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Anticipating Adversary Military Interventions



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Preface

This report documents research and analysis conducted as part of a project entitled *Anticipating Adversary Interventions and Aggression*, sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7, U.S. Army. The purpose of the project was to identify characteristics and signposts of adversary military interventions to better inform Army planning, operations, and force posture.

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Summary

The research reported here was completed in July 2020, followed by security review by the sponsor and the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, with final sign-off in July 2021.

There are many reasons for U.S. policymakers to be concerned about the interventions of adversaries. First, adversary interventions might pursue outcomes that undermine or threaten U.S. interests. Second, adversary interventions might directly affect the activities and objectives of U.S. forces when they intervene in the same places. Finally, adversary interventions may directly threaten U.S. forces or U.S. allies. Despite their importance, however, there have been only limited analyses of the military intervention behavior of such countries as China, Russia, and Iran.

In this report, we seek to address two sets of research questions:

- First, we explore where, how, and how often U.S. adversaries have intervened militarily since 1946.
- Second, we investigate why U.S. adversaries choose to initiate military interventions—that is, what factors drive U.S. adversaries to use military forces abroad?

This report summarizes our approach and findings across all U.S. adversaries, and three companion reports consider Chinese, Russian, and Iranian military intervention behavior in detail. The four reports are intended broadly for U.S. national security practitioners and researchers and for intelligence and military planners and analysts. The insights and signposts identified in these reports can inform U.S. decisions about military posture, partnerships, and investments.

Definitions and Approach

The foundation of our analysis was a database that we constructed of U.S. adversary military interventions from 1946 to 2018. We defined a *U.S. adversary* as a state with which the perception of the potential for military conflict existed on both sides during a given period. To identify U.S. adversaries, we first looked for states with which the United States had a history of militarized disputes.¹ We then excluded states with which the United States also had a record of close partnership or cooperation despite these disputes, such as Pakistan. We also considered the period of each adversarial relationship, looking at when militarized disputes occurred and other aspects of the political and strategic relationship. This process resulted in the identification of 13 U.S. adversaries post-1945, listed in Table S.1.

We define a *military intervention* as any deployment of military forces to another country (or international waters or airspace) in which two additional parameters were satisfied regarding (1) the size of the force involved and (2) the activities in which the force was engaged. For ground interventions, the size threshold is set at 100 person-years, which could be met by interventions of, for example, 100 people for one year, 1,200 people for one month, or 5,200 people for about one week. This size threshold would need to be met in every year during the intervention. To qualify as an intervention on the basis of the naval or air forces involved, the deployment had to involve the presence of a substantial portion of the adversary's naval forces rather than the isolated deployment of a small number of ships or aircraft. In addition, substantial instances of air-to-air or air-to-ground combat or strikes were included. The purpose of the size criteria was to eliminate small uses of force that may be more difficult to track consistently over time. Although smaller adversary interventions can create significant operational challenges and inflict damage on U.S. forces and interests, it is adversary interventions above this size threshold that most often pose acute challenges for U.S. policymakers because they challenge capa-

¹ We looked for states that had at least two militarized high-intensity disputes, as defined by the Militarized Interstate Dispute data set.

Table S.1
List of U.S. Adversaries, 1946–2018

Country	Adversary Date Range
Soviet Union	1946–1991
Russia	1991–2018
China	1949–2018
North Korea	1946–2018
Iran	1979–2018
Cuba	1960–2015
Vietnam (North Vietnam)	1960–1994
Libya	1969–2011
Iraq	1990–2003
Syria	1982–2018
Yugoslavia/Serbia	1991–2000
East Germany	1946–1989
Czechoslovakia	1946–1989

bility and capacity in significant ways. The purpose of the requirement that the forces involved be engaged in a particular set of activities was to eliminate cases in which a state might forward-deploy forces as a convenient alternative to basing them at home. In these cases, the forces were otherwise engaged in the same activities they would have been doing if stationed domestically and were not substantially interacting with or affecting the host state or population.²

After identifying a case of adversary military intervention, we collected several additional pieces of information about each case, including detailed information about the size of the force and the activities in which the forces were engaged (at both the intervention level and the

² We highlight two types of interventions excluded from our definition that are deserving of additional research: interventions below the 100-person threshold and interventions by proxy forces.

location-year level) and the political objectives motivating the intervention and the degree of success that the adversary had in achieving them.

Our analysis combines a review of prior literature, quantitative analysis of our database, and qualitative case studies. The quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics and trends. We used the literature review to identify the factors most likely to affect the intervention decisionmaking of key U.S. adversaries, drawing on the broader literature concerning motivations for third-party interventions. From this review, we developed a framework of ten factors organized into four broader categories: geopolitical, domestic, ideational, and enablers. We then reviewed past research on the interventions of the three key adversaries identified as our focus (China, Russia, and Iran), documenting evidence for and against each factor in each case. We also used this framework in our case studies to explore how each factor shaped the intervention decisionmaking of U.S. adversaries in the past.

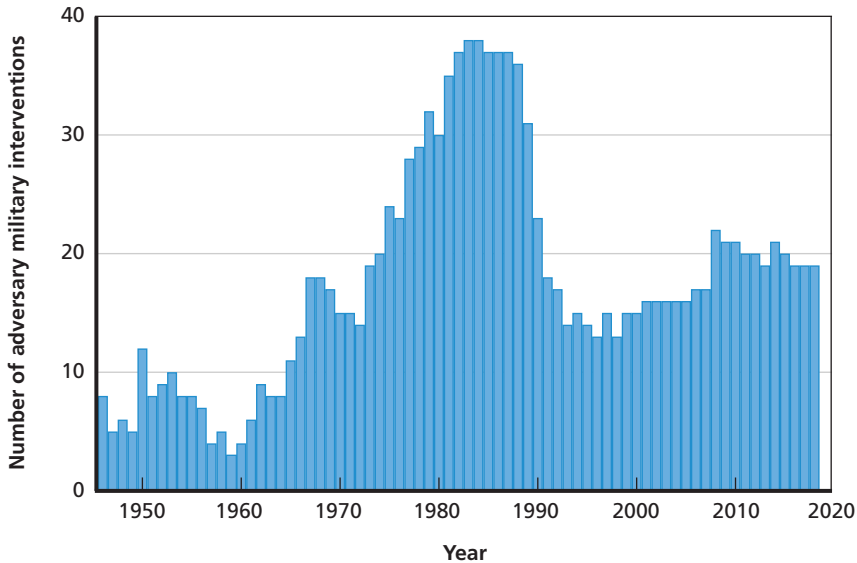
How and How Often Do States Intervene?

Our quantitative analysis used descriptive statistics to study trends in adversary interventions. In total, we identified 165 U.S. adversary military interventions undertaken from 1946 to 2018. We used the data collected to help answer our first set of research questions: Where, how, and how often do U.S. adversaries intervene? First, we considered the question of how often U.S. adversaries intervene.³ Figure S.1 shows the overall trend in the number of ongoing adversary military interventions per year. U.S. adversary military interventions were most prevalent during the late Cold War period. After the Cold War, these interventions declined by more than half, although they have seen a modest increase in number over the past decade.

We also looked at trends by adversary. Figure S.2 shows the number of adversary interventions over time by the adversary that con-

³ Although covered only briefly in this summary, our more detailed analysis of where U.S. adversaries have tended to intervene is provided in Chapter Three.

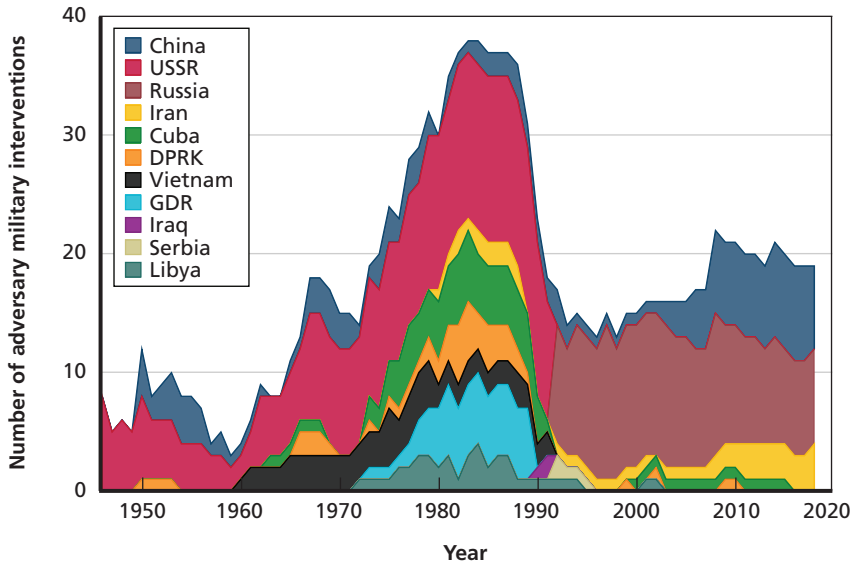
Figure S.1
Adversary Military Interventions, by Year (1946–2018)



ducted them. There are several notable historical patterns. First, the large spike in adversary military interventions in the late Cold War period was driven, in part, by an increase in Soviet interventions but also was driven by substantial increases in the number of interventions undertaken by Soviet satellites and allies (in particular, East Germany, or the German Democratic Republic [GDR], and Cuba). China was notably excepted from this spike. In the post–Cold War period, the sharp decline in adversary interventions was a result of the near cessation of military interventions involving these former Soviet allies and partners. The modest increase in adversary interventions over the past decade, meanwhile, has been driven largely by an increase in the number of Chinese interventions.

Next, we considered how adversaries intervene, focusing on such factors as activity type and size. Accounting for the size of adversary interventions shows a more dramatic post–Cold War decline. Figure S.3 shows the number of adversary troops involved in military interventions each year. The post–Cold War period has lacked any of the large-

Figure S.2
Adversary Military Interventions, by Adversary (1946–2018)



NOTE: DPRK = Democratic People's Republic of Korea; USSR = Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

scale commitments of adversary forces that frequently characterized the Cold War period, such as the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe, the Chinese involvement in the Korean War, and the Iran–Iraq War. Since 1991, although adversaries have continued to intervene militarily outside their borders, they have done so on a dramatically reduced scale (as shown in Figure S.1).

We also considered trends in forces deployed by adversary, as shown in Figure S.4. Cold War patterns in the number of adversary troops deployed in military interventions were driven by a handful of larger-scale, mostly combat interventions, such as those that accompanied the Korean and Vietnam Wars. The main large-scale noncombat intervention during the Cold War was the long-standing Soviet intervention in Eastern Europe.

Figure S.3
Troops Involved in Adversary Military Interventions, by Year (1946–2018)

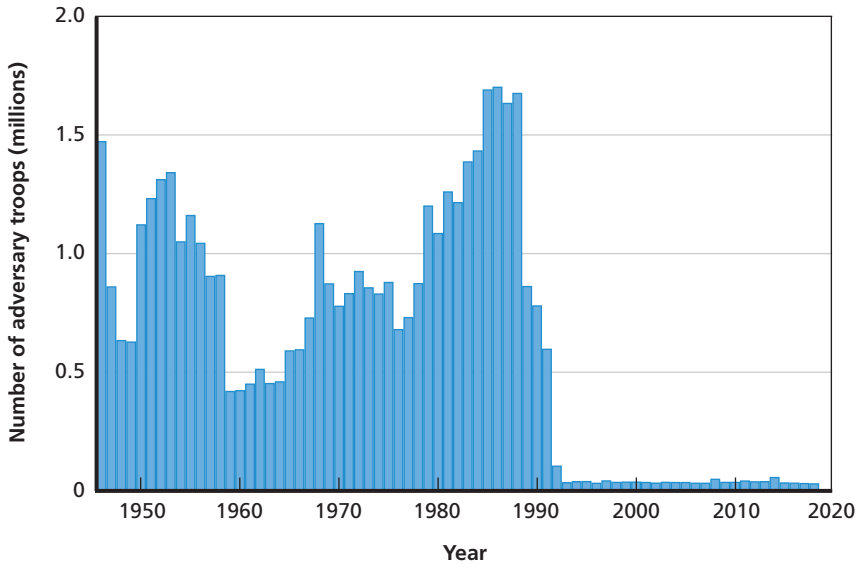
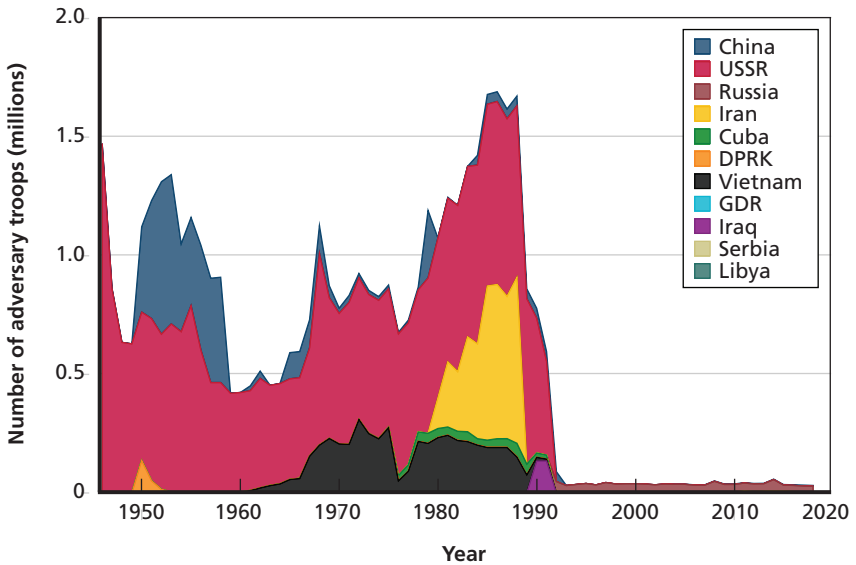


Figure S.4
Troops Involved in Adversary Military Interventions, by Adversary (1946–2018)



Why Do States Intervene? Drivers of Military Interventions

With these descriptive trends in mind, we developed a framework for understanding why U.S. adversaries undertake military interventions. Our identification of categories for the framework combined inductive and deductive approaches and relied on both general and country-specific literature reviews. We identified four main categories of intervention drivers: geopolitical, domestic, ideational, and enablers. Using our review of the literature, we grouped more-specific key factors into each of these four categories, giving us ten factors of interest that appeared consistently across past research and were relevant to intervention decisions. Our framework is shown in Table S.2. More-detailed definitions of these factors are included in Chapter Two.

Key Drivers of Adversary Interventions

We used country-specific literature reviews and in-depth case studies to identify which of the ten factors identified mattered most for each of the three key U.S. adversaries: China, Russia, and Iran. Importantly, our approach identified factors that make interventions more likely, but we could not identify factors that guarantee an intervention. There are numerous cases in which key factors that contribute clearly to an intervention decision in one case do not contribute to an intervention in another.⁴ The factors we identify should therefore be understood to affect the risk or likelihood of intervention but not necessarily to constitute sufficient conditions for one. Table S.3 summarizes the results of our analysis across adversaries. Although there is clearly heterogeneity across actors, there is also significant similarity in the factors that matter most across cases. First, for all adversaries, geopolitical drivers seem to be the most important category. In particular, concerns about the regional balance of power and responses to external threats to sovereignty emerge across the board as strong predictors of adversary interventions. Adversaries in this report differed somewhat in their use of military interventions to protect or advance national status, though

⁴ This is a question that can be addressed in more detail with future research.

Table S.2
Third-Party Intervention Framework

Category	Factor Affecting the Likelihood of Adversary Military Interventions
Geopolitics	Regional power balance
	External threat to sovereignty
	Alliance or partnership with host
	National status
Domestic	Domestic politics and legitimacy
	Economic interests in host
	Coidentity group populations in host
Ideational	Adversary leadership and personality
	Ideology
Enablers	Adversary military capabilities

it remained a highly or moderately important factor for all states. The final geopolitical factor, alliances and partnerships, was more relevant for Iran than for other U.S. adversaries.

There is more heterogeneity when we consider the role of domestic factors. Domestic factors do not seem to be major intervention drivers for any adversary (with the exception of China and its pursuit of its economic interests), but they clearly matter in different ways for different actors. Russia seems the least sensitive to domestic factors, although military interventions have sometimes had domestic political ramifications, both positive and negative. For Iran, domestic political factors are only moderately important, but the existence of coethnic and coreligious group populations in the potential intervention target appears to play a highly significant role in shaping Iranian intervention decisions.

Ideational factors have varied widely in importance over time. Although ideology does not appear to be a major driver of adversary interventions in the present day, ideologically driven military interventions were much more common during the Cold War. With respect to

Table S.3
Summary of Importance of Key Factors Across Adversaries

Factor	Russia	China	Iran	Summary
National status concerns	High	High	Moderate	Important for major powers or states seeking a greater international role.
Regional power balance	High	High	High	A major motivation and deciding factor across cases.
External threat to sovereignty	High	High	High	A major motivation and deciding factor across cases.
Alliance or partnership with host	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	More important for larger states that tend to have broader alliance relationships.
Domestic politics and legitimacy	Low/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Can play a role on the margin but has rarely been a deciding factor.
Economic interests in host	Low	High	Low	Does not appear to drive interventions for most adversaries, with the notable exception of recent Chinese interventions.
Coidentity group populations in host	Low/ Moderate	Moderate	High	Plays a role on the margin for most states, excepting Iran (where coidentity groups are central to regional strategy).
Leadership and personality	Moderate	Low	Low	Particularly in the post–Cold War period, leader personality has not been a central factor.
Ideology	Low	Low	Moderate	Higher for Cold War interventions and for smaller adversaries with nationalist ambitions. Lower in post–Cold War period overall.
Enabling military capabilities	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Can sometimes play an important role in enabling or constraining interventions further from adversary borders. Also likely to shape how states intervene.

Table S.3—Continued

NOTE: Key drivers were coded as “high,” “moderate,” and “low,” matching the influence of that factor on the adversary’s decision to intervene according to the judgments of the regional experts conducting the case study research and subsequent independent review by additional coders. We anchored these assessments in the objective metrics defined for each factor in Chapter Two along with the following guidelines for each of the three categories. **High:** Factor present in significant way (high level or vital importance of location or asset) and plays a decisive role in driving the adversary decision to intervene. **Moderate:** Factor is present in some way (moderate level or asset of moderate importance) and plays a supporting role in the decision to intervene. **Low:** Factor is present at low levels only and factored only peripherally into intervention decisionmaking.

leadership personality and preferences, despite the fact that major U.S. adversaries, such as Iran, China, Russia, and North Korea, have often had strong, autocratic leaders, we do not find evidence that it is the personality of these leaders or their predecessors that drives intervention behavior.

Finally, military capabilities and changes in those capabilities seem to function in similar but not identical ways across adversaries. In most cases, as states have become stronger militarily, they have been able to take on interventions that are more geographically dispersed, and they have been able to challenge more-capable adversaries. For smaller or weaker adversaries, limited military capabilities often serve as a constraint, generally confining their intervention activities to a smaller geographic area.

Signposts of Intervention

Understanding the types of factors that drive intervention decisions is useful for three main reasons. First, it can provide insight into state decisionmaking, allowing analysts to understand how different states prioritize geopolitical, domestic, and other factors. Second, it can provide insight into intervention objectives. A better understanding of what motivates adversaries to undertake interventions, and therefore what they may be hoping to achieve, can help the United States calibrate a response. Finally, these factors can help identify early warn-

ing indicators or signposts of likely future adversary interventions. Table S.4 describes signposts for each of the three major U.S. adversaries discussed in this report: Russia, China, and Iran. A more detailed discussion of these signposts and patterns we observe across them is included in Chapter Five.

Implications for U.S. Army Planners

Concern over Adversary Interventions Should Be Tempered (for Now)

A recent increase in adversary military interventions, including several that have caused alarm because of their size, location, and scope (e.g., Russia in Ukraine and Syria, Iran in Syria and Iraq), has increased attention and concern paid to these activities, their potential future trajectories, and the implications for U.S. interests. However, when assessing current adversary military activities, it is also important to consider longer-term trends. Overall, adversary military interventions, both in number and scale, remain far below the levels that the United States had to contend with during the Cold War. For U.S. Army planners, then, the primary risk with adversary military intervention trends is not that they might continue as they have been but that they could more radically shift to involve substantially more-aggressive and larger-scale interventions. Several factors could contribute to such a shift, including an intensification of U.S. rivalries with key adversaries (such as Russia or China), adversary perceptions of threats faced from U.S. actions, or dramatic domestic changes in China or Iran that sharply alter how an adversary thinks about and uses its military forces. Such a shift in intervention trends would also be more likely if accompanied by an expansion in the number of smaller U.S. adversaries. Therefore, U.S. planners will need to track evidence of emerging systemic shifts that could reorient the way key adversaries think about the use of their forces outside their borders.

Table S.4
Intervention Signposts, by Adversary

Category	Russia	China	Iran
Geopolitical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developments in post-Soviet Eurasia that threaten Russian status or the regional balance of power (e.g., Western influence in Georgia or Ukraine) • Extraregional changes to the status quo that pose a threat to Russian influence or interests (<i>loss prevention</i>, especially likely in the Middle East) • Violations of previously stated redlines or core interests (e.g., expansion of Western influence into Russia's sphere of influence) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developments at a Chinese flashpoint that threaten Chinese influence, status, or geopolitical interests (e.g., Taiwan, South China Sea, Chinese borderlands) • Expansion of military partnerships that suggest or enable new attitudes about use of military force (especially likely in South Asia and Africa) • Emergence of new global threats to Chinese interests from non-state actors or U.S. rivalry (e.g., Chinese borderlands, neighbors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional changes that pose a potential direct threat to Iran, the Iranian regime, or the regional balance of power (e.g., nonstate threats, the loss of crucial allies or partners, or the expansion of Western influence or military presence)
Domestic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instability that threatens Chinese economic interests or nationals (e.g., along the Belt and Road Initiative [BRI], in Eurasia, or in the Middle East) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events that threaten the security or status of neighboring Shia populations (e.g., Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen)
Ideational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified

Intervention Signposts Should Be Prioritized

The signposts we identified as possible early warning indicators of future interventions by key U.S. adversaries can serve more broadly to focus and prioritize the analysis and attention of U.S. military planners and intelligence officers. It is useful to think about the signposts at three levels relative to the adversary: outside their home region, within their home region, and domestic. Although there are signposts at all three levels, the central importance of signposts in the home region of the adversary is shared across adversaries. According to our analysis of historical trends, alluded to earlier, these signposts in the home region also seem to be the most likely to trigger substantial interventions, including those involving combat, making these home region signposts especially useful for planners and analysts. At the home region level, analysts may benefit most from watching for any evidence of a shift in the regional balance of power or change to the status quo that threatens the adversary's influence or national status. For China, for example, changes in its home region are most likely to present new external threats, which seem to be the strongest predictors of military activity. For Russia, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) activities in Georgia, Ukraine, or Belarus seem to be particularly likely to trigger military responses. Notably, both China and Russia have regions or territories about which each country has been clear when it comes to the consequences of a response. These redlines should be focal points for military analysts. Areas where the spheres of influence for China and Russia overlap in Central Asia are also worth watching. Although these regions are important to China's economic expansion through the BRI, they also remain important to Russia's desire for a favorable regional balance of power.

Of the Three Adversaries Considered, China Has the Greatest Prospects for Increased Extraregional Interventions

Of the three adversaries considered here, China has the greatest potential to shift adversary intervention trends in a more concerning direction. China has substantially greater resources and, in some areas, capabilities than Russia or any other current U.S. adversary. It also has an expanding set of strategic interests and ambitions outside its home

region. We also identified several possible domestic changes that could trigger a more aggressive approach to the use of military force by China. Dramatic changes in China's approach to military interventions would likely have the largest effect on overall trends in adversary military interventions with which U.S. Army planners would need to contend. There are many scenarios that could lead to an increased frequency of Chinese military interventions with an expanded set of implications for U.S. interests. Such a shift in Chinese intervention decisionmaking could occur following a sharp deterioration in U.S.-Chinese relations, which would place the two states firmly on opposite sides of an intense, militarized rivalry. A large-scale Chinese combat intervention could also occur more suddenly over several existing hot spots, such as Taiwan, although the likelihood of such an intervention would also be affected by the overall tenor of Chinese relations with the United States and Chinese military capabilities at the time. Although there is the potential for increased cooperation with China in military interventions designed to increase regional stability or counter malign nonstate actors, the drivers of Chinese military interventions bear particular attention because of their greater ability to adversely affect overall levels of U.S. adversary military interventions and because of the potential risks that such interventions pose to a wider range of U.S. interests.

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Abbreviations

BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COW	Correlates of War
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DPRK	Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FID	foreign internal defense
GDR	German Democratic Republic
HA/DR	humanitarian assistance and disaster relief
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
MID	militarized interstate dispute
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEO	noncombatant evacuation operation
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Introduction

Objective and Motivation

Concern about the potential for military intervention by U.S. adversaries has risen over the past decade, driven by high-profile interventions, such as the Russian missions in Ukraine and Syria, Iranian activity in Iraq and Syria, and expanding Chinese military activity in Africa. There are many reasons for U.S. policymakers to be concerned about the interventions of adversaries. First, adversary interventions might pursue outcomes that undermine or threaten U.S. interests. During the Cold War, for example, adversary interventions to support communist groups by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and China destabilized U.S. allies and partners in the developing world. Second, adversary interventions might directly affect the activities and objectives of U.S. forces when they intervene in the same places. Post-2003 Iranian interventions in Iraq, for instance, undermined the efforts of U.S. forces to establish a stable, Western-oriented democracy. Finally, adversary interventions may directly threaten U.S. forces or U.S. allies. Chinese intervention into the Korean War led to direct clashes with U.S. forces, inflicting substantial casualties and dramatically lengthening the conflict and altering its course.

Despite these concerns, relatively little is known about the intervention behavior of such countries as China, Russia, and Iran. Although there have been numerous studies of specific adversary interventions, there has been little systematic consideration of how and why key U.S. adversaries engage in military intervention.

This report and its three companion reports attempt to fill this gap by documenting historical and present-day trends in interventions by key U.S. adversaries, identifying the factors that seem most relevant to their military intervention decisions and identifying signposts of adversary military interventions that can be tracked by U.S. Army analysts and planners. This report summarizes our approach and findings across all U.S. adversaries; three separate reports consider Chinese, Russian, and Iranian military intervention behavior in detail. These reports are intended broadly for U.S. national security practitioners and researchers, as well as for intelligence and military planners and analysts and policymakers. If the United States is better able to anticipate where, when, and how adversaries are likely to intervene, it might be able to prepare to respond or take steps to counter those interventions where they have the potential to threaten U.S. interests. The insights and signposts identified in these reports can inform U.S. decisions about posture, partnerships, and investments. This report provides an overview of all U.S. adversaries post-1945, with a particular focus on Russia, China, and Iran as three key U.S. adversaries identified in the National Defense Strategy that also have been active militarily and have the greatest capability to launch military interventions outside their borders.

Research Questions and Approach

In this report, we seek to address two sets of research questions:

- First, we sought to explore where, how, and how often U.S. adversaries have intervened militarily since 1946.
- Second, we asked why U.S. adversaries choose to initiate military interventions—that is, what factors drive U.S. adversaries to use military forces abroad?

In this section, we describe how we approached each of these questions.

Where, How, and How Often Do U.S. Adversaries Intervene?

The foundation of this analysis is a database of adversary military interventions covering the 1946–2018 period. We start with 1946, after the end of World War II, as the date when the outlines of the current international system emerged.¹ For the purpose of this report, we define a *U.S. adversary* as a state with which the perception of the potential for military conflict existed on both sides during a given period.² Our approach to identifying U.S. adversaries and the period in which they were considered an adversary is described in more detail in Chapter Three. To summarize, we first looked for states with which the United States had at least two militarized high-intensity disputes, as defined by the Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data set, which records such disputes and their characteristics.³ We then considered the period of each adversarial relationship, looking at both the time span of the disputes and other aspects of the political and strategic relationships.

We define a *military intervention* as any deployment of military forces to another country (or international waters or airspace) during the 1946–2018 period in which two additional parameters were satisfied regarding (1) the size of the force involved and (2) the activities in which the force was engaged.⁴ For ground interventions, the threshold

¹ That said, the years for which we collected information on individual adversaries varied according to when these states were U.S. adversaries. For example, we do not collect information on Iranian interventions prior to the 1979 revolution or Chinese interventions prior to the Communist victory in 1949. See Chapter Three for complete details.

² The Joint Chiefs' official definition of *adversary*, as codified in Joint Publication 3-0, is "A party acknowledged as potentially hostile to a friendly party and against which the use of force may be envisaged" (Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, October 22, 2018, p. GL-6).

³ High-intensity MIDs include events that involve the use of force by one state against another, which can range from limited exchanges on a single day to full-scale war.

⁴ Implicit in this definition is some ambiguity regarding the sovereign status of disputed territories. In this study, we consider sovereign countries to be those included in Correlates of War's (COW's) country code list. Additionally, to determine whether individual adversary incursions into disputed territories constituted a foreign intervention per se, we referred to the Issue Correlates of War Territorial Claims data set to determine whether, in disputed territory, the actor was the target of the claim (in which case, it was assumed to have possession

is set at 100 person-years, which could be met by interventions of 100 people for one year, 1,000 people for one month, or 10,000 people for about four days. To qualify as an intervention on the basis of the naval or air forces involved, the deployment had to involve the presence of a substantial portion of the adversary's naval forces rather than the isolated deployment of a small number of ships. In addition, substantial instances of air-to-air or air-to-ground combat or strikes were included without needing to meet the plane-year size threshold. The purpose of the size criteria was to eliminate very small uses of force that may be more difficult to track consistently over time. We wanted to define a threshold that would allow us to comprehensively capture all interventions in the defined universe. This would be exceedingly difficult for interventions smaller than the 100 person-year threshold. In addition, although smaller adversary interventions can often create significant operational challenges and can inflict substantial damage on U.S. forces and interests, it is adversary interventions above this size threshold that most often pose acute challenges for U.S. policymakers because they challenge capability and capacity in significant and distinct ways.⁵

The purpose of the requirement that the forces involved be engaged in a particular set of activities was to eliminate cases in which

of the territory) or the challenger was the target of the claim (in which case, it was assumed to not have possession of the territory, and therefore it was assumed that this territory was a possible location for a military intervention). See Correlates of War Project "State System Membership (v2016)," undated; and Bryan Frederick, Paul R. Hensel, and Christopher Macaulay, "The Issue Correlates of War Territorial Claims Data, 1816–2011," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 54, No. 1, 2017.

⁵ Large adversary interventions create problems of capability and capacity for the United States because the United States may need to be able to mount a counterintervention or other strategic response of equivalent size. Such interventions might also create strategic challenges because the United States may need to make choices about how to posture differently, signal intent, or otherwise manage the strategic implications. Small adversary interventions can also have serious strategic implications and can impose costs on U.S. interests and U.S. forces. But they are less likely to create the same capability and capacity challenges posed by larger interventions. Moreover, larger adversary interventions are also important for what they tell us about the capabilities of the adversary. Small-scale interventions are also deserving of analysis, but this report focuses on those uses of military forces above the 100 person-year threshold.

a state might forward-deploy forces as a convenient alternative to basing them at home, but the forces were otherwise engaged in the same activities they would have been doing if stationed domestically and were not substantially interacting with or affecting the host state or population. Activities that warrant inclusion as an intervention include foreign internal defense (FID), combat, counterinsurgency, stability operations, humanitarian assistance, deterrence, security, intelligence and reconnaissance, and lift. We provide additional detail and definitions of each activity type in Chapter Three. As an additional criterion, the forces involved must have been part of the country's military: Interventions by state-aligned paramilitary forces, proxy organizations, and/or intelligence services are excluded.

We used these definitions and inclusion criteria to build the database of adversary military interventions. For each intervention, we collected information on the size, number of forces, activities, objectives pursued, and likelihood of success. We used this data set to explore trends in adversary interventions overall and for specific adversaries and selected cases from it for deeper analysis. We looked at the number of interventions and the number of forces deployed, overall and by adversary. We also considered trends in activity types and looked at interventions by region to understand the types of interventions launched by each adversary. Finally, we considered the political objectives that adversaries pursued in undertaking military interventions and how successful they were at achieving those objectives. The quantitative analysis did not directly address the question of why U.S. adversaries initiate military interventions, but it did provide useful insights into how these states have used military force in the past and equally important insights into how and where they have not.

Why Do Adversaries Intervene?

To answer this second question, we turned first to the broader literature on third-party intervention to understand, in general, why states choose to intervene. The purpose of this review was to identify a robust set of factors that past analysis has shown to be relevant to intervention decisionmaking across state actors. Certainly, each U.S. adversary is likely distinct in important ways. However, there is no reason to

believe that, as a group, they are systematically unlike the universe of other third-party interveners. Instead, it is likely that, of the set of general factors found to affect intervention decisionmaking across intervening states, some will apply more and some will apply less to each adversary. Factors unique to individual adversaries were assessed using case studies and other analyses specific to those states.

Our first step was to review literature on third-party interventions across cases to identify those factors most likely to affect the intervention decisionmaking of key U.S. adversaries. From this review, we developed a framework of ten factors organized into four broader categories: geopolitical, domestic, ideational, and military. We included only factors that came up repeatedly in existing research rather than insights drawn from only one study. We also attempted to define observable metrics for each factor. In other words, if we wanted to measure each factor, what indicators would we look for? We then reviewed past research on the interventions of the three key adversaries identified as our focus (China, Russia, and Iran), documenting evidence for and against each factor in each case. Reviews of the literature specific to these three adversaries are contained in the country-specific companion reports. We used these reviews and relevant data on each country's military, economic status, and political characteristics to identify which of the ten factors are most relevant to that adversary. For this summary report, we discuss the broader literature that informed our development of the framework.

To further explore the factors driving intervention decisionmaking for each adversary, we used case studies drawn from the larger data set. The cases were chosen to provide insight into the types of interventions that these U.S. adversaries are conducting and the types they might conduct with greater frequency in the future. These case studies are presented in detail in the companion reports. For each case, we identified those factors from our framework that appear to matter most to the adversary's intervention decision and then used these insights to supplement findings from past research and observations from the

quantitative review.⁶ Synthesizing across these different modes of analysis, we then derived signposts of adversary interventions for Russia, China, and Iran—that is, factors and indicators that the United States can use to consider where adversaries may intervene in the future and under what conditions they might become more or less likely to intervene. These signposts include metrics and events to watch for, contexts that might trigger interventions, and larger domestic and international changes that might cause shifts in how adversaries think about and use military forces. However, it is also worth acknowledging some of the limitations of these signposts. First, they remain fairly broad. Second, they identify indicators that may warn of a higher risk of future interventions, but they do not guarantee that an intervention will follow.

This report summarizes the insights from the analysis in each of the companion reports, presents signposts from each adversary, and offers overarching summary insights. Together, this report and its companions make several novel contributions. First, we collect and summarize detailed data on the military activities of key U.S. adversaries over the period 1946 to 2018. These data expand our understanding of the scale, scope, and type of military interventions used by U.S. adversaries. Second, we provide an in-depth exploration of key factors driving adversary decisionmaking. Not all of the observations are novel to scholars focused on the behavior of these adversaries, but the accumulated evidence allows us to distinguish between factors that matter relatively more in adversary decisionmaking and those that matter rela-

⁶ Although case studies have their limitations in terms of generalizability, this was not a case for which we could use a large-*N* quantitative analysis. There are a few reasons for this. The most important is that we expect the factors that drive intervention decisions to vary across adversaries in meaningful ways. Running a large-*N* regression on the full set of adversary interventions (combining across adversaries) would assume that all adversary interventions are drawn from a single universe and that it is possible to find one set of relationships with key covariates that applies to all adversaries. We do not believe this to be the case and assess that the results of such an analysis would not be terribly meaningful. One way to mitigate this would be to run separate regressions for each adversary. However, key U.S. adversaries (for the most part) have not launched a sufficient number of interventions (according to our definition) over the period under consideration to conduct regression analysis. For these reasons, we rely on descriptive statistics and case studies, despite the limits this places on generalizability.

tively less, adjudicating between competing arguments. Finally, we use our analysis to provide some insights into the contexts and areas where future adversary interventions may be most likely to affect the decisions of U.S. military planners.

Limitations

Our analysis comes with several limitations. First, gathering accurate data on adversary military interventions was challenging. Although we invested substantial effort in attempting to ensure a complete record of adversary interventions post-1945, we were limited to publicly available information, a particular challenge for states that remain highly secretive about their foreign activities. These concerns were particularly acute when it came to such details as the numbers of forces deployed and, sometimes, the period in which an intervention occurred and the activities in which the adversary forces were involved. These limitations will affect our ability to accurately study trends in adversary interventions. Second, we do not have a large set of cases of adversary military intervention to work from in most instances, especially when considering the post-Cold War world. This is particularly the case for smaller U.S. adversaries, which may have intervened only a limited number of times (even Iran has launched only eight interventions since 1979 that meet our definition). The relatively small number of cases can make it difficult to identify patterns and draw conclusions that could be predictive of future behavior, whether using qualitative or quantitative analysis. Third, our approach is able to identify factors that make interventions more likely, but we cannot identify factors that guarantee an intervention. There are numerous cases in which key factors that contribute clearly to an intervention decision in one case do not contribute to an intervention in another. This means that our signposts can suggest indicators and factors that are worth watching as potential early warning signs, indicating a higher risk of intervention, but they do not identify factors that guarantee adversary interventions. Finally, it is worth noting that although we are able to identify some commonalities across cases, the circumstances involved in military interventions

tend to be highly idiosyncratic. This makes it difficult to generalize our findings across adversaries and equally difficult to definitively predict where and when adversaries will intervene in the future. We use signposts to identify the types of indicators military analysts and planners may want to track as early warning signs of adversary military activity to assist in early preparation and prevention, but we note that there will very likely be future adversary interventions that violate the patterns identified here.

There are also some limitations associated with our definition of intervention. Most notably, as discussed earlier, our definition excludes small-scale interventions and interventions by proxy forces, both of which are commonly used approaches to intervention by U.S. adversaries. This means that the analysis and signposts here will exclude a portion of meaningful adversary military activity and will not speak to trends in these activities or their drivers. Still, this report provides an analysis of all moderate-size or larger direct military interventions that may pose significant challenges for U.S. forces and U.S. interests. Analyses of smaller interventions and the use of proxy forces are certainly needed and valuable, but the research presented here serves as a first step toward a more holistic understanding of adversary intervention behavior and decisionmaking.

Organization of This Report

This report is one of four reports produced from our analysis of adversary military interventions. This report provides an overview of intervention trends across adversaries, a summary of intervention drivers and signposts for U.S. major and selected minor adversaries, and a synthesis of these findings to derive implications for the U.S. Army and national security practitioners more generally. The three other reports cover each of the three major U.S. adversaries—China, Russia, and Iran—in more detail, including an in-depth review of quantitative trends, past

research, and case studies.⁷ These companion reports should appeal especially to regional experts, as well as those with particular interests in a specific region or U.S. adversary. This report will provide more-generalized observations and more-generalized implications that pertain across adversaries, as well as some more-specific insights.⁸

The remainder of this report includes a literature review, a quantitative assessment of trends in adversary interventions, and a discussion of our key findings and implications for the U.S. Army. Chapter Two summarizes relevant literature on the drivers of third-party interventions and presents a framework for categorizing the most common of these drivers. Chapter Three presents the results of our quantitative review of adversary intervention trends. Chapter Four provides a summary of key factors driving Russian, Chinese, and Iranian interventions, taken from our longer reports on each of these adversaries, and a shorter treatment of intervention drivers for three smaller U.S. adversaries: North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba. Finally, Chapter Five includes a discussion of intervention signposts from each of the three major U.S. adversaries, along with a description of the key implications of our analysis for the U.S. Army and broader national security community.

⁷ Samuel Charap, Edward Geist, Bryan Frederick, John J. Drennan, Nathan Chandler, and Jennifer Kavanagh, *Russia's Military Interventions: Patterns Drivers, and Signposts*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-A444-3, 2021; Timothy R. Heath, Christian Curriden, Bryan Frederick, Nathan Chandler, and Jennifer Kavanagh, *China's Military Interventions: Patterns, Drivers, and Signposts*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-A444-4, 2021; and Ariane M. Tabatabai, Nathan Chandler, Bryan Frederick, and Jennifer Kavanagh, *Iran's Military Interventions: Patterns, Drivers, and Signposts*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-A444-2, 2021.

⁸ This work also builds on previous RAND analyses of U.S. intervention signposts and objectives and of the success at achieving those objectives. The definitions and inclusion criteria used in this report are derived from this previous work. See Jennifer Kavanagh, Bryan Frederick, Matthew Povlock, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Angela O'Mahony, Stephen Watts, Nathan Chandler, John Speed Meyers, and Eugeniu Han, *The Past, Present, and Future of U.S. Ground Interventions: Identifying Trends, Characteristics, and Signposts*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1831-A, 2017; and Jennifer Kavanagh, Bryan Frederick, Alexandra Stark, Nathan Chandler, Meagan L. Smith, Matthew Povlock, Lynn E. Davis, and Edward Geist, *Characteristics of Successful U.S. Military Interventions*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-3062-A, 2019.

Why Do States Intervene? A Summary of Past Research

We first conducted a general review of when and why states initiate military interventions. We used the review to identify the key driving factors of third-party interventions and to develop a framework to organize intervention drivers and motivations and guide our analysis. This framework allows us, in subsequent chapters and in our analysis of the interventions of specific adversaries, to systematically explore the drivers of specific interventions, to identify factors that most frequently motivate the intervention decisions of specific adversaries, and to identify signposts of adversary interventions that can inform decisions by U.S. Army planners and defense policymakers.

Approach

We started our review of existing literature by considering past research on U.S. military interventions, documented in previous RAND reports, and then expanded our focus to include research on factors that determine third-party intervention decisions across interveners. We searched major journal databases, such as Online Computer Library Center First Search and Social Science Abstracts, Google Scholar, and the archives of leading journals in military strategy, political science, international relations, and public affairs. We also reviewed regionally focused journals (e.g., on the Middle East or Eurasia) and used the citations in articles we collected to expand the search further. We included

both quantitative analysis and qualitative case studies in the review. Finally, in addition to including relevant foundational literature in our review, we searched for new research to capture findings and analysis relevant to today's geopolitics and that reflected the most up-to-date understanding of intervention decisions across interveners. After collecting articles, we reviewed them for relevance and content, keeping notes on the key factors that each article identified as relevant to intervention decisionmaking.

Our identification of categories for the framework combined inductive and deductive approaches. At the most fundamental level, countries undertake interventions when they assess that the intervention is more likely to accomplish their political goals than not intervening. Intervention is a policy tool like any other, and therefore the decision to intervene reflects the assessment that, all things considered, the expected tangible and intangible benefits of an intervention are likely to exceed the tangible and intangible costs. This assessment is unlikely to be only about financial benefits and costs and may include an assessment of additional domestic, geopolitical, and other factors. Using our past work and this understanding of military intervention decisions, we started with four main categories of intervention drivers: geopolitical, domestic, ideational, and enablers.

Using our review of the literature, we grouped key factors into each of these four categories, giving us ten key factors of interest that appeared consistently across past research as relevant to intervention decisions. Our framework is shown in Table 2.1. In the rest of this chapter, we discuss evidence for and against the relevance of these factors to the decisions that states make about intervening militarily outside their borders. In addition to defining the key factors and what we know about them, we seek to identify metrics that can be used to measure or assess these different factors and to clarify the definition of each factor. These potential metrics will be discussed again when we highlight signposts of future interventions in Chapter Five. Importantly, the ten factors identified here appear to contribute to intervention decisions by third-party states according to our review of existing qualitative and quantitative research, but they do not guarantee an intervention. State decisionmaking on the use of military forces is

Table 2.1
Third-Party Intervention Framework

Category	Factors Affecting the Likelihood of Adversary Military Interventions
Geopolitics	External threat to sovereignty Regional power balance Alliance or partnership with host National status
Domestic	Domestic politics and legitimacy Coidentity group populations in host Economic interests
Ideational	Leadership and personality Ideology
Enablers	Capabilities

complex, and single factors in isolation are rarely sufficient to guarantee a particular intervention decision. Instead, these factors should be viewed as potentially increasing or decreasing the risk of an intervention. As an example, the existence of a partnership between two states may encourage one to intervene to defend the other, but it does not necessitate such an intervention. The state may still choose to abstain from intervening, assessing that other factors outweigh its commitment to the partnership, although the partnership makes the intervention more likely than it would otherwise have been.

Geopolitical Factors

The first set of key intervention drivers is geopolitical. Geopolitical factors are any that relate to the international system or relationships between countries that can drive the decision to intervene at a more macro level.

External Threat to Sovereignty

The logic for why external threats to sovereignty may drive states to initiate a military intervention is straightforward: States that perceive a direct threat to their sovereignty, their citizens, their territory, or their resources might choose to deploy forces abroad to counter or reduce that threat.¹ We include only actual or threatened infringements on sovereignty, actual or threatened territorial claims, or direct and immediate threats to regime security as part of this factor. The clearest indicators of this factor are relatively straightforward: the existence or threat of an armed attack, the existence of a territorial claim or challenge to the territorial integrity of the intervening nation, the perception or fear of such a claim at some point in the future, or the threat or fear of a forced regime change. Past research suggests that the risk of conflict between two neighboring states is significantly higher when there is a dispute about the location of a shared border or when one state has made a claim to territory the other also believes it owns. In such instances, states might launch an intervention to defend or reclaim disputed territory.² Interventions might also respond to a direct attack on a nation's homeland or even the threat of such an attack. As one recent example, the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 reflected the U.S. response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the continued threat that al Qaeda terrorists based in Afghanistan posed to U.S. citizens and interests. Even potential threats can trigger interventions by states seeking to protect their interests or forestall the development and emergence of new threats. RAND research has shown, for instance, that U.S. decisions to initiate a deterrent intervention and even the number of forces deployed for such a mission are directly linked to the severity of the perceived threat.³ U.S. deterrent interventions in the Middle East and in Europe are clear examples of this, and the United States used deterrent interventions throughout the Middle East, Asia,

¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, "To Intervene or Not to Intervene," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 45, No. 3, April 1967.

² Stephen A. Kocs, "Territorial Disputes and Interstate War, 1945–1987," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 57, No. 1, February 1995.

³ Kavanagh, Frederick, Povlock, et al., 2017.

and Central America during the Cold War to forestall the ubiquitous threat posed by the spread of communism and the territorial expansion of the Soviet Union's sphere of influence.

Alliances and Partnerships

The second geopolitical factor shown to drive intervention decisions has to do with relationships between countries. States will often intervene to protect or support allies and partners. Past research is clear that the existence of an alliance or partnership is one of the strongest factors shaping intervention decisions.⁴ This relationship seems obvious in the case of treaty allies that have made a commitment to defend each other, but it is also true for countries with other types of partnerships, even informal. Relevant partnerships, then, may be identified by looking first at states with formal treaties and agreements (defense-oriented and otherwise) and then looking at states with other types of close partnerships, developed through, for example, military or economic aid or past instances of cooperation. Countries may be more likely to intervene to protect allies and partners for many reasons. The most obvious is to respond to a shared external threat or adversary (e.g., an intervention by a rival power, an internal guerilla movement), but the decision to intervene can also be driven by a set of shared interests or goals, historical ties, or the explicit terms of the alliance.⁵ Research on interventions during the Cold War, for example, finds that one of the strongest predictors of U.S. intervention into a civil conflict is whether one of the two states was an ally or partner.⁶ Similarly, one of the key reasons that the French have continually intervened in conflicts and humanitarian crises in Africa is the status of these countries as former French colo-

⁴ Kavanagh, Frederick, Povlock, et al., 2017; Michael G. Findley and Tze Kwang Teo, "Rethinking Third-Party Interventions into Civil Wars: An Actor-Centric Approach," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 68, No. 4, November 2006; Mi Yung Yoon, "Explaining U.S. Intervention in Third World Internal Wars, 1945–1989," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 4, August 1997.

⁵ Yoon, 1997; Findley and Teo, 2006.

⁶ Yoon, 1997.

nies.⁷ Finally, states may intervene not only to protect an ally but also to support an ally that is intervening elsewhere. Research suggests that such interventions may be more common when there are divergences in the interests and objectives of intervening powers, since this gives each state a greater and more enduring incentive to participate in order to influence the outcome.⁸ However, alliances and (especially) partnerships do not guarantee an intervention. There are numerous examples of states violating established partnerships in favor of other interests or choosing one partner over another. A potential intervener might also simply decide that the cost of intervening is too high given the depth or importance of the partnership. Refusing to support a partner may be less likely in the context of a formal mutual defense treaty, but the likelihood of intervention to support the partner may be lower without such a clearly binding commitment.

Regional Balance of Power

States may also intervene into an ongoing crisis or conflict to ensure a favorable balance of power in the region where they are intervening or in regard to the international system, whether this means maintaining the current balance of power or creating a balance of power that is more immediately favorable.⁹ Past research demonstrates that states consider possible intervention by rivals when deciding to intervene.¹⁰ More generally, past research suggests that states may use interventions to protect the integrity of their sphere of influence and to head off any threats to the existing international balance of power from a major adversary or a regional challenger.¹¹ Similarly, states may use inter-

⁷ Susanna D. Wing, "French Intervention in Mali: Strategic Alliances, Long-Term Regional Presence?" *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2016; Nathaniel K. Powell, "Battling Instability? The Recurring Logic of French Military Interventions in Africa," *African Security*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2017.

⁸ Findley and Teo, 2006.

⁹ Stephen E. Gent, "External Threats and Military Intervention: The United States and the Caribbean Basin," *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2010.

¹⁰ Yoon, 1997.

¹¹ Gent, 2010; Yoon, 1997; Mark P. Lagon, "The International System and the Reagan Doctrine: Can Realism Explain Aid to 'Freedom Fighters'?" *British Journal of Political Sci-*

ventions to maintain the balance of power within a specific region. This may include efforts to shore up weak states, reduce instability that is affecting the balance of power, or prevent regime or policy changes that would alter regional partnerships or allegiances.¹² Analysis of Iran's intervention in Syria, for instance, suggests that Iran may be trying to maintain the current status quo and prevent a change that could result in the loss of a key ally.¹³ As another example, it is possible to view Russia's intervention into Ukraine as an attempt to limit the spread of Western influence in the region, influence that could have shifted the balance of power in the region in ways that would have disadvantaged Russia. By intervening and seizing Crimea, Russia was able to prevent that potential outcome and increase its influence.¹⁴ The *regional balance of power* factor is related to the *external threat to sovereignty* factor, but the two are distinct. Certainly, a threat to one state's sovereignty by another state in the region has the potential to challenge the regional balance of power. However, shifts in the regional balance of power occur even more often in the absence of direct threats or territorial claims. Anything from the expanding economic influence of an adversary, to civil war in a neighbor, to the development of new military technologies can shift the regional balance of power in ways that have the potential to trigger some sort of military intervention.

Shifts in the regional balance of power can be hard to measure objectively. The National Military Capabilities index is one possible

ence, Vol. 22, No. 1, January 1992.

¹² Dursun Peksen and Marie Olson Lounsbury, "Beyond the Target State: Foreign Military Intervention and Neighboring State Stability," *International Interactions*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2012; Jacob D. Kathman, "Civil War Diffusion and Regional Motivations for Intervention," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 55, No. 6, 2011; Roy Allison, "The Russian Case for Military Intervention in Georgia: International Law, Norms and Political Calculation," *European Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2009.

¹³ Emile Hokayem, "Syria and Its Neighbours," *Survival*, Vol. 54, No. 2, 2012; Ted Galen Carpenter, "Tangled Web: The Syrian Civil War and Its Implications," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Winter 2013.

¹⁴ Andrei Tsygankov, "Vladimir Putin's Last Stand: The Sources of Russia's Ukraine Policy," *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 2015; Samuel Charap and Timothy J. Colton, *Everyone Loses: The Ukraine Crisis and the Ruinous Contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia*, Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2017.

metric that can be used to study changes in the balance of power. An index of relative economic size is another option, among others. RAND researchers have also developed a metric useful for studying changes in the balance of power regionally.¹⁵

National Status

The fourth geopolitical rationale for intervention is national status. States may use interventions to underscore their capabilities, as a statement of national power or of military strength. Although again related to other geopolitical factors, national status is also distinct. National status is largely about reputation. States may use interventions to maintain or build their reputation. National status can drive an intervention even when there is no threat and no change in the balance of power. States concerned with national status may use interventions to demonstrate military strength or relevance or their relative place or rank in either the global or the regional order.¹⁶ States may intervene to exercise their abilities to influence policy outcomes: in other words, to get a seat at the table.¹⁷ States may intervene to protect interests and assets that are core to their national status, or at least to their perception of their national status.¹⁸ For example, analysis of the perceptions of Russia's political leaders suggests that they view their ability to intervene and influence the outcome in Syria as evidence of Russia's relevance as

¹⁵ Stephen Watts, Bryan Frederick, Jennifer Kavanagh, Angela O'Mahony, Thomas S. Szayna, Matthew Lane, Alexander Stephenson, and Colin P. Clarke, *A More Peaceful World? Regional Conflict Trends and U.S. Defense Planning*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1177-A, 2017.

¹⁶ Karen A. Feste, *Expanding the Frontiers: Superpower Intervention in the Cold War*, New York: Praeger, 1992; Timothy R. Heath, "Developments in China's Military Force Projection and Expeditionary Capabilities," testimony presented before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission on January 21, 2016, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, CT-450, 2016; Michael J. Mazarr, Timothy R. Heath, and Astrid Stuth Cevallos, *China and the International Order*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-2423-OSD, 2018; Lagon, 1992.

¹⁷ Lagon, 1992; Dmitri Trenin, "Russia in the Middle East: Moscow's Objectives, Priorities, and Policy Drivers," New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016; Findley and Teo, 2006.

¹⁸ Trenin, 2016.

a great power.¹⁹ Similarly, China uses its military interventions, among other things, to demonstrate military capabilities, to wield influence in the international arena, and to protect access to territories it views as central to its national status.²⁰ Even participation in multinational humanitarian or other interventions may be influenced by pursuit of national status. Specifically, states may see their ability to participate in international operations as a sign of relevance on the international stage.²¹

It is more difficult to operationalize or measure national status, for at least two reasons. First, status is necessarily defined relative to other states. Second, it is largely about perception and can mean something different to each intervening state. For a larger, revisionist power, being perceived to be a great power might be the goal. For a smaller state, the goal may simply be to achieve a greater degree of influence than held previously. It is easier to think about national status more concretely across the three adversaries that are the main focus of this report. For Russia and China, their national status goal often appears to be a desire to be seen as a great power, both the dominant player in their region and able to extend their influence outside that region. Iran's national status goal is slightly less ambitious, focusing largely on being recognized as a strong regional power in the Middle East whose concerns must be respected by global and other regional powers.²² Across all three adversaries, however, national status concerns the state's perceived position on the international stage, particularly vis-à-vis other great powers, such as the United States.

¹⁹ Trenin, 2016.

²⁰ Heath, 2016; Mazarr, Heath, and Cevallos, 2018.

²¹ Justin Massie and Benjamin Zyla, "Alliance Value and Status Enhancement: Canada's Disproportionate Military Burden Sharing in Afghanistan," *Politics and Policy*, Vol. 46, No. 2, April 2018.

²² Notably, we do not include "nationalism" when used as the driver of nation-building and creating a national myth as part of national status. National status has only to do with position or perceived position on the international stage.

Domestic Factors

States may also be motivated to intervene because of internal drivers: political, economic, or sociocultural factors that make interventions advantageous or desirable. There is some work that finds that the impact of domestic factors overwhelms that of geopolitical factors when explaining why states intervene.²³

Politics and Legitimacy

The most commonly proposed domestic drivers of interventions are those having to do with domestic politics and legitimacy. According to this family of arguments, political leaders might use interventions and their timing for political purposes, to build support among their constituency, or to enhance their domestic political legitimacy. The “diversionary theory of war” suggests that leaders might use interventions to increase their chances of reelection, distract from economic or other problems at home, or shore up their support through a “rally around the flag” effect. Although these explanations are appealing in theory and seem to describe some individual cases fairly well, they have mixed empirical support.²⁴ Some research suggests that leaders can successfully use intervention to bolster their chances for reelection, but this relationship seems to exist under a narrow set of circumstances. Where it does work, intervention seems to allow leaders who launch successful interventions to rebuild their popular support. Losing interventions, however, can end political careers.²⁵ Empirical work is clear that

²³ Patrick James and John R. Oneal, “The Influence of Domestic and International Politics on the President’s Use of Force,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 35, No. 2, June 1991; Charles W. Ostrom and Brian L. Job, “The President and the Political Use of Force,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 80, No. 2, June 1986.

²⁴ Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, paperback ed., Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005; Amber Aubone, “Explaining US Unilateral Military Intervention in Civil Conflicts: A Review of the Literature,” *International Politics*, Vol. 50, No. 2, 2013; Brett Ashley Leeds, and David R. Davis, “Domestic Political Vulnerability and International Disputes,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 6, December 1997.

²⁵ Karl DeRouen, Jr., and Jeffrey Peake, “The Dynamics of Diversion: The Domestic Implications of Presidential Use of Force,” *International Interactions*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2002; Ostrom

although rally effects can occur following a new intervention, those effects are not guaranteed and are smaller and more short-lived than many might expect.²⁶

Aside from using interventions to win elections, leaders might use interventions to shape their public image (e.g., to demonstrate their toughness in the face of the adversary, which could increase political support in some contexts).²⁷ Or leaders might base their intervention decisions on public support, intervening when public support is high (typically, when the stakes are high and perceived costs are low) and not when the public does not support the intervention.²⁸

There is also a body of work focused on the role played by the institutional characteristics of the domestic polity: the political party of the leader, the regime type, the timing of elections, and even the type of democracy. Empirical evidence on the relevance of these factors is mixed. First, the type of democracy and, specifically, the decision-making process used by a country's leaders to make intervention deci-

and Job, 1986; Kyle Haynes, "Diversionsary Conflict: Demonizing Enemies or Demonstrating Competence?" *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 2017; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005; Stephen E. Gent, "Scapegoating Strategically: Reselection, Strategic Interaction, and the Diversionsary Theory of War," *International Interactions*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2009.

²⁶ Aubone, 2013; Tim Groeling and Matthew A. Baum, "Crossing the Water's Edge: Elite Rhetoric, Media Coverage, and the Rally-Round-the-Flag Phenomenon," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 70, No. 4, October 2008.

²⁷ James Meernik, "Domestic Politics and the Political Use of Military Force by the United States," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 4, December 2001.

²⁸ There is also an extensive body of literature on the topic of what drives public support for military operations and interventions. Past research has identified (1) what is at stake, (2) the expressed consensus of elites, and (3) the perceived costs as key variables. Some work also suggests that public support may also be influenced by media coverage. See, for example, Eric V. Larson and Bogdan Savych, *American Public Support for U.S. Military Operations from Mogadishu to Baghdad*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-231-A, 2005; Adam J. Berinsky, "Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites, and American Public Support for Military Conflict," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 4, November 2007; Louis Klarevas, "The 'Essential Domino' of Military Operations: American Public Opinion and the Use of Force," *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 3, No. 4, November 2002; and James Golby, Peter Feaver, and Kyle Dropp, "Elite Military Cues and Public Opinion About the Use of Military Force," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2018.

sions can have an effect on whether the intervention occurs. Parliamentary and presidential democracies, for example, may be differentially influenced by domestic politics, because the constraints placed on the executive are different in each context.²⁹ The relevance of regime type extends even to authoritarian leaders, who may be accountable to their inner core of supporters for continued loyalty but who have much greater flexibility when launching interventions and may have different priorities when weighing the costs and benefits of an intervention decision.³⁰ Evidence for a relationship between interventions and the executive political party or other related institutional factors seems weaker. Past research does not find a consistent relationship between political party and intervention behavior or between election timing and intervention decisions, although there are differences across individual leaders, discussed in more detail later.³¹

Finally, there are arguments about bureaucratic politics and the role it can play in driving states into interventions. These arguments suggest that government decisions, including those to intervene militarily, are the result of processes and interactions that occur within the government and of negotiations and trades made by government actors. Under this argument, a “decision” to intervene is really just the end result of dozens of smaller interactions and choices made by political actors, including but usually not only the chief executive, acting in the name of a variety of interests.³²

²⁹ Juliet Kaarbo, “Prime Minister Leadership Style and the Role of Parliament in Security Policy,” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2018; Wolfgang Wagner, “Is There a Parliamentary Peace? Parliamentary Veto Power and Military Interventions from Kosovo to Daesh,” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2018.

³⁰ Jessica L. Weeks, “Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 106, No. 2, May 2012; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005.

³¹ Michael T. Koch and Patricia Sullivan, “Should I Stay or Should I Go Now? Partisanship, Approval, and the Duration of Major Power Democratic Military Interventions,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 72, No. 3, July 2010; Meernik, 2001.

³² Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, “Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications,” *World Politics*, Vol. 24, Supp. 1, Spring 1972.

Given the complex causalities and processes involved, it is challenging to identify metrics to measure or analyze domestic political factors. There are several that may be relevant, however. These include such measures as the popularity of the chief executive or the approval of the government, the time until the next election, and the type of political system, which is aimed at capturing whether a government is a democracy or an authoritarian state and assessing the level of bureaucracy.

Coidentity Populations

Past research also suggests that countries may be more likely to intervene to protect coethnic or coreligious group populations living elsewhere.³³ The rationale for this seems straightforward: States are motivated to protect those with whom they share common cultural and other ties. Existing research consistently finds that a strong transnational link across kinship groups can increase the risk of conflict and military intervention, as well as the intensity of that conflict or intervention.³⁴ This effect can be significant. For some states, particularly those with high ethnic fractionalization and a dominant ethnic group, ethnic kinship is one of the most significant and determinative factors driving intervention decisions.³⁵ The influence of ethnic and religious ties in explaining intervention decisions extends across types of interventions. Existing work finds that ethnic and religious kinship networks can shape the decision to intervene in civil wars and can influence the side

³³ David Carment and Patrick James, “Third-Party States in Ethnic Conflict: Identifying the Domestic Determinants of Intervention,” in Steven E. Lobell and Philip Mauceri, eds., *Ethnic Conflict and International Politics: Explaining Diffusion and Escalation*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

³⁴ Lars-Erik Cederman, Luc Girardin, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “Ethnonationalist Triads: Assessing the Influence of Kin Groups on Civil Wars,” *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 3, July 2009; Mehmet Gurses, “Transnational Ethnic Kin and Civil War Outcomes,” *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 1, 2015.

³⁵ Ada Huibregtse, “External Intervention in Ethnic Conflict,” *International Interactions*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2010.

on which the intervening state aligns itself.³⁶ Other research explores the willingness of states to take on peacekeeping interventions on their own (outside a multilateral framework) and finds that ethnic ties are one of the most influential factors.³⁷ Research also underscores that religious ties can be as influential as ethnic ones in shaping intervention decisions.³⁸ The mechanism for this relationship appears to operate both through ties between elites in the intervening and host states and through public pressure in the intervening state. Specifically, a survey experiment that assessed the willingness of respondents to support a military intervention found that, when respondents shared religious ties with potential intervention hosts, they were more willing to intervene.³⁹ The most straightforward way to operationalize this factor would be to consider the percentage of various coethnic or coreligious group members in various target countries. In regard to the United States, this might mean considering the percentage of U.S. citizens who come from or have relatives in a given country, the argument being that the United States could be more likely to intervene in states from which there is a larger diaspora in the United States. For China, a country that is a traditional source of immigration, rather than a recipient, metrics could include the percentage of Chinese citizens or the percentage of ethnic Chinese in a possible intervention target.

Economic Interests

The final domestic consideration focuses on economic interests. There are several possible ways in which economic interests could factor into state intervention decisionmaking. First, states might use military interventions to protect their economic interests, especially when

³⁶ Martin Austvoll Nome, "Transnational Ethnic Ties and Military Intervention: Taking Sides in Civil Conflicts in Europe, Asia and North Africa, 1944–99," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 2013.

³⁷ Nicolas Rost and J. Michael Greig, "Taking Matters into Their Own Hands: An Analysis of the Determinants of State-Conducted Peacekeeping in Civil Wars," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2011.

³⁸ Joshua Su-Ya Wu and Austin J. Knappe, "My Brother's Keeper? Religious Cues and Support for Foreign Military Intervention," *Politics and Religion*, Vol. 9, No. 3, September 2016.

³⁹ Wu and Knappe, 2016.

access to resources or national property overseas is threatened.⁴⁰ U.S. intervention to protect economic interests in Central and South America in the early part of the 20th century is one example of this type of intervention. Second, states might intervene to secure new economic assets or access, including access to natural resources, ports, or markets. Some research has found that economic gain (specifically, in the form of access to oil reserves) can be a strong motivation for interventions, particularly for states with high demand for oil.⁴¹ Related work finds a similar relationship for other lootable natural resources.⁴² Other research asserts that access to ports and markets can be similarly powerful motivators.⁴³ Importantly, however, there is research on the opposite side of this argument that finds little or no relationship between economic gain and intervention decisions. RAND researchers in 2017 did not find access to oil markets as a significant predictor of U.S. intervention decisions, for example.⁴⁴ Third, domestic leaders might seek to use interventions abroad explicitly to boost economic growth. Specifically, states might launch interventions to spur their domestic manufacturing or other industries, using military intervention as a sort of economic stimulus aimed at improving the approval or popularity of the executive.⁴⁵ The economic basis for this strategy is weak, however. There is some empirical evidence that military intervention can help

⁴⁰ Benjamin O. Fordham, "Power or Plenty? Economic Interests, Security Concerns, and American Intervention," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 4, December 2008; Yoon, 1997.

⁴¹ Vincenzo Bove, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Petros G. Sekeris. "Oil Above Water: Economic Interdependence and Third-Party Intervention," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 60, No. 7, 2016.

⁴² Michael G. Findley and Josiah F. Marineau, "Lootable Resources and Third-Party Intervention into Civil Wars," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 32, No. 5, 2015.

⁴³ Fordham, 2008; Trenin, 2016.

⁴⁴ Kavanagh, Frederick, Povlock, et al., 2017; also see Frederic S. Pearson and Robert Baumann, "Foreign Military Intervention and Changes in United States Business Activity," *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1977; and Karl R. DeRouen, Jr., "The Indirect Link: Politics, the Economy, and the Use of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 39, No. 4, December 1995.

⁴⁵ This final motivation bleeds into the domestic arena, but we keep it in this section so as not to split up economic interests in many places.

certain industries, but it is often hard to attribute any economic gains to the intervention *per se*.⁴⁶ Finally, it is worth noting that the relative importance of domestic economic factors in intervention decisions has consistently been shown to be less than that of domestic political or strategic drivers.⁴⁷

Although interventions can bring economic gains, they can also have significant economic costs, not the least of which is the potential for serious disruptions to international trade or loss of access to international markets, either because of trade restrictions or because of other disruptions to supply chains and economic integration. When making decisions about whether to intervene, states are likely to weigh the possible economic gains from access to new markets and resources against possible losses from such disruptions. In other words, economic interests can serve as an inducement to interventions, but they can also serve to limit or prevent an intervention, depending on the context.

There are several potential ways to measure economic interests as they relate to intervention decisions. First, one can look specifically at access to key strategic resources, such as warm water ports, oil, or other key resources. Second, one can use measures of economic growth and trade, especially over time, to understand how economic resources may relate to intervention decisionmaking. Notably, we distinguish between economic interests as defined here and such factors as regional power balance. Although changes in economic fortunes can shift the international balance of power, such an interpretation considers economics as one factor among many and in relative terms. Here, we focus specifically on a state's economic condition and opportunities, apart from those of other states.

⁴⁶ Pearson and Baumann, 1977.

⁴⁷ Yoon, 1997; DeRouen, 1995; Fordham, 2008.

Ideational Factors

The third category of factors that emerged from our review is ideational factors: factors that emerge not from politics or economics, but from ideas, personality, and other more abstract, intangible factors.

Ideology

Ideology may also shape or determine intervention decisions, with states intervening to uphold or advance (or counter) a set of principles, beliefs, or norms. In the U.S. context, the most commonly cited ideological driver of military intervention is that of democracy promotion. The United States has used the cause of democracy as the rationale for intervention since its earliest days and as recently as the 2003 intervention in Iraq. However, although democracy promotion is cited as a common intervention driver, it is less clear how many interventions actually work toward democratization as a key intervention objective. Previous RAND work looking at the objectives of military interventions finds that democratization (and norm-driven objectives more generally) is only a small fraction of the total objectives.⁴⁸ Meernik finds that states that have experienced ground interventions by the United States that were specifically aimed at democracy promotion and regime change have experienced more democratization than comparable states that have not had such an intervention.⁴⁹ Competing research finds instead that such interventions, particularly those targeted at resource-poor countries, can destabilize democracies.⁵⁰ Finally, although democracy seems to be a relevant ideological driver of intervention, evidence that authoritarianism serves a similar purpose is more mixed.⁵¹

Humanitarian interventions may similarly be driven by ideological factors: specifically, the emerging norm of “responsibility to pro-

⁴⁸ Kavanagh, Frederick, Stark, et al., 2019.

⁴⁹ James Meernik, “United States Military Intervention and the Promotion of Democracy,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 33, No. 4, November 1996.

⁵⁰ Nils Petter Gleditsch, Lene Siljeholm Christiansen, and Håvard Hegre, *Democratic Jihad? Military Intervention and Democracy*, Washington, D.C.: World Bank, June 2007.

⁵¹ Lucan A. Way, “The Limits of Autocracy Promotion: The Case of Russia in the ‘Near Abroad,’” *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 54, No. 4, November 2015.

tect.” Evans, Thakur, and Pape describe responsibility to protect as “the normative instrument of choice for converting shocked international conscience about mass atrocity crimes into decisive collective action.”⁵² In other words, the concept serves as an ideological driver of humanitarian interventions that is not transactional or political. Other research suggests that responsibility to protect is a strong ideological motivator for intervention among Western states but that non-Western states, such as Russia, and developing nations find inconsistency in the logic, understand the norm of sovereignty as more important, and consider interventions of any sort as meddling.⁵³ For non-Western states, ideology may serve to favor restraint rather than interventions.

Literature on third-party intervention also identifies efforts to counter specific ideologies (e.g., communism, jihadism) as strong motivators for intervention. Some past research finds that preventing the spread of communism during the Cold War years was, perhaps, the most significant and consistent driver of U.S. military interventions. For U.S. interventions in developing countries, for instance, one of the strongest drivers of intervention was whether the USSR was involved and whether there was a risk of communist victory.⁵⁴ Since 9/11, countering transnational terrorism has similarly provided an ideological motivation for interventions by the United States and others.⁵⁵

Nationalism is a final relevant ideology that may drive interventions. Here, we consider nationalism as an ideology focused on the creation of a nation state and a national myth. In comparison to the national status factor, nationalism as defined here is inwardly focused, rather than focused on national position on the international stage. Van Evera argues that when a state believes that portions of its diaspora

⁵² Gareth Evans, Ramesh Thakur, and Robert A. Pape, “Correspondence: Humanitarian Intervention and the Responsibility to Protect,” *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 4, Spring 2013.

⁵³ Charles E. Ziegler, “Contesting the Responsibility to Protect,” *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 17, No. 1, February 2016.

⁵⁴ Yoon, 1997.

⁵⁵ Tim Dunne, “Liberalism, International Terrorism, and Democratic Wars,” *International Relations*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2009.

or pieces of territory that are rightly part of an imagined “homeland” exist outside the state’s borders, the state might choose to use military force to work toward that homeland.⁵⁶ In other words, “unattained nationalisms” may drive conflict as a state seeks to unify its territory and build its national narrative. This may be especially true if the land or diaspora to which the state lays claim is contiguous to the state’s borders and is homogeneous in nature.⁵⁷

It is, of course, worth noting that ideological motivations can often be used as covers for a country’s true intentions. For example, some Cold War interventions (e.g., intervention in the Dominican Republic) executed in the name of efforts to counter communism were often actually undertaken for more self-interested reasons.⁵⁸

Developing metrics to operationalize and assess the presence or strength of ideology would be exceedingly difficult and is outside the scope of this report. One option could be to develop a taxonomy of relevant ideologies and assess their presence and absence across a variety of intervention cases (and potential cases) and adversaries. For example, we could note that although earlier Chinese interventions sought to spread Mao Zedong’s revolutionary model, this ideological driver has no longer been as visible, particularly since the mid-1980s.

Leader Personality

In addition to ideology, the personality of the leader making the intervention decisions has been shown in past research to shape a state’s intervention behavior.⁵⁹ Most theories that focus on the role played by individual leaders start from the premise that leaders generally act in self-interested ways to retain power when faced with domestic or international challenges to their regime. However, even given this baseline,

⁵⁶ Stephen Van Evera, “Hypotheses on Nationalism and War,” *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 4, Spring 1994.

⁵⁷ Van Evera, 1994; Barry R. Posen, “Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power,” *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Fall 1993.

⁵⁸ Kavanagh, Frederick, Povlock, et al., 2017.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth N. Saunders, *Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Interventions*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011.

different leaders may have different tolerances for risk, different attitudes toward the use of force as a political tool, and different preferences about involvement in conflict more generally.⁶⁰ One set of arguments focuses on the aggressiveness of a leader's posture toward other states. In the U.S. case, Meernik argues that a president's reputation for aggressive use of force in the past is a strong predictor of that president's willingness to intervene in the future. Under this argument, the decisions that leaders make about use of force are generally consistent and even influenced by their past behavior or reputation for use of force.⁶¹

Saunders offers a more nuanced perspective on the role of personality, arguing that leaders across countries and political systems develop worldviews that are either internally oriented (focused on domestic threats and outcomes at home and in other states) or externally focused (emphasizing international outcomes and threats) prior to assuming office. This worldview then influences each leader's cost-benefit calculations and decisions about when to use force and when to exercise restraint. Leaders, under this view, differ in the types of crises and events that they will respond to rather than in their fundamental propensity to intervene.⁶² Leader personality may also affect a leader's decisionmaking process in ways that affect intervention outcomes. Past research has indicated that leaders differ in how much they involve advisers, parliamentary bodies, and other experts in foreign policy decisions and that their approach to the decisionmaking process can affect the outcomes of those decisions.⁶³

A final set of arguments considers the role of the leader's background and personal experience. This work suggests that a leader's life

⁶⁰ Michael C. Horowitz and Matthew Fuhrmann, "Studying Leaders and Military Conflict: Conceptual Framework and Research Agenda," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 62, No. 10, 2018; Ulrich Pilster, Tobias Böhmelt, and Atsushi Tago, "Political Leadership Changes and the Withdrawal from Military Coalition Operations, 1946–2001," *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 16, No. 4, November 2015.

⁶¹ James Meernik, "Presidential Decision Making and the Political Use of Military Force," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 1, March 1994.

⁶² Elizabeth N. Saunders, "Transformative Choices: Leaders and the Origins of Intervention Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 2, Fall 2009.

⁶³ Kaarbo, 2018.

experience prior to their position of political power is likely to shape their subsequent decisions about the use of force. For instance, a 2014 study found that leaders with prior military experience but no combat experience or those who have been members of rebel groups are most likely to initiate new wars and interventions. The authors suggest it is the leader's past experience with use of force that guides their decisions about future military action.⁶⁴

Although the body of research on the role of leadership in military intervention has been growing, this is an area in which it will be difficult to define a single metric or even a set of metrics to measure and operationalize the factor. One possible way would be to consider various personality types or consider key leaders along standard personality scales. However, this could be difficult without sufficient information about a given political leader's personality and behaviors. Another approach would be to develop a very specific assessment of each leader's personality and decisionmaking style, relying on intelligence and past decisionmaking. Either way, attempts to use leader personality as a guide to an adversary's intervention choices will be complicated and only as successful as the quality of information available.

Finally, it is worth noting that although the above arguments are part of a growing body of work on the role of leader personality, there are still those who suggest that leader personality plays a much more limited role in influencing the course of events or the initiation of intervention.⁶⁵

Enablers: Capabilities

The final factor that emerged from our literature review did not have to do with state motivations at all, but instead focused on capabilities,

⁶⁴ Michael C. Horowitz and Allan C. Stam, "How Prior Military Experience Influences the Future Militarized Behavior of Leaders," *International Organization*, Vol. 68, No. 3, Summer 2014.

⁶⁵ Robert Jervis, "Do Leaders Matter and How Would We Know?" *Security Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 2013.

primarily military and economic resources that allow a state to successfully launch and sustain a military intervention. Here, we refer to capabilities as *enablers*, meaning that they are resources that enable or allow a state to successfully launch a military intervention. Without sufficient economic resources to fund an intervention and to support the defense-related costs, and without the needed military technology and capabilities, states will not be able to undertake interventions they might otherwise prefer to. In particular, we focus on changes in capabilities: new economic resources or new military capabilities that may encourage states to launch interventions that they would not have otherwise. As with many of the individual motivations discussed earlier, such enablers are unlikely to drive an intervention decision on their own. For example, a state is not likely to decide to intervene simply because it has the economic or military capacity. A state would also likely need a motivation, such as those discussed earlier. However, given persistent motivations to intervene, changes in enabling capabilities can help to explain why a state intervenes at one point in time and not in another.

Military and economic capabilities might shape intervention decisions in a few key ways. First, military capabilities might shape intervention feasibility. A state might have the desire to intervene but ultimately decide not to do so because it lacks the military capabilities or the economic resources required to launch the intervention or because decisionmakers assess that they do not have the military or economic capability to achieve desired objectives.⁶⁶ Second, past research suggests that, for the most part, states only pursue interventions where they expect to be able to achieve the desired outcome at a reasonable cost. This understanding of military interventions as based, in part, on military and economic capabilities is consistent with realist arguments that focus first on military power and state self-interest.⁶⁷ However, it is worth noting that states might choose to intervene even in cases in

⁶⁶ Benjamin A. Most and Harvey Starr, *Inquiry, Logic and International Politics*, Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1989.

⁶⁷ Rost and Greig, 2011; Paul K. Huth, "Major Power Intervention in International Crises, 1918–1988," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 42, No. 6, December 1998.

which they are overmatched and unprepared if other factors (such as those described earlier) demand such an intervention and overwhelm concerns about possible constraints.

In terms of metrics used to assess these capabilities, there are many options. One approach would be to focus on changes in capabilities. Significant increases or decreases in economic resources or military technology could be identified and recorded as a marker of states that might suddenly be more able to conduct military interventions than in the past. Another approach would be to focus on absolutes. For example, military spending, military size, gross domestic product per capita, or variables that denote possession of key technologies (e.g., nuclear weapons) are all ways to measure capabilities as they pertain to the ability of a state to launch an intervention.

Summary

In this chapter, we presented a framework for exploring factors that shape state decisions to initiate military interventions and discussed relevant past research surrounding each of the identified key factors, as well as metrics that could be used to operationalize, measure, and track these factors across cases. Table 2.2 outlines these factors, short definitions, and proposed metrics. An important observation to emerge from our review of past work across key factors is that interventions are rarely driven by one factor alone or even by one type of factor. Rather, past research suggests that geopolitical, domestic, ideational, and enabling factors work together to determine when and where states intervene militarily. Although the relevant set of factors may change over time or vary from intervention to intervention, it also seems possible that states have patterns, meaning that they tend to weight certain factors more heavily than others. Knowing which factors may be most relevant to our adversaries would be valuable for military planners and defense policy decisionmakers.

In the next chapter, we review the empirical patterns in adversary military interventions. Then, we turn to an exploration of which factors seem to matter the most to which adversaries.

Table 2.2
Drivers of Third-Party Interventions

Category	Factor Affecting the Likelihood of Adversary Military Interventions	Definition	Metrics
Geopolitics	External threat to sovereignty	Actual or threatened attack, territorial claim, or forced regime change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attack or threat of attack on territory • Territorial claim • Threat of territorial claim • Threat of forced regime change
	Regional power balance	Assessment of the impact on the regional balance of power of a potential intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Military Capabilities Index • Measures of relative economic power
	Alliance/partnership	Formal or informal relationship that encourages a state to support another through intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal treaty • Past experience cooperating • Military or economic assistance
	National status	Opportunity to preserve or increase international standing through a potential intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great-power status • Recognized regional hegemony
Domestic	Domestic politics and legitimacy	Domestic political dynamics that can drive interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader popularity and survival • Bureaucratic politics • Regime type • Party politics and elections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time to election • Regime type • Party in power • Government approval
	Coidentity group populations in host	Presence of coidentity group populations in intervention target, especially if threatened	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size or type of coidentity group population
	Economic interests	Protection of economic assets, access to resources, pursuit of economic opportunities and trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural resource deposits • Trade growth • Access to ports, markets, and other sites

Table 2.2—Continued

Category	Factor Affecting the Likelihood of Adversary Military Interventions	Definition	Metrics
Ideational	Leadership and personality	Leadership type and propensity to launch intervention or use military force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality type of the leader
	Ideology	Set of beliefs or a worldview that drives intervention to advance or counter that ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear metrics • Could potentially code for presence of key ideological drivers: democracy, communism, Islamism, nationalism
Enablers	Capabilities	Military and economic resources required to support an intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military size and spending • Changes in gross domestic product, military spending • Access to key military technologies

A Quantitative Look at Adversary Military Interventions

To anticipate future adversary military interventions, it is helpful to understand where, when, and under what circumstances different U.S. adversaries have intervened in the past (specifically, since 1946). Whereas the literature review in the previous chapter highlighted several broad patterns in adversary interventions and the interventions of countries in general, this chapter reviews the results of our effort to provide a more systematic look at where and when U.S. adversaries have actually intervened, using the data set we collected of every U.S. adversary military intervention since 1946. First, we describe how we collected this information, including our definition for military interventions and the additional variables describing characteristics of these interventions that we coded. We then present several descriptive statistics and graphs that illustrate key patterns in the historical data of adversary military interventions organized around several of our key research questions.

Identifying Adversary Military Interventions

Identifying Adversaries

To identify the universe of adversary cases that satisfy the definitions noted earlier, our research proceeded in three broad steps. First, we needed to identify which states qualified as U.S. adversaries, during which years. For the purpose of this study, we define a *U.S. adver-*

sary as a state with which the perception of the potential for military conflict existed on both sides during a given period.¹ To empirically implement this theoretical definition, we relied on the Correlates of War's (COW's) MID data set. From this data set, we took those U.S. dyads (i.e., the United States and the potential adversary) involving more than one historical case at a hostility level of four (use of force) or five (war).²

From this starting point (which gave us a preliminary list of 20 states), we excluded five states that were U.S. treaty allies (Panama, Nicaragua, Peru, Ecuador, and Canada) and three states that merited exceptions according to a case-specific analysis of the history of their relationship with the United States. These three excluded states were Pakistan (excluded on the basis of its close counterterrorism partnership with the United States since 2001), Egypt (excluded because the MIDs in the late 1950s and early 1960s that saw the two states on opposite sides were relatively minor in nature), and Cambodia (excluded because the identified MIDs between that country and the United States all had to do with the Vietnam War and were not directly related to the U.S.-Cambodia relationship).

Finally, to more carefully bound years in which we identified states as U.S. adversaries, we used the existence of actual MIDs as a signpost but made some departures according to case-specific analysis. Table 3.1 shows the results of this process and our final list of 13 post-1945 U.S. adversaries. Although we are interested in the military interventions of adversaries in this report, we did not require the presence of one or more interventions as a requirement for a state to be included as an adversary. Indeed, our list of adversaries includes two states—Syria and Czechoslovakia—that do not have military interventions that meet our definition for inclusion during the period consid-

¹ The Joint Chiefs' official definition of *adversary*, as codified in Joint Publication 3-0, 2018, p. GL-6, is "a party acknowledged as potentially hostile to a friendly party and against which the use of force may be envisaged."

² The following countries had only one MID equal to or greater than a hostility level of four: Afghanistan (2001), Albania (1958), Cote d'Ivoire (2004–2005), Grenada (1983), Guatemala (1958–1959), Haiti (1963), Israel (1976), Taiwan (1949–1950), and Yemen Arab Republic (1962–1963).

Table 3.1
List of U.S. Adversaries, 1946–2018

Country	Number of MIDs (Level 4–5) ^a	MIDs Date Range ^b	Adversary Date Range	Date Range Notes
Soviet Union	18	1948–1985	1946–1991	Considered adversary for entire Cold War.
Russia	0	N/A	1991–2018	Considered a consistent adversary because of nuclear threat and other contentious issues.
China	14	1949–2001	1949–2018	Start date based on Communist victory in the Chinese Civil War.
North Korea	15	1950–2010	1946–2018	Start date based on Soviet military occupation post–World War II.
Iran	7	1979–2004	1979–2018	Start date based on fall of the Shah.
Cuba	6	1960–1996	1960–2015	Start date based on beginning of U.S. support for the Bay of Pigs invasion. End date based on reopening of U.S. embassy as marker of new Obama administration policy.
Vietnam (North Vietnam)	3	1960–1975	1960–1994	End date based on the end of the U.S. trade embargo.
Libya	4	1973–1984	1969–2011	Date range bound by Muammar Gaddafi’s regime.
Iraq	8	1987–2003	1990–2003	U.S. tacit support continued through end of Iran–Iraq War; start date based on Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.
Syria	5	1957–2005	1982–2018	Start date based on intensification of Syrian involvement in Lebanese Civil War.
Yugoslavia/ Serbia	4	1946–2000	1991–2000	Start date based on beginning of Balkans crises; end date based on end of Slobodan Milosevic’s regime.

Table 3.1—Continued

Country	Number of MIDs (Level 4–5) ^a	MIDs Date Range ^b	Adversary Date Range	Date Range Notes
East Germany/ GDR	3	1958–1962	1946–1989	Considered adversary for entire Cold War.
Czechoslovakia	3	1953–1985	1946–1989	Considered adversary for entire Cold War.

NOTE: GDR = German Democratic Republic.

^a As noted in the text, we include only MIDs with hostility level 4 or 5.

^b Date range refers to MIDs with hostility level 4 or 5. As of this writing, the latest version of the MIDs data set only goes through 2010.

ered. We mention those states here, but they are not directly included in our analysis.

Identifying Interventions

Second, we defined and identified interventions by these adversaries. As noted earlier in this report, we define an *adversary military intervention* as any deployment of military forces to another country (or international waters or airspace) during the period 1946–2018 in which two additional parameters were satisfied regarding (1) the size of the force involved and (2) the activities in which the force was engaged.³ The purpose of the size criteria was to eliminate very small uses of force that are more difficult to track consistently over time. As noted in Chapter One, although these smaller interventions are no less important strategically for the United States, they present a different kind of

³ Implicit in this definition is some ambiguity regarding the sovereign status of disputed territories. In this study, we consider sovereign countries to be those included in COW's country code list. Additionally, to determine whether individual adversary incursions into disputed territories constituted a foreign intervention per se, we referred to the Issue Correlates of War Territorial Claims Dataset to determine whether, in disputed territory, the actor was the target of the claim (in which case, it was assumed to have possession of the territory) or the challenger was the target of the claim (in which case, it was assumed not to have possession of the territory, and therefore it was assumed that this territory was a possible location for a military intervention). See Correlates of War Project, undated; and Frederick, Hensel, and Macaulay, 2017.

challenge and are significantly harder to track consistently. We wanted a definition that would allow us to comprehensively track those interventions over time that met our criteria. With a lower threshold, this would have been more difficult. For these reasons, we focus here on these relatively larger interventions and suggest that future work should focus on adversary military activity below this threshold. This decision means our data will not capture many of the smaller activities carried out by adversaries; for some adversaries, this is a meaningful portion of their overall activity. Still, the analysis presented captures important insights for military planners and policymakers aiming at a different set of threats.

The purpose of the requirement that the forces involved be engaged in a particular set of activities was to eliminate cases in which a state might forward-deploy forces as a convenient alternative to basing them at home but in which the forces were otherwise engaged in the same activities they would have been doing if stationed domestically and were not substantially interacting with or affecting the host state or population. As an additional criterion, the forces involved must have been part of the country's military; interventions by state-aligned paramilitary forces, proxy organizations, and/or intelligence services are excluded. Again, this is a meaningful exclusion because key adversaries, such as Russia and Iran (particularly recently), have relied heavily on paramilitary forces and private military companies. In this report, however, we are interested in military interventions by the adversary's military and the threats they might pose to U.S. forces and interests. Other research should (and does) address other types of interventions. More details on the size and activity type criteria and their implications on the set of adversary interventions included in our analysis are listed below.

Force Size Threshold

To warrant inclusion, the deployed ground, naval, and/or air forces of the adversary intervention force had to cross minimum size thresholds, which were designed to be relatively inclusive. The minimum size thresholds included different specifications depending on the domain in which forces were operating: land, sea, or air. To qualify as an inter-

vention on the basis of ground forces, the deployment had to include military personnel from any service branch deployed for at least 100 person-years. This size threshold could include 100 troops deployed for one year or a larger number of troops deployed for a shorter period (e.g., 200 troops for six months or 1,200 troops for one month).⁴ This person-year size threshold needs to be met in each year of the intervention, however. So, a deployment of ten troops for ten years would not qualify.

To qualify as an intervention on the basis of the naval forces involved, the deployment had to involve the presence of a substantial portion of the adversary's naval forces, rather than the isolated deployment of a small number of ships. This relatively higher bar for inclusion (in comparison with ground forces) was adopted because of the inherently more mobile nature of naval forces to avoid coding a large number of naval-only interventions involving the deployment of one or two ships that may not even have been explicitly decided on or authorized by national-level decisionmakers. In the RAND U.S. Military Intervention Dataset, which this effort was modeled on, a U.S. carrier strike group or larger force was required for a naval intervention to be identified.⁵ Given the smaller number of carriers in the navies of non-U.S. states, we did not use this same criterion, but we did attempt to use a standard that represented an approximately equivalent proportion of that state's naval forces. In addition, interventions involving any substantial kinetic naval activity, such as battles, skirmishes, or strikes using naval aircraft or missiles, were included regardless of the number and/or class of naval ships involved.

We took a similar approach to coding an adversary intervention on the basis of the air forces involved. Whereas the deployment for the United States was required to involve either roughly one wing-year

⁴ In some rare instances, force levels during a multiyear intervention might temporarily have fallen below this threshold for an isolated year (and then again risen above it); as a general rule of thumb, we would nonetheless code it as a continuous mission. However, if there were long periods beneath this threshold either after the withdrawal of major forces or in the run-up to the deployment of major forces, then the intervention would be broken into different cases or would otherwise exclude these years.

⁵ Kavanagh, Frederick, Stark, et al., 2019.

of aircraft (about 80 planes employed for one year, 160 planes for six months, etc.), the size threshold was interpreted proportionally when identifying adversary interventions according to the relative disparity in baseline air force sizes. In addition, substantial instances of air-to-air or air-to-ground combat or strikes were included without needing to meet the plane-year size threshold.⁶ This methodology permits a manageable set of incidents for the purpose of analysis but admittedly is imperfect. The threshold of 100 person-years means that any number of smaller-scale adversary deployments of military forces that could, because of their circumstances, be substantively interesting are omitted from consideration. We nevertheless upheld the threshold as a useful means of focusing attention on larger operations that could hold more salient implications for the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and to help ensure a more consistent comparison of military interventions across states and over time.

Force Activity Type

Beyond meeting these size parameters, the forces involved must have conducted at least one of the following ten activity types to satisfy our definition of a military intervention. Intentionally absent from this activity type taxonomy are categories for noncombatant evacuation operations (NEOs), as well as general logistics, support, and communications.⁷ Additionally, we do not include in our definition of foreign interventions general forward deployments of troops and/or supplies and weapon depots, unless they also satisfy one of the activity types (e.g., a clear deterrent function). The ten activity types are

⁶ Minor air-to-air incidents, such as the downing of a single fighter in contested airspace, would not meet this threshold. Likewise, in most cases, instances involving limited artillery or mortar fire across international borders at random targets would generally not constitute a foreign intervention, absent other conditions.

⁷ We exclude NEOs because they almost always fall below our 100 person-year threshold, making it difficult for us to reliably capture these activities universally. There would be a strong recency bias, with these activities being more likely to be recorded during the post-Cold War period, for which we have better data.

1. **Advisory and FID.** Interventions involving military advisers or trainers. The focus of these interventions is typically on preparing host-nation personnel to operate on their own.
2. **Counterinsurgency.** Interventions involving counterinsurgency activities, including “comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes.”⁸
3. **Combat and conventional warfare.** Interventions characterized by formations of organized military forces deployed to conduct kinetic operations. The majority of interventions in this category involve the application of violent force by the intervener, but we also include cases in this category in which an intervener enters the territory of another state prepared for such an action but does not meet with armed resistance, and therefore violence does not result.
4. **Deterrence and signaling.** Interventions involving activities intended to send a signal to a potential adversary or other state regarding the intentions or capabilities of the intervener. Most cases in this category involve the deployment of military forces for deterrent purposes, but forces might be deployed in other instances to signal aggressive intent, intimidation, or coercion.
5. **Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR).** Interventions involving humanitarian and relief operations, including responses to natural disasters and conflict. These must be sizeable efforts to meet the study threshold, involving at least 100 person-years’ worth of activity. Smaller-scale efforts involving one or two transport aircraft or small crews of personnel, which include most of the People’s Liberation Army’s HA/DR experiences, are not considered here.
6. **Security.** Interventions involving protection of the adversary’s assets (e.g., embassies, corporations) or civilian personnel during periods of threat or unrest.

⁸ Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 25, 2018, p. iii.

7. **Stability operations.** Interventions involving operations to stabilize or maintain peace in postconflict situations. These may include operations following coups or other situations causing unrest among the civilian population. They can also involve participation in multilateral peacekeeping operations, such as United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations.
8. **Interdiction (air and naval only).** Interventions involving operations to interdict foreign military ships or aircraft, trade or arms shipments, or refugees or migrants (e.g., naval blockades, no-fly zones).
9. **Lift and transport (air and naval only).** Interventions involving operations focused on movement of persons and supplies (not applicable to ground interventions).⁹
10. **Intelligence and reconnaissance (air and naval only).** Interventions involving operations focused on intelligence or reconnaissance functions (not applicable to ground interventions).

In some cases, only one or two activity types may have been relevant to a given case; in others, more than three could arguably apply. For each intervention, the adversary database thus codes up to three activity types for each force type involved in the case (ground, naval, air), denoting the dominant or most common activity for each force, followed by the secondary and tertiary activity for each. Our descriptive analyses presented in this chapter use only the primary activity

⁹ Of the possible activity types, lift and transport is distinct in some ways. Most notably, it is a supporting function in some ways, often but not always intended to enable other functions. This taxonomy was developed in an earlier project for the coding of U.S. military interventions. In that context, we felt it necessary to add this code to capture the tremendous contributions of air and naval forces to a few types of interventions. Although transport of troops and supplies to support combat or stabilization missions is one category, another category is transport of humanitarian supplies. In this second type of intervention, the supply of humanitarian materials was not an enabler but was the *objective* of the mission. Examples include the Berlin Airlift in 1948 (also coded as deterrence) and the Congo Airlift in 1960 (no other coding). In the adversary context, there are few cases in which lift and transport was the only naval and air activity, but we leave the activity code here for consistency and apply it when adversary and air and naval contributions exceed the threshold.

type to categorize interventions, but the full data contain the other codings for completeness.

Case Research and Validation

We applied our definition to aggregated case information for all adversaries from a variety of respected data sets on historical military interventions, such as the Uppsala Conflict Data Program/Peace Research Institute Oslo Armed Conflict Dataset, the International Crisis Behavior data set, the COW Inter-State Wars data set, the COW Intra-State Wars data set, the MID data set, the Military Interventions by Powerful States data set, the International Military Intervention data set, and the International Peace Institute Peacekeeping Database.¹⁰ We further supplemented this preliminary list by crossing it with other secondary reference resources, such as the International Institute for Strategic Studies' *The Military Balance*, as well as hundreds of declassified U.S. and foreign government documents, academic and think tank reports, and news articles.

This preliminary case list of adversary interventions was divided among RAND subject-matter experts, who expanded, vetted, and

¹⁰ See Nils Petter Gleditsch, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg, and Håvard Strand, "Armed Conflict 1946–2001: A New Dataset," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 39, No. 5, September 2002; Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, *A Study of Crisis*, paperback ed., Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2000; Meredith Reid Sarkees and Frank Whelon Wayman, *Resort to War: A Data Guide to Inter-State, Extra-State, Intra-State, and Non-State Wars, 1816–2007*, Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2010; Glenn Palmer, Vito D'Orazio, Michael Kenwick, and Matthew Lane, "The MID4 Dataset, 2002–2010: Procedures, Coding Rules and Description," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2015; Faten Ghosn, Glenn Palmer, and Stuart A. Bremer, "The MID3 Data Set, 1993–2001: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 21, No. 2, Summer 2004; Daniel M. Jones, Stuart A. Bremer, and J. David Singer, "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816–1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1996; Patricia L. Sullivan and Michael T. Koch, "Military Intervention by Powerful States, 1945–2003," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 46, No. 5, September 2009; Frederic S. Pearson and Robert Baumann, *International Military Intervention, 1946–1988*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, Data Collection No. 6035, University of Michigan, 1993; and Emizet F. Kisangani and Jeffrey Pickering, *International Military Intervention, 1989–2005*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, Data Collection No. 21282, University of Michigan, 2008.

refined it with primary and secondary resources. During this secondary stage of in-depth, case-by-case investigation, many preliminarily identified potential events were deemed not to meet all of the parameters described earlier and were ultimately excluded from the case universe. Finally, the refined case universe was subjected to multiple rounds of iterative, case-by-case reviews by different research team members to ensure consistent case inclusion coding standards were applied across all actors and cases. As noted earlier, we determined at the completion of this research that only 11 of our 13 adversaries had qualifying interventions, so the remainder of the analysis in this chapter will not include reference to Syria or Czechoslovakia.

Key Variables Collected

Third, having identified a case of adversary military intervention, we then collected several additional pieces of information about each case. Some of these variables have already been noted: detailed information about the size of the information and the activities in which the forces were engaged. This information was collected both at the intervention level (including typical or average values) and at the location-year level, enabling an understanding of how the size or activities of an intervention force may have changed over time. This also allowed us to specify the forces and activities associated with specific countries in instances where an intervention might take place in multiple countries.

Beyond the size and activity type variables, we also collected detailed information on the political objectives motivating the intervention and the degree of success that the adversary had in achieving them. When collecting the list of political objectives, we made a distinction between political and military or operational objectives.¹¹ We

¹¹ Political objectives, generally speaking, went to the “why” of the intervention: What motivated state decisionmakers to undertake the intervention? What were they hoping to accomplish? We therefore did not include military or operational objectives (the “how” of the intervention) that leaders may have also established as means or signposts toward achieving the political objectives. For example, the U.S. intervention in Iraq after 2003 had a political objective of stabilizing the country. In service of that political objective, the United States set a host of military or operational objectives, such as benchmarks for numbers of Iraqi police trained and reduced levels of insurgent activity for provinces. The data we collected on objectives were entirely focused on the former, political type.

collected the specific years in which each political objective was being pursued, allowing objectives to change over the course of the intervention. Although state policymakers in some cases were forthcoming about their objectives for an intervention, they appear to have been less forthcoming in other cases. We therefore relied not only public statements but also historical and other analyses that gave additional clues as to the true motivations of policymakers in pursuing an intervention.

Having identified the set of political objectives states pursued in each intervention, we then coded the degree of success they had in achieving them. We coded success using a straightforward three-part scale: *success*, *some success*, and *no success*. The success of each objective was assessed by multiple coders with familiarity with the case, and discrepancies were adjudicated by the larger project team. The data on political objectives and success do not bear directly on the key questions in this report of anticipating when and where the adversary is likely to undertake future military interventions, but we present descriptive statistics of these data next and aim to pursue the implications of these data further in future research.

Descriptive Statistics and Graphs

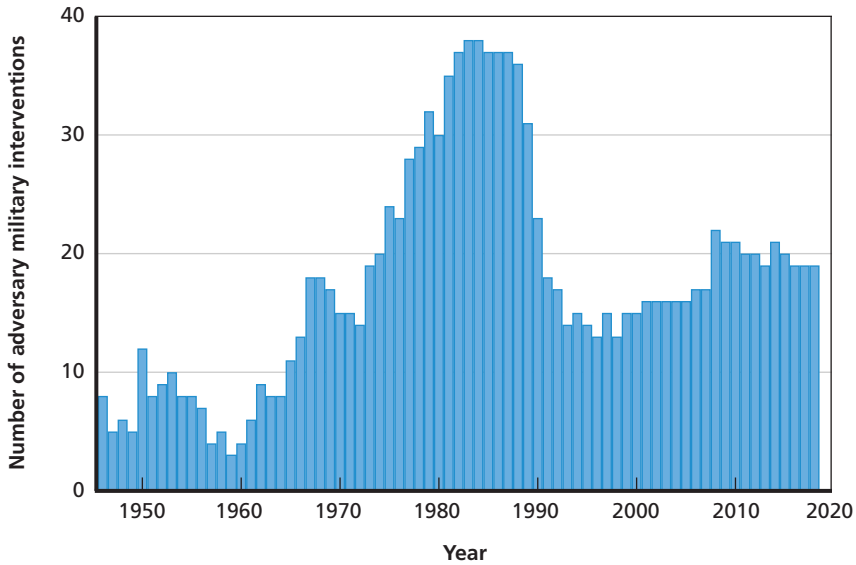
Using this approach, we identified 165 U.S. adversary military interventions undertaken post-1945. A complete list of the interventions we identified is found in Appendix A. We used our data to help answer our first set of research questions: Where, how, and how often do U.S. adversaries intervene?

How Often Do U.S. Adversaries Intervene?

We started by considering how often U.S. adversaries have intervened over the period under consideration, 1946–2018. Figure 3.1 shows the number of ongoing interventions by year.

Overall, U.S. adversary military interventions became dramatically more prevalent during the late Cold War period. After the Cold War, they declined by more than half, although they have seen a modest increase in number over the past decade. We can also consider

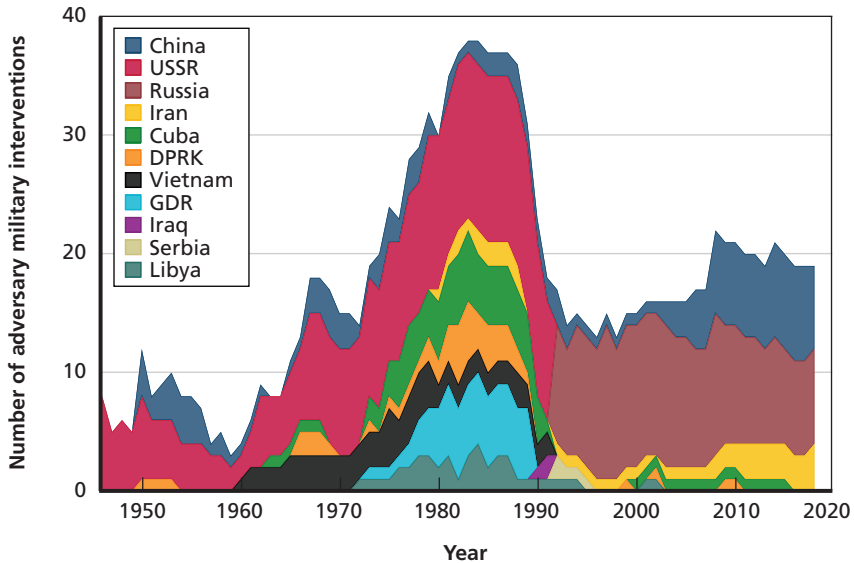
Figure 3.1
Adversary Military Interventions, by Year (1946–2018)



intervention frequency by adversary. Figure 3.2 shows the number of ongoing U.S. military interventions by U.S. adversary over the period from 1946 to 2018.

There are several notable historical patterns in Figure 3.2. First, the large spike in adversary military interventions in the late Cold War period was driven, in part, by an increase in Soviet interventions but also by substantial increases in the number of interventions undertaken by Soviet satellites and allies (in particular, East Germany/GDR and Cuba) during this period. Notably excepted from this spike was China. In the post–Cold War period, the sharp decline in adversary interventions was a result of the near cessation of military interventions involving these former Soviet allies and partners. The number of Russian interventions in the 1990s was broadly similar to the number of Soviet interventions in the late Cold War, but interventions from East Germany/GDR (which ceased to exist after the 1990 reunification of Germany), Cuba, and Vietnam all ended. The more recent modest increase in adversary interventions over the past decade, mean-

Figure 3.2
Adversary Military Interventions, by Adversary (1946–2018)



NOTE: DPRK = Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

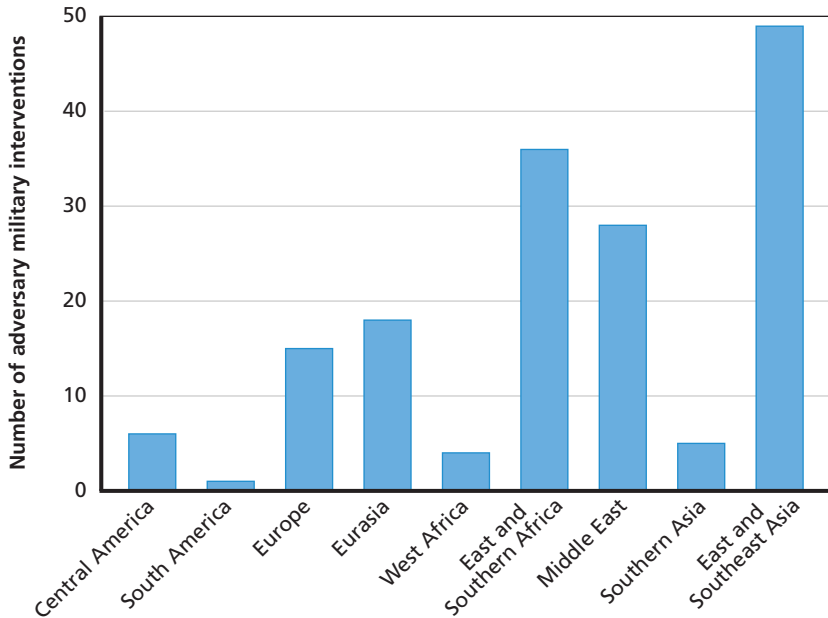
while, has been driven largely by an increase in the number of Chinese interventions.

Where Do U.S. Adversaries Intervene?

Next, we consider where U.S. adversaries have intervened over this same period. This is a key question for U.S. policymakers and military planners, because it may reveal trends in where U.S. adversaries are militarily active and where they may be most likely to threaten U.S. interests. Geographically, Figure 3.3 shows that adversary military interventions have tended to concentrate in certain regions.

East and Southeast Asia has most frequently been the region for adversary military interventions, followed by East and Southern Africa and the Middle East. Europe and Eurasia have also seen a substantial number of adversary military interventions, while other regions have not. Adversary interventions have been notably infrequent, for example, in the Americas, perhaps reflecting the high degree of U.S. influ-

Figure 3.3
Adversary Military Interventions, by Region (1946–2018)

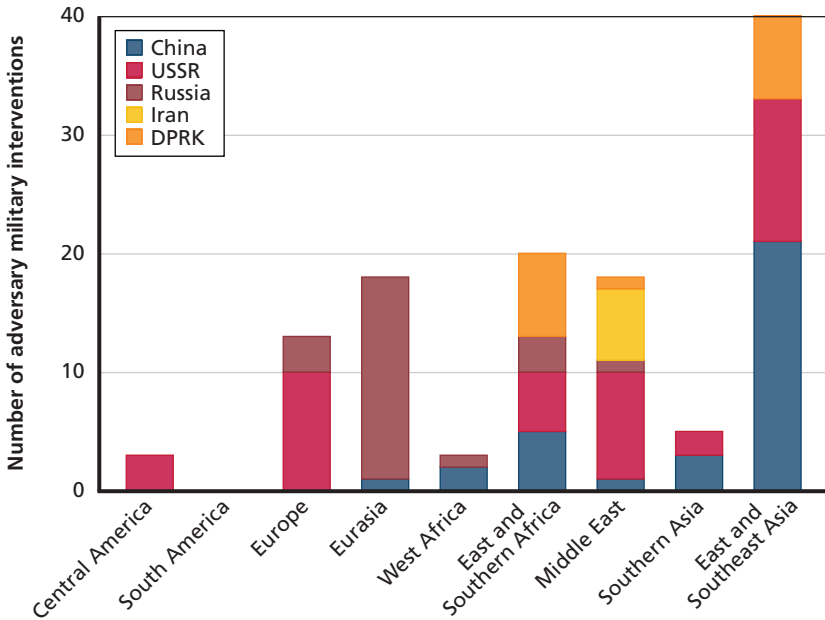


ence in the region and the great distance this region is from most U.S. adversaries, apart from Cuba.

We can also look at regional trends by considering each adversary independently. Figures 3.4 and 3.5 provide the regional breakdown of the interventions of individual U.S. adversaries, looking first at major U.S. adversaries, such as China and Russia, and then at more minor adversaries, such as Cuba and Vietnam.

East and Southeast Asia has most frequently been the region for major power intervention, with roughly twice as many interventions as the next closest region, including substantial numbers of interventions from China, the USSR, and the DPRK. Major U.S. adversaries also have often intervened in four other regions, although less frequently. East and Southern Africa was the next most common as the location of a wide variety of advisory and peacekeeping missions, both during the Cold War and afterward. The Middle East, meanwhile, is the only region where every major U.S. adversary has conducted a military

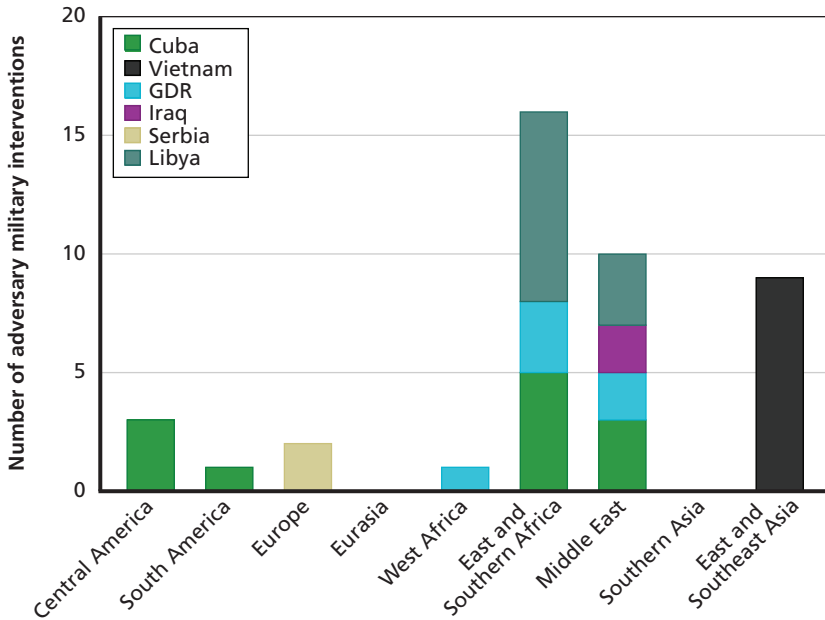
Figure 3.4
Adversary Military Interventions in Each Region, by Major Adversaries (1946–2018)



intervention. By contrast, major adversary interventions in Eurasia and Europe have largely been conducted by Russia and the Soviet Union, respectively. Other regions have seen comparatively fewer major adversary interventions, including limited numbers in the Americas, West Africa, and South Asia.

Minor U.S. adversaries, as shown in Figure 3.5, have largely tended to intervene in their home regions. Vietnamese interventions were limited to East and Southeast Asia, Iraqi interventions to the Middle East, and Serbian interventions to Europe. Libyan interventions have also been geographically limited to the Middle East and nearby states in East and Southern Africa. The exception to this rule is found in the interventions of Cuba and East Germany/GDR, close allies of the Soviet Union (and large recipients of military aid and support from that superpower) that intervened extensively in Africa and

Figure 3.5
Adversary Military Interventions in Each Region, by Minor Adversaries (1946–2018)



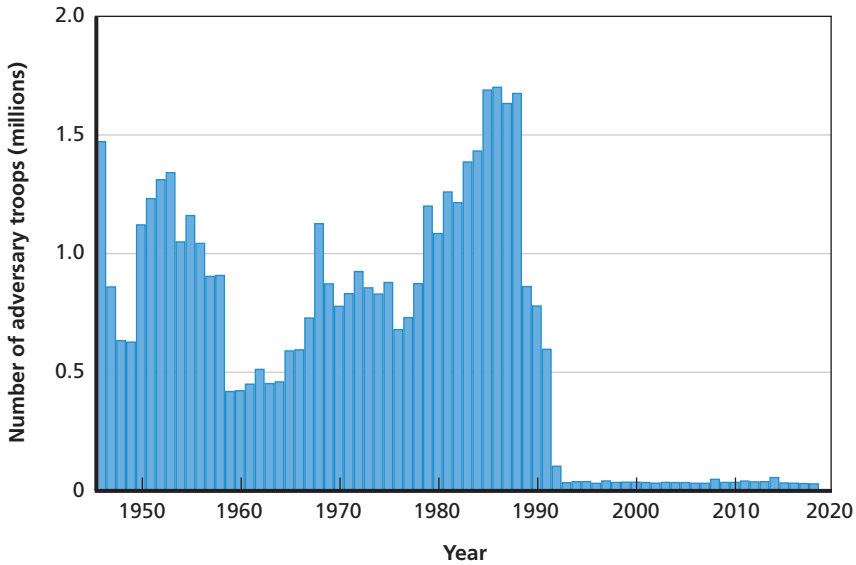
the Middle East during the Cold War. Cuba also intervened relatively frequently in the Americas.

How Do U.S. Adversaries Intervene?

The third question we considered using our data was *how* U.S. adversaries intervene. Each of the previous charts tells us about the frequency of adversary military interventions but treats all adversary interventions equally, regardless of size or activity type. A measure of frequency alone, however, tells us little about the importance or the implications of an intervention. We can develop a more nuanced understanding of adversary interventions by considering how many troops each adversary has deployed. Figure 3.6 illustrates the number of adversary troops involved in military interventions each year.

The first observation is the sharp drop in the number of adversary troops involved in military interventions in the post–Cold War

Figure 3.6
Troops Involved in Adversary Military Interventions, by Year (1946–2018)



era. Although we observed some decline in the number of adversary military interventions over the same period, the drop in the number of adversary forces deployed (and the total size of these interventions) has been substantially more significant. Notably, the post–Cold War period has completely lacked any of the large-scale commitments of adversary forces that characterized the Cold War period, such as the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe, the Chinese involvement in the Korean War, and the Iran–Iraq War. Since 1991, although adversaries have continued to intervene militarily outside their borders, as shown in Figure 3.1, they have done so on a dramatically reduced scale. There are many possible explanations for this decline, both geopolitical and domestic. First, the geopolitical context and international norms shifted in the post–Cold War era. The end of the Cold War drastically reduced international tensions and, for many states, the strategic motivations that can often drive military interventions. The breakup of the Soviet Union drastically reduced the size of Russian (formerly Soviet) interventions, and a stronger norm emerged toward multilateral

interventions conducted through the UN or regional organizations. In China, the focus was now firmly on internal reforms and economic growth, rather than military adventurism.

Figure 3.7 looks only at the years after 1992, when Russia's withdrawal of its troops from neighboring states was largely completed, allowing us to see more-recent trends.

Taken together, we do not see clear trends in the number of adversary troops involved in military interventions over the past 25 years. Although there have been some notable spikes, such as prominent Russian interventions in Ukraine in 2014, the overall number of such troops has not shifted dramatically over time. Despite the more recent increase in the number of adversary interventions shown in Figure 3.1, Figure 3.7 shows that the number of troops involved in these interventions has actually been slightly declining, suggesting that the average size of these additional interventions has likely been quite small. We will return to this issue later in this chapter.

Figure 3.7
Troops Involved in Post-Cold War Adversary Military Interventions, by Year (1993–2018)

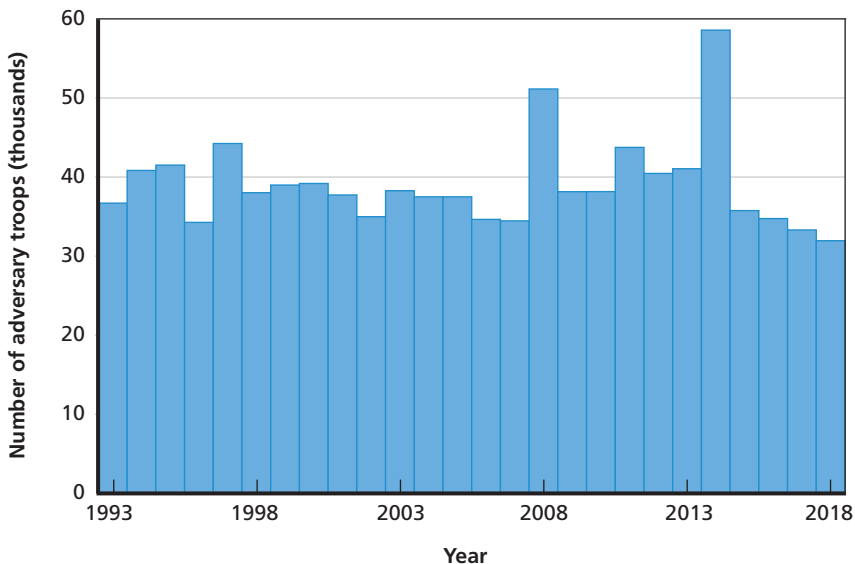
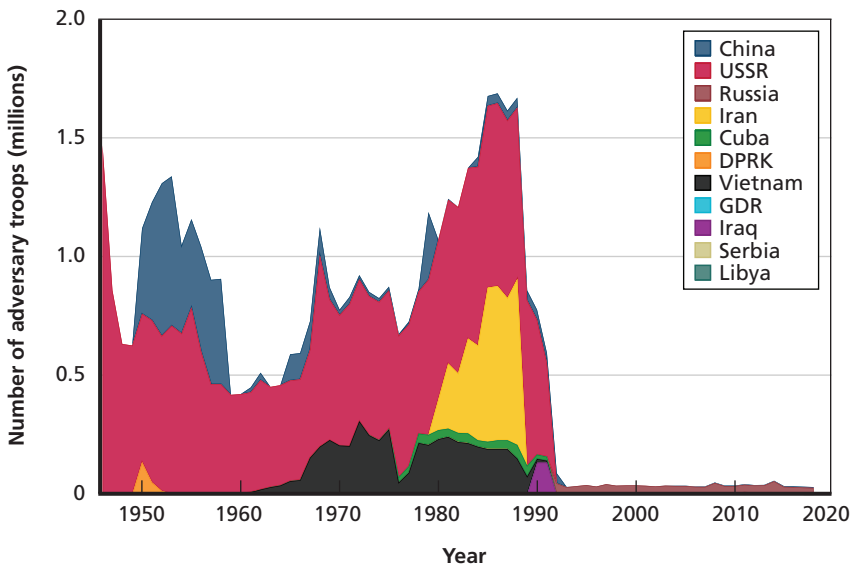


Figure 3.8 considers the number of military forces deployed by adversary, providing insight into which states have been most active in deploying military forces over time. This figure highlights that the historical patterns in adversary troops deployed in military interventions during the Cold War were driven by a much smaller number of states and were tied to a handful of larger-scale, mostly combat interventions. The exception to such patterns was the long-standing Soviet deterrence and stabilization intervention in Eastern Europe,¹² but other notable conflicts, such as the Chinese involvement in the Korean War, North Vietnamese intervention in South Vietnam, and the Iran–Iraq War, largely drove the overall patterns in troop deployments. It is therefore notable that such adversary-involved conflicts cease following the end

Figure 3.8
Troops Involved in Adversary Military Interventions, by Adversary
(1946–2018)

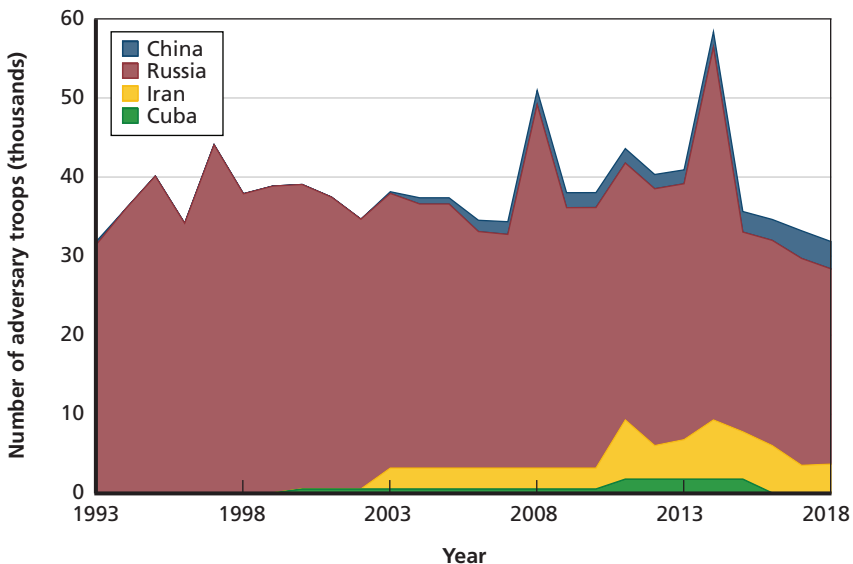


¹² We code this Soviet intervention as deterrence rather than simply counting it as forward presence because we assess that its primary purpose was to establish a sphere of influence able to deter the West and to counter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This is analogous to how we treated U.S. deployments of forces to Europe during the Cold War.

of the Cold War. The decline in the number of adversary troops is so dramatic that the post-1991 trends cannot be clearly distinguished on the same figure. Figure 3.9 therefore provides a closer look at the post-Cold War period.

Since the end of the Cold War, only a handful of U.S. adversaries have committed any substantial numbers of ground forces to military interventions outside their borders. Of these forces, Russian troops have been by far the largest number. Notwithstanding short-term spikes surrounding Russian combat interventions in Georgia and Ukraine in 2008 and 2014, respectively, this number of Russian troops has actually been declining modestly over time. The number of Chinese troops involved in military interventions has been growing in recent years, but such interventions still involve very small numbers of troops in comparison with either contemporary Russian interventions or historical Chinese interventions during the Cold War. Iran has also somewhat increased its troops involved in interventions since the

Figure 3.9
Troops Involved in Adversary Military Interventions, by Adversary (1993–2018)

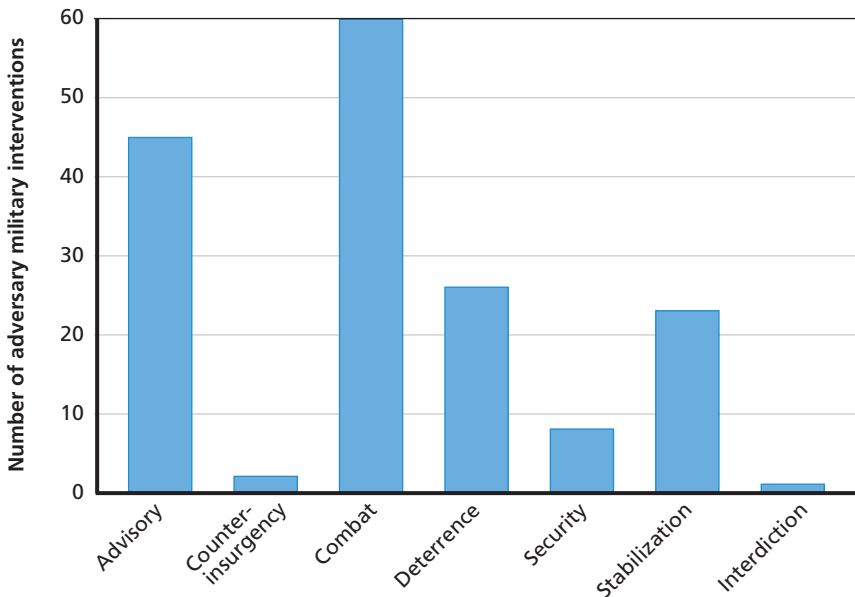


2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, but these troops remain relatively modest in number. Only a limited number of Cuban troops remain involved in interventions, a far cry from the robust Cuban deployments in many interventions during the Cold War.

Another view of how U.S. adversaries intervene comes from an analysis of the types of interventions adversaries have engaged in most often over the period under consideration. Figure 3.10 shows the number of adversary interventions categorized by their primary activity type, as defined earlier.

Combat missions have been the most frequent type of adversary military intervention, followed by advisory missions. Advisory missions in particular were a focus during the Cold War period, when several communist-bloc states conducted these missions throughout the developing world and elsewhere as a way to build partnerships and spread influence. There have also been substantial numbers of adversary deterrence and stabilization missions. The other activity types are perhaps more notable for their infrequency. There have been a very limited

Figure 3.10
Adversary Military Interventions, by Activity Type (1946–2018)



number of counterinsurgency and interdiction missions, though there have been modestly more missions focused on security. There are three other activity types that have never been the primary activity type for an adversary intervention across our cases: lift and transport, humanitarian assistance, and intelligence and reconnaissance.

Figures 3.11 and 3.12 provide a similar breakdown regarding how adversary intervention activity types have varied by adversary. Combat interventions have been both the most frequent type of adversary intervention and the most widely undertaken, for both major and minor U.S. adversaries. The only U.S. adversaries not involved in combat interventions have been East Germany/GDR and Syria, which does not have an identified military intervention outside its borders. Involvement in advisory missions has been almost as widely shared, involving eight states, though notably excluding Russia, which has not undertaken a primarily advisory intervention. Deterrence and signaling and stabilization missions have largely been undertaken by three major adversar-

Figure 3.11
Adversary Military Interventions by Major Adversaries, by Activity Type (1946–2018)

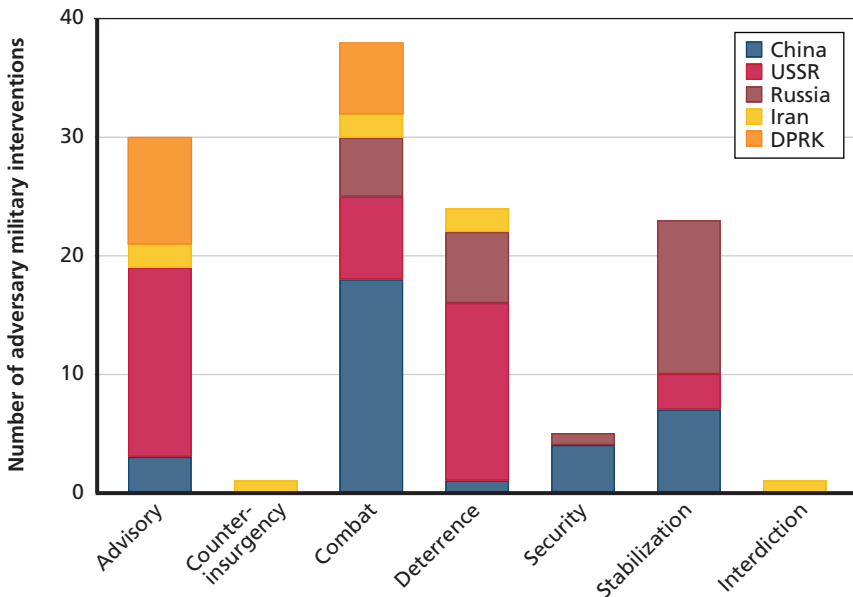
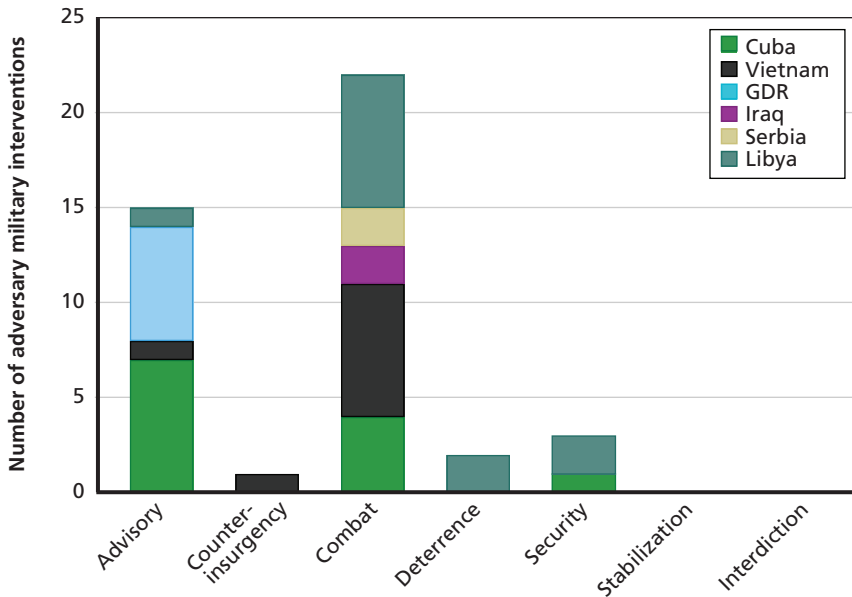


Figure 3.12
Adversary Military Interventions by Minor Adversaries, by Activity Type (1946–2018)

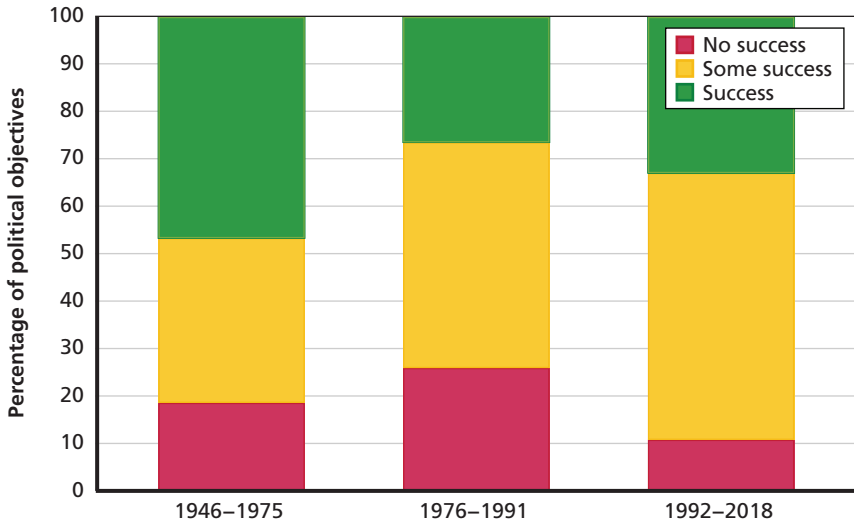


ies: China, the Soviet Union, and Russia, although Iran and Libya have also been involved in isolated deterrence and signaling interventions. Other activity type categories have involved much more limited numbers of interventions, across both major and minor adversaries.

A third lens that we can use to explore the question of how adversaries intervene is to consider how successful they have been at achieving their political objectives. This analysis can tell us something about how effectively adversaries use military interventions to pursue their key political goals. Although a full analysis of the factors associated with adversary success, or lack thereof, will be the subject of future research, we present the overall results of this data-gathering process next.

Figure 3.13 shows how the rate at which adversaries have successfully achieved their political objectives in their military interventions has varied over time.

Figure 3.13
Success of Adversary Political Objectives (1946–2018)

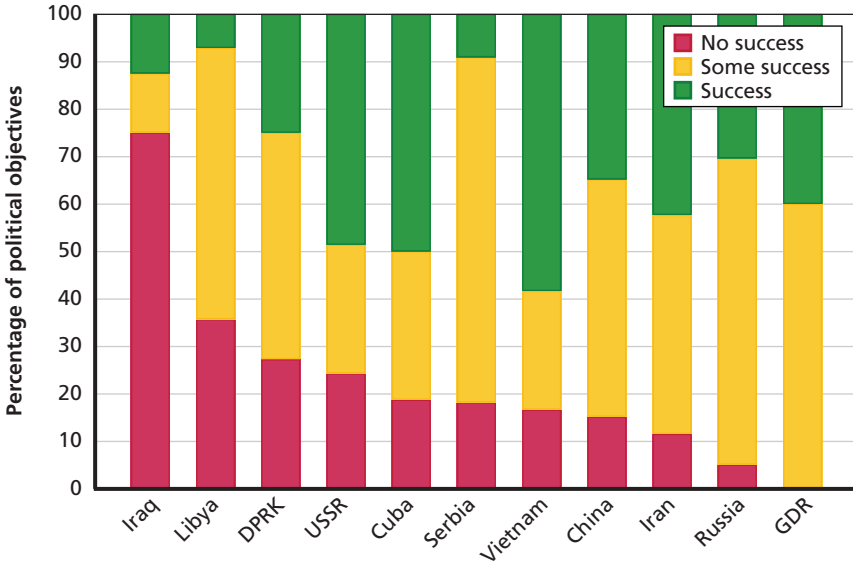


U.S. adversaries had the highest rate of success in the early Cold War period, when nearly half of their objectives were successfully achieved and fewer than one-fifth had no success. These adversaries became notably less successful in the later Cold War period as the number and size of these interventions markedly increased. In the post–Cold War period, as the number and size of adversary interventions have declined dramatically, rates of success have increased somewhat (though not to the level of the early Cold War period), but rates of no success have also fallen to their lowest level.

These rates of success also vary substantially according to the adversary involved, as shown in Figure 3.14.

Some adversaries have been markedly less successful than others in achieving the political objectives of their military interventions. Roughly three-quarters of Iraq’s political objectives were not successfully achieved; for several other states, including the USSR, lack of success occurred more than one-fifth of the time. Notably more successful were states such as Vietnam, which achieved success on more than half of its political objectives, and Russia, which achieved “full success”

Figure 3.14
Success of Political Objectives, by Adversary



only roughly one-third of the time but also had among the lowest rates of “no success.” As noted earlier, we have not analyzed the factors that may explain these differing rates of success, but this is an important area for future research. Although not all adversary political objectives are necessarily contrary to U.S. interests, many are. Understanding the factors that correlate with adversary success could therefore be helpful in designing strategies to counter these interventions when they are opposed to U.S. interests.

Conclusion

U.S. adversary military interventions have become less frequent and much smaller in size in recent decades. This decline in size, in particular, has correlated with an overall decline in the frequency of major adversary combat interventions, with recent Russian interventions in Ukraine and Syria standing as notable exceptions. The major-

ity of interventions that have occurred (particularly, the majority of large interventions) have been undertaken by major adversaries, such as China, Russia, the Soviet Union, and Iran. The other reports in this series on interventions by these adversaries provide much more detailed looks at their intervention patterns.

This clear trend toward smaller-scale adversary interventions, however, may not be predictive of the future. To understand whether the recent trend toward fewer, smaller adversary interventions is likely to persist, or whether recent Russian interventions could be a sign of a renewed energy and aggressiveness on the part of U.S. adversaries, we need to better understand the factors that have motivated U.S. adversaries to undertake these interventions. This topic is the subject of the next chapter.

Summary of Factors Driving Adversary Interventions

As noted earlier in this report, we began this project with a review of factors that drive third-party military interventions. We identified ten such factors, and we described them and the evidence for and against each in the literature in Chapter Two. In this chapter, we consider which of these factors matter most to which adversary. Our assessment is based on a review of adversary-specific literature, historical patterns in adversary interventions, and select case studies we conducted for each adversary. We discuss each of the three major U.S. adversaries—China, Russia, and Iran—and include discussions for three smaller adversaries in Appendix C—North Korea, Vietnam (for relevant periods), and Cuba (for relevant periods). We conclude with summary observations drawn from across these adversaries.¹

Assessing the Importance of Key Factors

Determining which of the key factors appear to be most relevant to which military interventions involved several types of inputs. First, we considered past research on each adversary to explore what previous analysis suggests about the key factors driving the adversary interventions included in our data set. This included reviewing literature and

¹ The analysis in this chapter is based on three supporting reports that provide additional detail and evidence. For a fuller treatment of the China, Russia, and Iran cases, see Charap et al., 2021; Heath et al., 2021; and Tabatabai et al., 2021.

data for significant and more-minor interventions by each adversary. Second, we consulted with subject-matter experts, who provided their thoughts on which key factors seemed most relevant to adversary decisionmaking. Finally, we conducted two case studies for each adversary to investigate more comprehensively how each state made decisions about where and when to intervene. For these case studies, we ranked each factor using a three-level scale—high, moderate, and low—according to the influence that factor appeared to have on the adversary’s decision to intervene. Although these definitions relied on the judgments of the regional experts conducting the case study research, we anchored these assessments in the objective metrics defined for each factor in Chapter Two, along with the guidelines provided in this chapter for each of the three categories. Specifically, researchers used defined metrics to assess the presence or absence of a factor and then considered the level of importance of that factor to decisionmaking, using primary sources that detailed adversary decisionmaking, secondary sources that described such deliberations, and polling, administrative, and other sorts of data when relevant. The coding was completed and reviewed by several research team members independently to validate and strengthen the rigor of the assessment. Researchers then combined these disparate sources of information, including the assessments of both cases, to provide the summary assessments presented in this report and in the conclusions of the supporting reports.²

- **High.** Factor is present in a significant way (high level or vital importance of location or asset) and plays a decisive role in driving the adversary decision to intervene. In other words, although rarely is only one factor responsible for a state decision to intervene, a coding of *high* indicates that this factor was of substantial importance to adversary decisionmaking in this case.
- **Moderate.** Factor is present in some way (moderate level or asset of moderate importance) and plays a supporting role in the decision to intervene. A factor with a *moderate* coding factored into decisionmaking, but it was not decisive.

² Appendix B provides the coding of the individual cases for each adversary.

- **Low.** Factor is present at low levels only and factored only peripherally into intervention decisionmaking.

It is important to note that the factors we identify as key drivers of adversary interventions are factors that appear consistently relevant to adversary interventions, but even these factors do not guarantee an intervention. Factors that often contribute to interventions may also be present in situations in which an adversary chooses not to intervene. They may even act as constraints against intervention in some contexts.³

Key Factors for Russian Military Interventions

Our analysis of Russian military interventions highlighted three key factors as being the most important for explaining Russian decisionmaking on this issue: national status concerns, the regional power balance, and perceptions of external threats to sovereignty.⁴ Two other factors were judged to have a more moderate, but still notable, effect on Russian decisions: the characteristics of the current leadership and the

³ To more fully explore how often the factors considered in our analysis contribute to interventions, we would need to build a data set that included noninterventions (opportunities for intervention in which the adversary chooses not to intervene) in addition to adversary interventions. We would also need to code each intervention (and nonintervention) case for the ten factors in our framework. With these data, we could then more accurately assess which factors are reliably associated with intervention rather than nonintervention. However, there are at least two obstacles to such an analysis. First, collecting a comprehensive data set of noninterventions would be exceedingly difficult because it would require some way to reliably document each instance in which intervention could have been or was considered. Previous RAND work has built such a data set for the United States, but the process was time-consuming, and we have greater information available regarding U.S. intervention decisionmaking than we do for most U.S. adversaries, which tend to have less open, more autocratic political systems. Second, even with such a data set complete, the analysis would be challenging. A large-*N* statistical analysis is one approach, but this would likely be complicated by issues of sample size because each adversary and each intervention type would likely require its own analysis. Such an effort could still be worthwhile for future research, however, and could proceed through a mixed-method approach, as was done in recent RAND research on U.S. military intervention.

⁴ These findings are discussed in detail in Charap et al., 2021.

enabling role of recent increases in Russian military capabilities. The other factors surveyed were found to have had more-limited effects.

Russian military interventions, and Russian foreign policy in general, have been highly motivated by a desire to maintain influence in the country's immediate neighborhood as an element of its position as a great power. Its neighborhood is referred to here as *post-Soviet Eurasia*, referring to the eleven other Soviet successor republics except the Baltic states. The large majority of Russian interventions took place in this region, as shown in Chapter Three. The Russian desire to retain a measure of control and influence in post-Soviet Eurasia, and its willingness to use its military to achieve that objective, is informed by all three of the factors we identify as being of high importance. First, Russia's preeminence in this region is key to the country's self-image and sense of great-power status.⁵ Moscow views great-power status as entailing leadership of broader regions or of several smaller allies that gives it a position on the international stage alongside the United States and China. Therefore, Russia has consistently responded militarily to any effort by other major powers to interfere in its neighborhood in a way that would challenge Russia's preeminence. Accepting the dominance of other major powers in its neighborhood, including the prospect of those states' political, economic, or security integration with Western institutions, would be viewed as a potentially fatal blow to Russia's status as a great power.⁶

Russian motivations to be the predominant power in post-Soviet Eurasia are also driven by concerns regarding the balance of power in the region and potential external threat to Russia's sovereignty. Ensuring a balance of power in post-Soviet Eurasia that is favorable to Russia and preventing any change in this relative power distribution that would undermine Russia's military advantage is central to the country's security. Although Russia is substantially larger and more

⁵ Olga Oliker, Keith Crane, Lowell H. Schwartz, and Catherine Yusupov, *Russian Foreign Policy: Sources and Implications*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-768-AF, 2009; Dmitri Trenin, "Demands on Russian Foreign Policy and Its Drivers: Looking Out Five Years," Carnegie Moscow Center, August 10, 2017.

⁶ Oliker et al., 2009; Trenin, 2017.

militarily capable than any other state in the region, the potential for other states to forge security links with outside actors, most notably NATO (and, specifically, the United States), that would give neighbors access to new military capabilities or economic resources and alter the regional power balance as a result introduce substantial concerns for Russian security.⁷

Further, the countries of post-Soviet Eurasia have the potential to be the source of various other threats to Russia's security, territorial integrity, or assets. They may be a source of terrorist threats, refugee flows, or other issues, such as perceived instability, that could prompt Russian intervention.⁸ Further, once Russian troops are deployed to countries in the region, Russia may feel the need to undertake additional interventions to protect them, escalating Russian involvement.

The case study we conducted on the Russian intervention in Georgia in 2008 highlights the importance of several of these factors.⁹ The proximate trigger for Russian involvement appears to have been the direct threat posed to the Russian peacekeeping troops in South Ossetia by the Georgian assault on the regional capital. But Russia was highly motivated to respond forcefully to this triggering event by a desire to reinforce its preeminence in the region and to underline the unacceptability of NATO membership for Georgia, both of increasing concern following the April 2008 Bucharest Summit that had promised eventual NATO membership to Georgia.¹⁰ The 2008 Russo-Georgian War helped to communicate to Western powers that Moscow fully

⁷ Elias Götz, "It's Geopolitics, Stupid: Explaining Russia's Ukraine Policy," *Global Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2015, p. 5.

⁸ Andrew Radin, Lynn E. Davis, Edward Geist, Eugeniu Han, Dara Massicot, Matthew Povlock, Clint Reach, Scott Boston, Samuel Charap, William Mackenzie, Katya Migacheva, Trevor Johnston, and Austin Long, *The Future of the Russian Military: Russia's Ground Combat Capabilities and Implications for U.S.-Russia Competition*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-3099-A, 2019.

⁹ Charap et al., 2021, Ch. 4.

¹⁰ NATO, "Bucharest Summit Declaration," April 3, 2008; Andrew T. Wolff, "The Future of NATO Enlargement After the Ukraine Crisis," *International Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 5, 2015, p. 1110; Ronald D. Asmus, *A Little War That Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010, Ch. 4.

intended to continue to use force if necessary to preserve its position as the only major power active in the area and to prevent any change to the regional distribution of power, notwithstanding any efforts by states such as Georgia to strengthen ties with external powers. Similar concerns over national status and regional power balance appear to have motivated the Russian interventions in Ukraine in 2014.¹¹

Russian interventions outside post-Soviet Eurasia have been substantially less frequent. The only combat mission beyond the region was the 2015 intervention in the Syrian Civil War. It is therefore notable that a similar set of key factors motivated Russian involvement in that conflict. Russian interest in ensuring the survival of the Bashar al-Assad regime after 2015 was driven, in part, by the implications of its collapse for the terrorist threat to Russia. Essentially, Russian officials equated Assad's fall to a Sunni extremist takeover of Syria: particularly, a group of Sunni extremists with close linkages to Russia through the large number of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) members who had come from Russia and post-Soviet Eurasia and who could either return to conduct attacks or inspire extremists in the restive North Caucasus.¹² Notably, however, it was not the Sunni ideology per se that Russia intervened to counter. Rather, the Russian intervention was driven by concern over the threat extremists (irrespective of specific beliefs) might pose to Russia's domestic security from internal (or external) attacks by violent groups. However, the decision to undertake such a high-profile intervention outside its immediate region was intended to help reestablish Russia's status as a great power, capable of playing a major and influential role on the international stage, which Russia

¹¹ Götz, 2015, p. 5.

¹² Marta Ter, "The Caucasus Emirate, the Other Russian Front," *Notes Internationals*, No. 129, November 2015; Viktor Baranets, "Nachal'nik genshtaba vooruzhennykh sil Rossii general armii Valerii Gerasimov: 'My perelomili khrebet udarnym silam terrorizma' [Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces General of the Army Valery Gerasimov: 'We have broken the back of the terrorist strike forces']," *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, December 26, 2017.

believed the West had sought to undermine following the annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine.¹³

Beyond these three central factors motivating Russian military interventions, we identified three others that were less consistently important but are still valuable to highlight. In Russia's hypercentralized and personalistic political system, the particular traits of Vladimir Putin are, by definition, important for determining Russia's interventions. Yet there is strong evidence that Putin's opinions are firmly within the mainstream thinking of Russia's broader foreign policy establishment. He does shape outcomes, but he also reflects broader elite preferences.

Alliances and partnerships also play a meaningful role in Russia's intervention decisions. Russia has several alliances with neighboring states and close partnerships with other states and actors. A series of deterrence missions Russia began in post-Soviet Eurasia mostly in the 1990s were motivated in part by a perceived need to protect and stabilize its allies, such as Russia's base in Tajikistan. A desire to protect nonstate partners, such as Russian-backed separatist groups, in several regional conflicts has also been manifest, though the evidence that such links would prompt Russian military intervention—outside the 2008 conflict in Georgia, where several drivers were also present—is not as clear.¹⁴

The vast majority of Russian military interventions have been conducted close to the country's borders, have required small numbers of troops, or have involved combating clearly inferior forces. Therefore, military capabilities were not a key factor in enabling most Russian interventions. Russia's post-2008 military reforms, however, appear to be changing this limitation. The 2015 Syria intervention, for example, could not have been accomplished without such reform because Russia lacked the logistical and other capabilities to operate effectively in an

¹³ Ekaterina Stepanova, "Russia and Conflicts in the Middle East: Regionalisation and Implications for the West," *International Spectator*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 2018 p. 53; Mikhail Zygar, "The Russian Reset That Never Was," *Foreign Policy*, December 9, 2016.

¹⁴ Andrew Bennett, *Condemned to Repetition? The Rise, Fall, and Reprise of Soviet-Russia Military Interventionism, 1973–1996*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999, pp. 302–305.

expeditionary manner that far from Russia.¹⁵ Even though Syria offered some particular advantages to the Russian military that would not be present elsewhere, the operation demonstrated a significant improvement in capabilities that enable interventions that previously would have been impossible.

Beyond these five factors, we found less evidence for the importance of the other potential factors identified in Chapter Two as potentially motivating Russian military interventions. Although coidentity group populations are often raised as a potential motivating factor for Russian interventions, our analysis suggests this concern is largely rhetorical.¹⁶ Contrary to arguments that the Kremlin is driven to intervene in order to increase its legitimacy, we found that concerns about popular support did not play a central role in the interventions, even if they may have had a positive effect on that support.¹⁷ Finally, we found very little evidence that economic or ideological issues have motivated Russian military interventions.

The results of our assessments about Russia are summarized in Table 4.1.

Key Factors for Chinese Military Interventions

Our analysis of Chinese military interventions identified two main types, with differences as well as continuity in the factors that seem to matter most to Chinese decisionmakers to undertake interventions. The first type of Chinese interventions, concentrated in the period between 1949 and 1980, tended to be more aggressive and combat ori-

¹⁵ Bettina Renz, *Russia's Military Revival*, Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2018; Dara Massicot, "Appendix I: C4ISR" in Radin et al., 2019, pp. 157–159; Edward Geist, "Appendix G: Long-Range Strike," in Radin et al., 2019, p. 115.

¹⁶ Scott Littlefield, "Citizenship, Identity and Foreign Policy: The Contradictions and Consequences of Russia's Passport Distribution in the Separatist Regions of Georgia," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 61, No. 8, October 2009; Lincoln Pigman, "Russia's Compatriots: Instrument or Responsibility?" *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 164, No. 2, 2019, p. 25.

¹⁷ See, for example, Kathryn Stoner and Michael McFaul, "Who Lost Russia (This Time)? Vladimir Putin," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 2, Summer 2015, p. 175.

Table 4.1
Summary of Evidence for Factors Driving Russian Military Interventions

Factor Affecting the Likelihood of Adversary Military Interventions	Importance of Factor	Summary Explanation
External threat to sovereignty	High	Responding to external threats has been the proximate trigger of several Russian interventions.
Alliance or partnership with host	Moderate	One of the drivers of deterrence and signaling missions. However, alliance commitments that might lead to combat or other types of interventions on behalf of state allies have never been tested.
National status concerns	High	Moscow has demonstrated its clear willingness to intervene militarily to reinforce its great-power status.
Military capabilities	Moderate	Recent reforms have helped enable combat interventions beyond post-Soviet Eurasia. Capability enhancements have allowed Russia to have a far longer reach with its military than at any time since the Soviet era.
Domestic politics and legitimacy	Low	At most, this is a secondary factor. The Putin regime has seen increases in popularity as a result of interventions, but there is limited evidence that such concerns drove intervention decisions.
Economic interests in host	Low	There is no evidence that Russian interventions have been motivated by economic issues.
Coidentity group populations in host	Low	At most, this is a secondary factor. Substantial Russian rhetoric is not matched by evidence that this has substantially affected intervention decisions.
Leadership and personality	Moderate	Putin’s role is highly important, but his preferences likely mirror those of the Russian elite more broadly.
Ideology	Low	In contrast with the Soviet period, there is no substantial evidence that Russian interventions have been motivated by ideology.

ented. These interventions were generally larger and were concentrated in China's regional neighborhood. They typically aimed to defeat or deter adversaries or consolidate China's control of disputed territories, as well as spread China's communist, revolutionary ideology. The second type of Chinese interventions, concentrated in more-recent years, has tended to be significantly smaller, more geographically dispersed, often in support of UN or other multilateral missions, and typically noncombat in nature. Many of these second type of interventions have been motivated by a desire to protect Chinese economic interests or Chinese citizens abroad.

There are important differences in the factors that appear to have driven Chinese interventions across these two types. Although the factors driving more-recent interventions may be most likely to be relevant for anticipating future Chinese interventions, it is also possible that, as we shift to a new era of strategic competition more closely resembling the Cold War period, factors that drove earlier, more-aggressive Chinese interventions could again become more relevant.¹⁸

Four factors emerged from our analysis that played significant roles in motivating Chinese intervention decisions. First, China has consistently used military interventions to help maintain a favorable regional balance of power. This was particularly true of China's more-kinetic interventions during the Cold War, but it remains a factor in China's more-recent interventions as well. From the 1950s through the 1970s, China used numerous interventions to attempt to shift the regional balance of power in its favor, such as in the Korean War and in a series of interventions in Southeast Asia that sought to limit the rise of a powerful Vietnam, disrupt Vietnam's alliance with the USSR, and limit Vietnam's ability to control Laos and Cambodia.¹⁹ More recently, many of China's efforts to affect regional balances of power have taken on a nonmilitary character, driven by China's dramatically greater eco-

¹⁸ These findings are discussed in full in Heath et al, 2021.

¹⁹ Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2000, p. 217; Nicholas Khoo, *Collateral Damage: Sino-Soviet Rivalry and the Termination of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

conomic influence. However, some Chinese military interventions are still motivated by concerns about regional balances of power, including those in support of multilateral peacekeeping missions and, of course, China's activities in the South China Sea.²⁰

Second, China has used military intervention consistently to respond to external threats to its territorial sovereignty, property, or people, including threats to the safety of Chinese citizens and to foreign claims on Chinese-held territories. During the Cold War, China used military intervention to further its territorial disputes with India and Vietnam and to prosecute its ongoing dispute with Taiwan, which China views as part of its territory.²¹ Today, the key threats likely to trigger a Chinese intervention include traditional threats, such as the threat of Taiwanese independence, and nontraditional threats, such as piracy, terrorism, or other threats to Chinese property and assets along the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or elsewhere.²² Chinese policy documents have highlighted this fuller range of threats as ones that could trigger the need for a more significant Chinese military response, either combat or noncombat.²³

Third, China's national status and reputation has played a significant and continuous role in Chinese interventions since 1949, though how this factor has translated into Chinese military interventions has evolved over time. China has historically been very sensitive to its reputation among its peers, including both allies and adversaries.²⁴ During

²⁰ M. Taylor Fravel, "Economic Growth, Regime Insecurity, and Military Strategy: Explaining the Rise of Noncombat Operations in China," *Asian Security*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2011; Lyle J. Morris, Michael J. Mazarr, Jeffrey W. Hornung, Stephanie Pezard, Anika Binnendijk, and Marta Kepe, *Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone: Response Options for Coercive Aggression Below the Threshold of Major War*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-2942-OSD, 2019.

²¹ See, for example, Zhang, 2010, p. 26.

²² Changhee Park, "Why China Attacks: China's Geostrategic Vulnerability and Its Military Intervention," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2008.

²³ State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *China's National Defense in the New Era*, Beijing, July 2019.

²⁴ Jian Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001, p. 121.

the Cold War, Chinese interventions in India and conflicts with the Soviet Union demonstrated Chinese efforts to establish its position in the international system. In recent years, concerns of national status have driven expanded Chinese participation in multilateral operations under UN and other auspices, as well as more-significant power projection activities. These activities have been used by China to signal its position as a major power with serious military capabilities.²⁵ The Chinese counterpiracy intervention and the associated base in Djibouti is one clear example of China using a military intervention to establish itself as a leader in the international community, to provide a public good, and to demonstrate its ability to conduct a long-distance operation.²⁶

Fourth, economic interests in recent years have become a major driving factor in determining where and how the Chinese intervene. For example, statements by Chinese officials consistently reference economic interests when explaining new military activity, including the need to secure trade routes, maintain or gain access to new markets, or protect Chinese business interests.²⁷ The Chinese counterpiracy mission off the Horn of Africa and Chinese interventions in the region more broadly, as well as China's activities in the South China Sea, have been described as aimed at economic security first and foremost, and China's increasing investment in its navy, which has enabled these interventions, is cast as an effort to expand and protect its national economic interests.²⁸

²⁵ "Chinese President Xi Jinping Pledges 8,000 UN Peacekeeping Troops, US\$1 Billion to Peace Fund," *South China Morning Post*, September 28, 2015.

²⁶ Andrew S. Erickson and Austin M. Strange, *Six Years at Sea . . . and Counting: Gulf of Aden Anti-Piracy and China's Maritime Commons Presence*, Washington, D.C.: Jamestown Foundation, June 2015.

²⁷ Michael Yahuda, "China's New Assertiveness in the South China Sea," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 22, No. 81, 2013.

²⁸ Yahuda, 2013; Neil Melvin, *The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region*, Solna, Sweden: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, April 2019; Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2015*, Washington, D.C., 2015.

Secondary Factors

There are a variety of other factors that appear to have had a more moderate influence on Chinese intervention decisions or to have played an important role only more intermittently. The role of alliances and partnerships is a good example. Although Chinese alliances and partner relationships played a key role in several Chinese intervention decisions during the early Cold War,²⁹ China in recent decades has typically avoided formal alliances or other relationships that would have obligated a response to defend or fight alongside another state. However, China has recently begun to establish a network of less-formal partnerships that include economic investments and some limited military cooperation. As a result, this factor has become increasingly important to China's military decisionmaking.³⁰ For example, Chinese participation in UN missions has often been aimed at helping new partners in the regions where these missions are deployed, and Chinese counter-piracy missions have the added benefit of assisting Chinese regional partners in Africa.³¹

Domestic politics have also been relevant to Chinese intervention decisions but mostly only in a secondary capacity. As an authoritarian country with government control over its domestic media sources, China has substantial control over how intervention decisions are portrayed to its population. This limits the risk of domestic pressure to intervene, or avoid intervention, at times when the Chinese government does not already wish to do so. That said, there is evidence that some Chinese interventions during the Cold War were influenced by domestic insecurity and unrest.³² Considering the post-Cold War period, we also find only limited evidence that domestic factors affect intervention decisionmaking, but experts suggest that Chinese leaders

²⁹ Hood, Steven J., *Dragons Entangled: Indochina and the China-Vietnam War*, New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 156.

³⁰ Melvin, 2019.

³¹ "China, Djibouti Agree to Establish Strategic Partnership," Xinhua, November 23, 2017.

³² Michael P. Colaresi, *Scare Tactics: The Politics of International Rivalry*, Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2005, p. 193; Allen S. Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Indochina*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1975, p. xxii.

exploit the domestic political benefits of overseas operations, particularly those that showcase Chinese capabilities and those that involve military protection to Chinese nationals abroad to consolidate support and encourage demonstrations of nationalism.³³ It is less clear to what extent this factor motivates the decision to intervene in the first place, however.

The presence of ethnic Chinese populations living outside China's borders is a related factor that has played a moderate role in Chinese intervention decisionmaking. Chinese officials have consistently used the protection of Chinese citizens abroad as a justification for military interventions. This factor has become increasingly important as the number of Chinese living and traveling abroad has expanded alongside the BRI and the spread of Chinese business interests.³⁴ Noncombat missions to protect the lives of Chinese citizens living abroad have become more common, including peacekeeping missions and NEOs (although, as noted, NEOs are generally not included in our definition of military intervention because of their limited scale and scope).³⁵

China's military capabilities (particularly, changes in those capabilities) have also played a moderate role in driving Chinese military interventions since the end of the Cold War. As China's military capabilities and, in particular, its transport and power projection capabilities have become more developed, China has taken on a more active role in multilateral operations and has been more willing to conduct interventions in geographically dispersed regions.³⁶ In this case, mili-

³³ Anna Fifield, "China's Xi Looks to Stoke Nationalism as Tiananmen Anniversary Approaches," *Washington Post*, April 30, 2019; Oriana Skylar Mastro, "Nationalism, Domestic Politics, and China's Global Leadership Role," *Future of the Global Order Colloquium*, Fall 2017.

³⁴ Mathieu Duchâtel, Oliver Bräuner, and Zhou Hang, *Protecting China's Overseas Interests: The Slow Shift Away from Non-Interference*, Solna, Sweden: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, June 2014, p. 5; Stefan Stähle, "China's Shifting Attitude Towards United Nations Peacekeeping Operations," *China Quarterly*, No. 195, September 2008.

³⁵ Duchâtel, Bräuner, and Hang, p. 5; Stähle, 2008.

³⁶ Cristina L. Garafola and Timothy R. Heath, *The Chinese Air Force's First Steps Toward Becoming an Expeditionary Air Force*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-2056-AF, 2017, p. 30.

tary capabilities have functioned as an enabler, driving Chinese military interventions by increasing the range of locations and circumstances in which the country's military can operate. However, recent developments in Chinese transportation and related capabilities need not be overstated. China's noncombat interventions in recent years have had fairly modest military requirements, involving small numbers of troops and limited equipment.³⁷ More-robust interventions outside China's neighborhood might still tax China's current capabilities.

Finally, it is notable that leadership style and ideology played a major role in China's intervention decisionmaking during the Cold War. During that period, the desire to spread China's communist, revolutionary ideology had greater influence on intervention decisions. China's desire to export its ideology abroad played a role in the interventions in the Korean War, for example.³⁸ However, since the end of the Cold War, these two factors have mattered far less. China has frequently conducted its interventions through multilateral institutions and expresses a clear desire to intervene in ways that respect sovereignty.³⁹ The role of leadership preferences and personality in intervention decisionmaking has followed a similar pattern. Chinese intervention decisions during the early Cold War period were strongly influenced by Mao's authoritarian leadership style and belief in the value of war.⁴⁰ After Mao's death, a less-personalized leadership structure emerged, minimizing the effect of this factor on intervention decisions. In more-recent years, scholars have reached mixed conclusions regarding the role that Xi Jinping's personality and leadership style has played in intervention decisions. It is possible that Xi's political style has mattered to the character of some interventions, including a more aggressive and more coercive defense of Chinese interests in the South

³⁷ Garafola and Heath, 2017, p. 30.

³⁸ Zhai, 2000, p. 146.

³⁹ Liu Tiewa, "China and Responsibility to Protect: Maintenance and Change of Its Policy for Intervention," *Pacific Review*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2012.

⁴⁰ Stanley Karnow, *Mao and China: From Revolution to Revolution*, New York: Viking Press, 1972, p. 71.

China Sea.⁴¹ In other areas, however, including the expansion of Chinese interventions outside Asia, there has been more continuity with preceding leader Hu Jintao and little evidence that leader personality has been a decisive factor.

Table 4.2 provides a summary of the ten key factors and the degree to which they have influenced China's military intervention decisions.

Key Factors for Iranian Military Interventions

Our assessment of the factors driving Iranian military interventions is based on analysis of relevant primary and secondary source documents, including statements by Iranian leaders, state media accounts, U.S. government assessments, and analysis by leading Iran experts.⁴² We also conducted two detailed case studies and identified patterns from all of Iran's prior military interventions. As with Russia and China, our analysis of Iranian military interventions identifies several key factors that influence Iranian military intervention decisions and several secondary factors that are also relevant.⁴³

There are four factors that seem to most strongly influence Iranian intervention decisions. First, Iranian military interventions have generally been conducted to support populations who share cultural or religious ties with Iran.⁴⁴ Examples include Iran's intervention in Syria, where it intervened to support the Alawite minority, and its involvement in Iraq, where it backed local Shia and Kurdish forces and the

⁴¹ Elizabeth Economy, "China's New Revolution," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2018.

⁴² The lack of transparency of the Iranian regime places some constraints on the certainty with which we can make certain judgments, but we were able to triangulate sources to gather insights. In addition, limited existing analysis of Iranian intervention decisions makes our assessment more difficult than for some of the other cases in this report.

⁴³ These findings are discussed in full in Tabatabai et al., 2021.

⁴⁴ Frederic Wehrey, David E. Thaler, Nora Bensahel, Kim Cragin, Jerrold D. Green, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Nadia Oweidat, and Jennifer J. Li, *Dangerous but Not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-781-AF, 2009, p. xiv.

Table 4.2
Summary of Evidence for Factors Driving Chinese Military Interventions

Factor Affecting the Likelihood of Adversary Military Interventions	Importance of Factor	Summary Explanation
Regional power balance	High	China has frequently used interventions to help maintain a favorable regional balance of power, through force or by supporting or pressuring other states.
External threat to sovereignty	High	China has frequently used military interventions to respond to external threats to Chinese territorial integrity and (more recently) to Chinese citizens and business interests abroad.
Economic interests in host	High	Economic security and interests are key drivers of recent Chinese military intervention decisions, whereas these issues were less central during the Cold War.
National status concerns	High	National status has consistently driven Chinese intervention decisions, including in Cold War combat interventions to assert China's role as a major player on the international stage.
Alliance or partnership with host	Moderate	Alliances and partnerships have recently become more-important drivers of Chinese military interventions, particularly those in Africa, where Chinese forces use interventions to support economic and security partnerships.
Coidentity group populations in host	Moderate	Cultural and identity group ties have played a secondary role in Chinese intervention decisions and have been most influential for more-recent noncombat interventions.
Military capabilities	Moderate	As Chinese military capabilities have improved, China has been able to establish an overseas base in support of its counterpiracy mission and take on a larger role in geographically dispersed multilateral interventions, but the requirements for such interventions remain fairly low.

Table 4.2—Continued

Factor Affecting the Likelihood of Adversary Military Interventions	Importance of Factor	Summary Explanation
Domestic politics and legitimacy	Moderate	Domestic legitimacy has been a secondary factor in intervention decisionmaking. Chinese leadership exploits domestic benefits of certain interventions, but domestic political motivations do not appear to have driven new interventions.
Ideology	Low	Ideology played a key role in early Cold War interventions, but current interventions do not appear to have the same goals.
Leadership and personality	Low	Leader personality appears to have mattered in Mao-era conflicts but seems to matter much less more recently.

Shia government against ISIS.⁴⁵ In most cases, interventions in support of coethnic or cosectarian populations involve Iran in an advisory role, supporting and training partner nations or groups. These interventions also allow Iran to increase the spread of its influence and strengthen cultural ties across borders. In the case of Iraq, for example, close cultural and religious ties between Iran and Iraq were a key factor explaining the decision to intervene and the way in which Iranian forces became involved: largely through local forces and mostly on behalf of Shia and Kurds.⁴⁶ This method also, however, resulted in Iran being considered a sectarian actor, one that favored Shia populations over Sunni.⁴⁷ Despite having these strong cultural ties with a handful of countries, Iran has thus far been unable to establish stronger partnerships with countries with which it does not share cultural ties. Combined with its more limited conventional military capabilities, these narrower security partnerships have constrained the geographic reach of Iran's military interventions, at least thus far.

A second factor driving Iranian military interventions is the regional power balance. Iran views itself as a fundamentally vulnerable state, surrounded by Sunni Arab rivals and enemies. As a result, Iran fiercely guards the balance of power and seeks to tilt that balance further in its favor whenever possible.⁴⁸ Iran uses military intervention to achieve this goal and reacts negatively to anything that tilts the balance in a way deemed counter to Iranian interests.⁴⁹ This has been as true historically as it is today. During the Cold War, Iran acted to

⁴⁵ Abbas William Samii, "The Shah's Lebanon Policy: The Role of the SAVAK," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1, January 1997; Arash Reisinezhad, *The Shah of Iran, the Iraqi Kurds, and the Lebanese Shia*, Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Nima Adelhkhah, "Iranian Intervention in Iraq Against the Islamic State: Strategy, Tactics, and Impact," *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 13, No. 2, January 23, 2015, p. 10.

⁴⁷ Ariane M. Tabatabai and Dina Esfandiary, "Cooperating with Iran to Combat ISIS in Iraq," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2017, p. 132.

⁴⁸ Wehrey et al., 2009, p. xiii.

⁴⁹ Mohsen Milani, "Iran's Policy Toward Afghanistan," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 2006; Thomas Juneau, "Iran's Costly Intervention in Syria: A Pyrrhic Victory," *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2020; Dina Esfandiary and Ariane Tabatabai, "Yemen: An Opportunity for Iran-Saudi Dialogue?" *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2016; Thomas

prevent competition between the United States and the Soviet Union from affecting its sovereignty and its position within the region. After the Cold War, Iran continued to guard its regional position, working to counter expanding ties between the United States and Iran's neighbors that might give regional competitors access to new resources that would shift the balance of power away from Iran.⁵⁰ Iran's approach to ensuring its position within the region has been two-pronged. First, it has aimed to make sure no other country is strong enough to threaten Iran or to fundamentally resist its influence. Second, Iran's leadership has aimed to ensure that friendly regimes remain in place and are not undermined by threats.

The intervention in Syria is a clear example of this two-pronged strategy. In Syria, Iran has used its intervention to expand its influence and prevent any major shifts in the balance of power but has been willing to tolerate some degree of instability. Iran certainly does not want a strong and dominant Syria, but it also fears the collapse of the Assad regime, which could leave a power vacuum that could lead to instability or the rise of a regime less friendly to Iranian interests. It has used its intervention to prevent both regime change and full consolidation.⁵¹ In Iraq, Iran's intervention has again aimed at maintaining Iranian influence in the country, exploiting the weakness of the new Iraqi regime and supporting Shia-backed groups but also keeping the country weak in ways that benefit Iran's regional dominance.⁵² In the fight against ISIS, for example, Iran has sought to influence the geopolitical alignment of the new Iraqi regime, placing itself at the center of any discussion about Iraq's future and using this position to remain

Juneau, "Iran's Policy Towards the Houthis in Yemen: A Limited Return on a Modest Investment," *International Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 3, May 2016.

⁵⁰ Imad Salamey and Zanoobia Othman, "Shia Revival and Welayat Al-Faqih in the Making of Iranian Foreign Policy," *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2011, p. 202.

⁵¹ Juneau, 2020, p. 28; "Aghaz-e bohran-e Surieh be revayat-e Shahid Hossein Hamedani," *Al-Alam*, December 26, 2016.

⁵² Afshon Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam: Religion, Politics, and Iran's Revolutionary Guards*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 205; Alireza Nader, *Iran's Role in Iraq: Room for Cooperation?* Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, PE-151-OSD, 2015, pp. 12–13.

a key power player in the region, despite the continuation of sanctions imposed by the United States and others in the international community.⁵³ It has not, however, agreed to work through the U.S. coalition, choosing instead to operate as an independent regional power broker.⁵⁴ The focus Iran places on the regional balance of power is a key factor in decisions about military interventions and other foreign policy decisions, given Iran's strategic position in the region and its sense of being encircled.

A third key factor that seems consistently relevant to Iranian military interventions is the external threat to sovereignty or property. Like most countries, Iran has launched military interventions when it perceives an external threat to national integrity. External threats have, in many ways, resulted in the most overt demonstrations of military strength.⁵⁵ In the face of more-significant external threats, such as the rise of ISIS, Iran has responded strongly, using the opportunity to demonstrate its ability to project power and to improve and exercise its growing military capabilities.⁵⁶ Iran has often viewed external threats to sovereignty as strategic opportunities to signal adversaries and rivals in the region and to solidify its position of influence in the region.⁵⁷ The intervention in Syria, for instance, has been used as an opportunity to expand the Iranian military's capabilities, competencies, and skills in ways that past operational training events had not allowed. For example, by having the Artesh (conventional Iranian military) and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force operating together, Iran hopes to increase the cohesion and effectiveness of its forces in

⁵³ "Maneuver-e qodrat-e Iran va Iraq moqabel-e America," *Javan Online*, March 14, 2019.

⁵⁴ "Tasavir-e didehnashodeh az Sardar Soleimani dar jang ba Daesh," *Mashregh News*, November 22, 2017.

⁵⁵ On Iranian external threat perceptions as a (partial) driver of regional interventions in the post-2003 period, see, for instance, Wehrey et al., 2009, p. xiii.

⁵⁶ Ian Black, "Iran Confirms It Has Forces in Syria and Will Take Military Action If Pushed," *The Guardian*, September 16, 2012.

⁵⁷ Ostovar, 2016, p. 205.

repelling significant threats to national integrity in the future.⁵⁸ In Iraq, Iran responded to the growing threat posed by ISIS, fearing that the threat would spill across the border into Iran if it did not defeat ISIS in Iraq.⁵⁹ Iran, then, used interventions first to protect national integrity but also to expand its influence and seek new advantages.

Finally, Iran has been motivated to intervene to support partners, although it is worth noting that these “partners” have mostly been non-state actors rather than other states.⁶⁰ Iran’s fierce independence means that it has only a few close bilateral relationships and no formal alliances or defense treaties that would obligate it to come to the defense of another state. Still, Iran has shown a willingness to intervene militarily to support state and nonstate partners when warranted, with the intervention in Syria being one example.⁶¹ It is worth noting, however, that even interventions to support partners are driven by Iranian interests in maintaining stability and the status quo. Once the international community turned against Assad, Iran’s primary focus was not saving him but instead ensuring that a transition of power was closely aligned with its interests.⁶² In the case of Iraq, the Iranian intervention similarly was influenced by the relationship between the two states. Once again, however, power relationships were at the center of the intervention, which Iran used to solidify its patron-client relationship with Iraq.⁶³ Thus, these partnerships seem secondary for Iran and seem relevant to intervention decisions only alongside other relevant factors.

⁵⁸ “Amir Pourdasatan tashrih kar joz’eyat-e hozoor-e Artesh-e Iran dar Araq va Surieh,” *Fararu*, January 21, 2018.

⁵⁹ “Taslihat-e Iran ke Daesh bayad az anha betarsad,” *Diplomacy-e Irani*, April 9, 2015.

⁶⁰ Ostovar, 2016, p. 205.

⁶¹ Ostovar, 2016, p. 205.

⁶² Mohsen Milani, “Why Tehran Won’t Abandon Assad(ism),” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 2013, p. 84.

⁶³ Kenneth M. Pollack, “Iranian Airstrikes in Iraq Are a Warning and a Sign of Progress,” *Markaz*, Brookings Institution blog, December 3, 2014.

Secondary Factors

Although the three factors described in the previous section seem to be the most important, there are other factors that have played important secondary roles in shaping Iranian military intervention decisions. National status concerns, for instance, are relevant but have not typically been primary motivators. Iran has sometimes sought to use military intervention as a way of demonstrating its power and influence and its ability to act as a leading security player on the international stage. Examples include the antipiracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden and Gulf of Oman (for which such concerns are a secondary driver), but these types of interventions appear to be the exception rather than the rule.

Domestic legitimacy could also be defined as a secondary driver of military interventions for Iran. Although Iran is not accountable to a voting population in the same way as a democracy, Iranian leaders appear to consider public opinion and tolerance for military activities: first, in deciding where to get involved but, more importantly, in deciding how to get involved and how public to make that involvement. Iran's efforts to justify public military intervention and hide those that have not been made public suggest that it is sensitive in some ways to public perceptions and domestic support for military action. However, this sensitivity is necessarily constrained by the lack of transparency and the state's control of most information channels, allowing Iran to construct legitimacy when it is needed. In the case of Iran's intervention in Iraq, for instance, it seems that the decision to intervene was taken at least in part to address the perceived threat among the domestic population,⁶⁴ and domestic considerations continued to matter as Iran messaged its public about the intervention and its progress.⁶⁵ But domestic considerations do not seem to be the primary factors in Iranian intervention decisionmaking; there is general agreement among

⁶⁴ The seven countries surveyed besides Iran were Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. See Zogby Research Services, *Today's Middle East: Pressures and Challenges*, Washington, D.C., November 2014, p. 18.

⁶⁵ Dina Esfandiary and Ariane Tabatabai, "Iran's ISIS Policy," *International Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 1, 2015, p. 6.

experts that domestic factors almost certainly play a smaller role than realist, national security factors.⁶⁶

Finally, there are other factors defined in our framework that seem less relevant or that have little evidence to make a determination one way or the other. For example, there is little evidence that economic interests are an independent motivator of Iranian military interventions. Apart from antipiracy operations and operations intended to relieve some of the pressure of international sanctions, economic interests have not really factored into Iranian decisionmaking. Similarly, there has been limited analysis to explore the role of leader personality in the context of Iran, especially when considering more-recent interventions.⁶⁷ There is some evidence of variation in willingness to intervene across Iranian leadership, but the lack of transparency and the insular nature of the regime make it difficult to analyze the relationship between leader worldview and intervention outcomes.⁶⁸ Ideology (specifically, a commitment to a revolutionary ideology) has been a driver of Iranian military intervention but mattered most in the period immediately after the revolution, in the 1980s.⁶⁹ When the revolution's leaders came to power, they sought to spread their movement's values and the revolution's ideology beyond Iran's borders. In regard to more-recent interventions, our analysis and work by other subject-matter experts suggest that Iran does not seek territorial expansion and is only somewhat motivated to impose its system of government on other nations.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ For more on the interplay of Iran's domestic politics and national security, see Shahram Chubin, *Wither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security*, New York: Routledge, 2014.

⁶⁷ Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 4, Spring 2001, pp. 132–133.

⁶⁸ Thomas Juneau, "Iran Under Rouhani: Still Alone in the World," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 21, No. 4, Winter 2014.

⁶⁹ Wehrey et al., 2009, p. xiv.

⁷⁰ Ray Takeyh, *Guardians of the Revolution: Iran and the World in the Age of the Ayatollahs*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 2.

Finally, military capabilities do not seem to be a significant driver of military interventions. States often consider military capabilities as an enabler when making decisions about whether an intervention is feasible or worth the cost. Our analysis suggests that Iran's calculations are somewhat different. Iran has more-limited conventional capabilities and has generally relied on asymmetric tactics and approaches. As a result, Iran's decisions about feasibility, while not divorced from military capabilities, are not overly constrained by conventional limitations. Instead, Iran might use military capabilities more as a guide in considering how and through what means to intervene. In this sense, military capabilities factor into decisionmaking at a later phase for Iran than they might for other states.

Table 4.3 provides a summary of the ten key factors and the degree to which they influence Iran's military intervention decisions.

Summary

Table 4.4 summarizes the key factors most associated with military intervention decisions among U.S. adversaries. Although there is clearly heterogeneity across actors, there is also significant similarity in the factors that matter most across cases. First, geopolitical drivers seem to be the most important for all adversaries. In particular, concerns about the regional balance of power and responses to external threats emerge across the board as significant predictors of adversary interventions. The discussion in this chapter emphasizes that states often use military interventions to shift the balance of power in their own regions or in regions of strategic importance in their favor or to restrain the rise of powerful competitors. We saw examples of this with Iran in the Middle East, Russia in its near abroad, China in interventions along its periphery, and even by smaller adversaries' interventions in their neighbors. Relatedly, the consistent role of external threats as an intervention driver is notable. Across cases, adversaries responded with military force when they perceived threats to their sovereignty or territorial integrity. Territorial disputes seem particularly likely to trig-

Table 4.3
Factors Driving Iranian Military Interventions

Factor Affecting the Likelihood of Adversary Military Interventions	Importance of Factor	Summary Explanation
Regional power balance	High	Iran seeks to tilt the balance of power in its favor, prevent the rise of a strong power in the region, and keep friendly governments in power.
External threat to sovereignty	High	Iran responds strongly and militarily to any threat to sovereignty, seizing the opportunity to advance its interests.
Coidentity group populations in host	High	Iran consistently responds militarily to protect interests of coethnic or coreligious group populations. This response, in part, explains the regional focus of Iran's interventions (regional states have significant coidentity populations).
Alliance or partnership with host	High	Iran has intervened in support of partners reasonably often, especially when such interventions would also support stability and the status quo. Most supported partners are violent nonstate actors.
National status concerns	Moderate	There are cases in which Iran has intervened to demonstrate and consolidate its status and to project power and military capabilities on the international stage, but this is rarely the most important factor.
Domestic politics and legitimacy	Moderate	Domestic legitimacy matters in some cases and appears to influence how Iran conducts interventions and which interventions it makes public. However, domestic support is not a deciding factor given the nature of the Iranian regime.
Ideology	Moderate	Iran's desire to spread its revolutionary ideology was a motivating factor following the 1979 revolution. More recently, Iran has not shown an intention to expand its territory or belief system to other countries.

Table 4.3—Continued

Factor Affecting the Likelihood of Adversary Military Interventions	Importance of Factor	Summary Explanation
Economic interests in host	Low	Economic interests do not appear to be a significant factor in intervention decisionmaking. They have mattered in a few interventions, but these are exceptions.
Leadership and personality	Low	There has been little rigorous research into the role of leader personality. It is hard to disentangle how variation in personality influences intervention choices.
Military capabilities	Low	Iran has limited conventional military capabilities and has relied on asymmetric activities to compete. Military capabilities might shape how Iran intervenes but do not appear to frequently be a binding constraint on intervention choices.

Table 4.4
Summary of Importance of Key Factors Across Adversaries

Factor	Russia	China	Iran	Summary
Regional power balance	High	High	High	A major motivation and deciding factor across cases.
External threat to sovereignty	High	High	High	A major motivation and deciding factor across cases.
National status concerns	High	High	Moderate	Important for major powers or states seeking a greater international role but more peripheral for smaller states.
Alliance or partnership with host	Moderate	Moderate	High	More important for larger states that tend to have broader alliance relationships and international interests.
Domestic politics and legitimacy	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Can play a role on the margin but has rarely been a deciding factor.
Economic interests in host	Low	High	Low	Do not appear to drive interventions for most adversaries, with the notable exception of recent Chinese interventions.
Coidentity group populations in host	Low	Moderate	High	Plays a role on the margin for most states, excepting Iran, where coidentity groups are central to regional strategy.
Leadership and personality	Moderate	Low	Low	Particularly during the post–Cold War period, leader personality has not been a central factor.
Ideology	Low	Low	Moderate	More important for Cold War interventions and for smaller adversaries with nationalist ambitions. Less important during the post–Cold War period overall.
Military capabilities	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Can sometimes play an important role in enabling or constraining interventions farther from adversary borders. Also likely to shape how states intervene.

ger interventions across adversaries, but such threats as terrorism and piracy have also motivated interventions.

Adversaries discussed in this report differed somewhat in their use of military interventions to protect or advance national status or reputation, though it remained a highly or moderately important factor for all states. The great powers we assessed (China, Russia, and the USSR) appeared to view military intervention as an important way to demonstrate national military capabilities, assert the state's position on the international stage, and prevent outcomes that would undermine national pride or reputation. Russia, for example, has used intervention to prevent any perceived loss of influence or strength in its near abroad. China has advanced national status by taking on a larger role in multi-lateral interventions and by demonstrating more-effective naval skills. This factor is less salient for smaller adversaries, though it is not absent in those states.

The final geopolitical factor (alliances and partnerships) matters somewhat less across the board, though it is more salient for the more powerful adversaries we surveyed. The factor was of moderate importance in explaining Chinese, Russian, Soviet, and even Iranian interventions but of lower importance for smaller U.S. adversaries. Great powers would be expected to have broader geostrategic concerns, including broader alliance and partnership networks, than smaller states have, so it is perhaps most notable that Iran appears to more closely resemble a great power in the importance it assigns to its partnerships.

Notably, this observation that geopolitical factors play the largest role in adversary intervention decisions is consistent with classical realist theory and neorealist arguments that the behaviors of states are governed by concerns of power, national interest, and competition over resources and influence.⁷¹ In this sense, this insight about adversary intervention decisionmaking is not new. However, it is still valuable

⁷¹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: Norton, 2001; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, 2010; Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth W. Thompson, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6th ed., New York: Alfred Knopf, 1985.

and helps adjudicate competing arguments about the drivers of state intervention behavior that focus more on domestic politics or ideology, as outlined extensively in Chapter Two.

There is more heterogeneity when we consider the role of domestic factors. Domestic factors do not seem to be major intervention drivers for any adversary (with the exception of China and its pursuit of its economic interests), but they clearly matter in different ways for different actors. Russia seems to place little weight on domestic political factors, although military interventions have sometimes had domestic political ramifications, both positive and negative. For Iran, domestic political factors are only moderately important, but the existence of coethnic and coreligious group populations in the potential intervention target appears to play a highly significant role in shaping Iranian intervention decisions. As noted earlier, efforts to support and bolster the position of coethnics have played at least some role in driving most Iranian interventions. Despite these differences, however, adversaries across the board seem to be less influenced by domestic than by geopolitical factors when making intervention decisions. Accompanying this observation, we should also note that these countries are largely authoritarian, with strong controls over domestic media and public opinion, at least for the bulk of the periods that we consider them to be U.S. adversaries.

Ideational factors seem to vary widely over time. Although ideology does not appear to be a major driver of adversary interventions in the present, ideologically driven military interventions were much more common during the Cold War. China, the USSR, and Iran have all used military intervention to spread their ideologies of political and economic systems, and this factor has been particularly important in explaining the interventions of smaller U.S. Cold War adversaries, such as North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba. However, since the end of the Cold War, ideology seems to have mattered much less in regard to intervention decisions. With respect to leadership personality and preferences, despite the fact that major U.S. adversaries, such as Iran, China, and North Korea, have strong autocratic leaders, our analysis does not find evidence that the personalities of these leaders or their predecessors drive intervention behavior. Russia's highly centralized

political system does give substantial importance to the preferences of Vladimir Putin, though his military intervention decisions seem to broadly reflect the desires of the broader Russian foreign policy elite.

Finally, military capabilities and changes in those capabilities seem to function in similar but not identical ways across adversaries. As states become stronger militarily, they are, in most cases, able to take on more-dispersed interventions geographically and to challenge more-capable adversaries. Russia, for instance, has been able to conduct more-complex and sustained operations in Syria because of recent military advances. For smaller adversaries, limited military capabilities often serve as a constraint, generally confining their intervention activities to a smaller geographic area.

In summary, although there is much heterogeneity across adversaries, there are some clear trends and areas of similarity. These trends are useful for understanding the types of events and trends that might drive military interventions across adversaries and that could pose threats to U.S. interests or operations. Still, we need to consider not only the relative importance of high-level factors but how these factors manifest in each country when looking for signposts of adversary military interventions. The most useful signposts for each adversary will be specific and tailored to that adversary. In the next chapter, we discuss some possible signposts and implications of the analysis in this report for the U.S. Army and defense community more broadly.

Summary, Signposts, and Implications

In the previous chapter, we described the key factors driving intervention decisions for three major U.S. adversaries that have conducted large numbers of military interventions (China, Russia, and Iran).¹ A comparison across these adversaries revealed some factors that appear to affect intervention decisions consistently: in particular, geopolitical factors, such as external threat and the regional power balance. Concerns about direct threats to the homeland and a desire to shape the state's regional environment appear to be motivations for nearly all of the adversaries we surveyed for conducting military interventions, irrespective of their size or the nature of their regime. These issues are arguably at the core of all states' security concerns.

Our analysis also identified factors that typically matter less across states for intervention decisions, including leader personality and domestic politics. Although there is a literature suggesting that these factors can affect the foreign policy decisionmaking of states in general, we did not see substantial evidence that these factors consistently affected military intervention decisionmaking among U.S. adversaries, particularly in the post–Cold War period. There was some evidence that these factors mattered more in the early Cold War period, when several U.S. adversaries (such as China) were less well-established institutionally and when individual leader preferences and domestic concerns were more likely to exercise greater influence on intervention and other foreign policy decisions.

¹ As a reminder, the factors identified are favor interventions but do not guarantee that they will occur. Key factors may also be present where no intervention occurs.

Although we observed some common patterns across adversaries, we observed many differences as well. Some of these differences were specific to individual adversaries, whereas others were apparent across categories of adversaries. Most notably, several key factors appear to vary depending on the size of the adversary and the scope of their strategic horizons. For instance, national status concerns appear to affect intervention decisions more for Russia and China than for Iran, which has been more directly focused on its security concerns in the region. Iran was considerably more motivated by the protection of coidentity group populations than either Russia or China was, and China was perhaps the only one of the three with strong economic motives for intervention in the cases we investigated. Ideology plays a much more minor role in shaping current intervention decisions, though we note that ideology was a key driver for all three major adversaries in previous periods: during the Cold War (Russia), under Mao (China), and in the immediate period after 1979 (Iran). These adversary-specific observations are notable but could be particularly useful for identifying signposts for when these states might consider conducting future military interventions. We discuss this issue in the next section.

Signposts of Intervention

Understanding the types of factors that drive intervention decisions is useful for several reasons. First, it can provide insight into state decisionmaking, allowing analysts to understand how different states prioritize geopolitical, domestic, and other factors. Second, it can provide insight into intervention objectives. A better understanding of what motivates adversaries to undertake interventions and, therefore, what they may be hoping to achieve, can help the United States calibrate a response. Finally, these factors can help identify early warning indicators or signposts of likely future adversary interventions. In other words, they can help us identify locations, conflicts, or contexts in which an adversary might choose to launch a military intervention. Such forewarning would give U.S. policymakers and defense planners time to prepare or the option of taking steps to deter the adversary action.

As noted earlier, however, the factors that drive interventions appear to differ across adversaries. Therefore, the signposts that could signal when future interventions are more likely are also likely to be specific to the adversary. In this section, we describe signposts for each of the three major U.S. adversaries discussed in this report: Russia, China, and Iran. We focus on identifying the contexts that would increase the likelihood of U.S. interventions needed to counter adversary interventions in specific regions, as well as those that might prompt or signal a fundamental change in the way one of these three adversaries might decide to use military interventions more generally. We point to specific metrics and indicators that could be used to identify changes in the likelihood of adversary military activity, but our analysis does not support statements about what specific levels of these metrics might warn of a coming intervention. We also do not provide specific locations or timing of future adversary interventions because neither would be supported by the analysis included here.

Signposts of Russian Interventions

We identified three primary signposts for Russian interventions. First, Russia has exhibited a particular willingness to conduct military interventions, including combat missions, in post-Soviet Eurasia. Several key factors overlap in this region that explain Russia's heightened interest, and threats to any of them could be sufficient to trigger Russian military action. These factors include the potential for changes to the regional power balance away from relative Russian predominance, challenges to Russia's status as the dominant power in the region, and the potential for direct, external threats to Russia that could manifest in the region, such as terrorism. Russia has demonstrated a willingness to take large-scale military action in post-Soviet Eurasia when these drivers were present, and it seems likely to do so in the future if they manifest again. Russia's activities within post-Soviet Eurasia seem especially likely to be triggered by the perceived interference of other major powers (e.g., the United States and China) in territories that Russia considers to be within its sphere of influence, whether by NATO in areas bordering Europe or, possibly, in Central Asia.

The second signpost has to do with the Russian desire to preserve existing regional power balances and, especially, to avoid adverse trends in those balances. Although we did not find evidence of Russia proactively intervening to shift regional power balances in its favor, particularly outside post-Soviet Eurasia, we see evidence that Russia is more likely to intervene to prevent relative losses in regional power balances that would adversely affect Russian interests. The intervention in Georgia, for instance, acted against a change to the status quo that Russia viewed as potentially unfavorable or likely to diminish Russian influence. U.S. planners might therefore view changes in the regional power balances that could prompt significant perceived losses in Russian influence as possible motivators of Russian military action. Examples might include events in Georgia, Belarus, or Ukraine that seem to lessen Russian influence. Outside this region, changes in the balance of power that threaten Russian influence in the Middle East may be especially likely to trigger military activity. Analysts typically can observe such shifts qualitatively but may also track relative measures of economic activity or military capabilities.

Finally, it is important to note that Russia is often very open about its vital interests, intentions, and redlines, and U.S. policymakers can use these statements as possible signposts of future interventions. In Ukraine in 2014, for example, Russia signaled clearly that Western interference and expanded influence would trigger a strong Russian reaction. Russia similarly signaled that it planned to respond in the aftermath of the 2008 Bucharest Summit that promised eventual NATO membership to Georgia and Ukraine. Although not every statement by a Russian leader reveals a true intent or interest, efforts to discern those redlines or areas in which Russia is in earnest could help identify circumstances for which Russian intervention is more likely, in turn guiding U.S. defense-planning decisions.

Signposts of Chinese Interventions

For China, we noted in previous chapters the distinction between Chinese interventions in the post-Cold War period, which have been largely multilateral and noncombat, and those during the Cold War that frequently involved combat and often were unilateral efforts to

defend or expand Chinese territory and influence. Our analysis highlights signposts that suggest where more-recent, noncombat interventions could be more likely and signposts that could signal a shift in Chinese behavior leading to more-aggressive interventions, similar to those undertaken in the early Cold War period. First, China has shown a willingness to intervene where there are threats to its growing international economic interests or to Chinese citizens living abroad. As a result, country or regional instability that could threaten either the security of China's economic interests or its citizens could indicate an increased likelihood of a Chinese intervention, albeit one that may be limited in scale, involve only noncombat activities, or be undertaken through multilateral institutions. There are several possible events that could trigger such threats, including civil conflicts or political crisis along the BRI or a natural disaster with an effect on Chinese people or economic interests. Areas along the BRI, especially where it passes through the Middle East (where instability is high) may be particularly likely to be future sites of Chinese interventions. In a postpandemic world with potentially lowered economic growth, competition between states over resources may intensify, increasing the relevance of these economic clashes and their potential to be militarized. Key metrics to track include those associated with economic activity and emerging threats to Chinese citizens abroad.

A second signpost of Chinese intervention could be an expansion of Chinese military partnerships. An expansion of partnerships with countries outside China's immediate region, especially those located in strategic locations that provide economic or geopolitical benefits, could provide an early signal of new Chinese military activities in these regions. China has not typically engaged in extensive bilateral partnerships, so any changes to that philosophy, such as an expansion of a current relationship, deepening BRI cooperation, the establishment of dual-use supply posts, agreements about burden-sharing, or new access agreements, could represent signals about China's future military interventions. Again, these interventions might primarily be focused on ensuring stability, providing assistance, or signaling deterrence. Planners might look for such patterns as an increase in high-level visits by political and military leaders between China and another country or

new Chinese investments in facilities in foreign ports or elsewhere that could host combat operations. These types of activities may be more likely in some countries with which China appears to have strengthening relationships, such as Cambodia, Pakistan, and countries along key maritime or land trade routes in the Middle East or Africa. Notably, these interventions are likely to be outside China's region but also are not likely to be large because China continues to lack the capabilities to project power over long distances.

Third, direct threats to China's sovereignty should also be considered as a key signpost of intervention, including interventions that could be substantially more aggressive than those China has undertaken in recent decades. Such threats might include a dramatic increase in the activities or capabilities of nonstate actors, up to and including a major terrorist attack on Chinese interests at home or abroad. A military response to a terrorist threat would be especially likely if the attack emanated from a country unable to combat or manage the challenge on its own. Tracking terrorist group activity and the growth of nonstate groups and threats could be one way to identify sites of a possible future Chinese intervention. Such an intervention would be most likely within China's neighborhood, particularly including countries along its borders that are known as havens for terrorist groups, such as Indonesia, Cambodia, and Thailand. Similarly, anything perceived to threaten Chinese claims to territories that it considers part of its homeland or areas where it seeks territorial expansion, such as Taiwan or the South China Sea, is also likely to trigger a military response.

Another important signpost would be a dramatic worsening of the relationship between China and the United States, because this could be perceived as a threat to China's sovereignty, national status, and the balance of power in the region. A return to a more overtly hostile relationship could trigger Chinese military interventions against U.S. allies in Asia (e.g., South Korea, Japan) or more-aggressive Chinese interventions in other strategic locations in the Middle East or Africa. In addition, any outbreak of a crisis or dispute at a flashpoint that seemed to pose a clear threat to China's national status or the regional balance of power in East Asia could dramatically increase the risk of an aggressive Chinese intervention, especially if it exacerbates

Chinese nationalism. Obvious potential flashpoints include Taiwan and areas in the South China Sea. However, there are other candidates along Chinese borderlands with India, Vietnam, and other Southeast Asian states. Near-term signposts that a given crisis could be likely to trigger a Chinese response include heightened political rhetoric or a breakdown in political talks, a disruption in trade relations, low-level acts of violence, or military demonstrations.

Finally, the emergence of different, more aggressive leadership in China could signal an increase in the likelihood of more-aggressive Chinese intervention activity. As noted earlier, Mao's more interventionist approach to foreign policy contributed to the higher number and aggressive nature of Chinese military interventions during the Cold War. Although leadership factors have not been a major driver of intervention decisions since China moved to a more consensus-driven leadership model, it is possible that a future, more aggressive leader might return to a more Mao-like approach to military interventions.

Signposts of Iranian Military Interventions

Finally, we identified four signposts of Iranian interventions. First, Iran is most likely to intervene where it shares cultural and religious ties with the host nation or at least where there are larger coethnic populations. Conflicts or crises in these locations that threaten the security or status of coethnic populations are particularly likely to attract Iranian military attention. Iran might use these interventions to gain influence, build partnerships, or as part of its effort to export security to coethnic populations against threats from other groups or actors. When assessing the likelihood of future Iranian interventions, policymakers should look for specific events involving these groups as potential signposts. For example, changes in the political landscapes of countries leading to an increase or decrease of the political power, welfare, and security of coethnic groups; major political upheavals that involve these groups; or direct attacks on these groups appear to affect the likelihood of Iranian interventions. Notably, these interventions could occur in almost any country in the Middle East region that has a substantial Shia population.

Second, any changes in the Middle East region that are likely to shift the balance of power against Iran are likely to trigger an Iranian response. Any threat to a traditional Iranian ally (e.g., Syria) that threatens Iranian influence can serve as a signpost of a heightened risk. Even in these cases, however, Iran is limited by its military capabilities and is most likely to intervene where there already are social or religious cleavages and weaker central authority. Continued involvement in Syria seems likely, as do continued efforts to support coethnics in Iraq and Lebanon. Expanded Iranian activities in Yemen could also be possible. Tracking state capacity and internal ethnic, religious, or political cleavages may help identify states that are vulnerable to interventions.

Finally, Iran is more inclined to intervene in the region when doing so has the potential to tilt the balance of power in its favor. In other words, Iran is most likely to intervene in states where it can gain leverage over the host state's behavior or where the intervention would have direct implications for the balance of power among states. In many cases, such influence relies on the presence of a friendly partner state or a powerful nonstate group. Tehran is also more likely to intervene where there is an opportunity: for example, porous borders, fragile states, or where weak central authority exists. Many of the states already mentioned here would be candidates, including Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. Although Iran is unlikely to launch major interventions outside its region, the majority of countries within the region are potential intervention targets in the right contexts.

Table 5.1 summarizes signposts across these three main U.S. adversaries.²

Summarizing these signposts across adversaries, we make a few key observations. To begin, these major U.S. adversaries appear to be more likely to intervene in response to threats to their core interests in their home regions, including potential shifts in the balance of power, challenges to their status or influence, or direct threats to sovereignty

² Signposts might warn of a possible intervention but do not predict that it necessarily will occur.

Table 5.1
Intervention Signposts, by Adversary

Category	Russia	China	Iran
Geopolitical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developments in post-Soviet Eurasia that threaten Russian status or the regional balance of power (e.g., Western influence in Georgia or Ukraine) • Extraregional changes to the status quo that pose a threat to Russian influence or interests (<i>loss prevention</i>, especially likely in the Middle East) • Violations of previously stated redlines or core interests (e.g., expansion of Western influence into Russia's sphere of influence) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developments at a Chinese flashpoint that threaten Chinese influence, status, or geopolitical interests (e.g., Taiwan, South China Sea, Chinese borderlands) • Expansion of military partnerships that suggest or enable new attitudes about the use of military force (especially likely in South Asia and Africa) • Emergence of new global threats to Chinese interests from nonstate actors or the U.S. rivalry (e.g., Chinese borderlands, neighbors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional changes that pose a potential direct threat to Iran, the Iranian regime, or the regional balance of power (e.g., nonstate threats, the loss of crucial allies or partners, or the expansion of Western influence or military presence) • None identified • None identified
Domestic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instability that threatens Chinese economic interests or nationals (e.g., along the BRI or in Eurasia or the Middle East) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events that threaten the security or status of neighboring Shia populations (e.g., Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen)
Ideational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified

from other states or nonstate groups.³ China and Russia also have signposts that suggest a willingness to intervene outside their home regions (a rare occurrence until recently), given certain conditions. For China, this willingness involves the potential for its interventions to follow its expanding commercial interests and partnerships, as has been the case with its naval counterpiracy mission and related base in Djibouti. For Russia, this willingness involves opportunities to maintain the vestiges of its influence as a great power and to preserve relatively favorable power balances outside post-Soviet Eurasia. Iran, meanwhile, does not appear to have similar signposts for interventions outside the greater Middle East, where it has never conducted an intervention.

Also notable is the presence of a signpost for China highlighting that increased rivalry with the United States could accompany an increased risk of Chinese military interventions, a factor that was not similarly identified as a signpost for Russian or Iranian interventions. There are multiple reasons for this difference. To begin, U.S. relations with Russia and Iran have been notably worse than those with China for some time, so there is a degree to which such concerns are already included in our considerations of those countries' decisions. In addition, greater Chinese capabilities and the greater geographic scope of Chinese interests create a greater potential and plausibility for more Chinese interventions outside its home region, which is more difficult to envision for Russia and Iran, the recent Russian intervention in Syria notwithstanding. A decline in U.S.-Chinese relations to the depths of these other U.S. adversaries is a trend we have not seen since the early Cold War period and would be a troubling indicator of an increased potential for more-aggressive Chinese military interventions in multiple regions given China's now much greater capabilities and resources.

It is also noteworthy that the bulk of the intervention signposts we identify are geopolitical in nature. Relatively few signposts touched on domestic factors (as defined in Chapter Two), and none involved ideational factors. This suggests that geopolitical factors are the most closely tied to adversary intervention decisions, as noted earlier. How-

³ As noted in Chapter Four, this observation is consistent with realist interpretations of international politics.

ever, it should be noted that ideational factors in particular might also be more difficult to measure or be less transparent. This might have made them more difficult to identify in our analysis and would make them less useful as signposts than geopolitical factors, which might be more visible.

Understanding these commonalities and differences could be valuable to policymakers, analysts, and planners because they can help develop analytical and data-collection priorities and provide nuance to the understanding of what motivates key adversaries to intervene.

Implications for U.S. Army Planners

Concern over Adversary Interventions Should Be Tempered (for Now)

A recent increase in adversary military interventions, including several that have raised alarm because of their size, location, and scope (e.g., Russia in Ukraine and Syria, Iran in Syria and Iraq), has increased attention and concern paid to these activities, their potential future trajectory, and the implications for U.S. interests. However, when assessing adversary military activities in the present, it is also important to consider longer-term trends. Overall, adversary military interventions, both in number and in scale, remain far below the levels that the United States had to contend with during the Cold War. Even recent Russian combat interventions in Syria and Ukraine have involved relatively small numbers of troops and a manageable threat to previously established close U.S. allies or partners. The recent growth in Chinese interventions, meanwhile, primarily involves noncombat missions and includes support for many UN peacekeeping missions. Although Iran has several concerning proxy relationships, its use of its military forces outside its borders has remained limited. In comparison with adversary military interventions during the Cold War period, which included intense wars fought directly against U.S. forces in Korea and Vietnam and a host of other efforts to combat U.S. influence throughout the world, recent trends in adversary interventions suggest much more limited concerns.

For U.S. Army planners, then, the primary difficulty with adversary military intervention trends is not that they might continue as they are but that they might more radically shift to involve substantially more-aggressive and larger interventions. Several factors, identified earlier, could contribute to such a shift, including an intensification of U.S. rivalries with key adversaries (such as Russia or China), an adversary's perception of the threats it faces from U.S. actions, or dramatic domestic changes in China or Iran that sharply alter how an adversary thinks about and uses its military forces. Such a shift in intervention trends would also be more likely if accompanied by an expansion in the number of smaller U.S. adversaries: In the 1980s, we identified ten U.S. state adversaries, in comparison with just five in 2018. States such as Cuba, despite their small size and limited capabilities, conducted a large number of interventions that greatly complicated U.S. efforts during the Cold War. An increase in military-capable partners for China or Russia that could combat U.S. or allied influence could substantially increase the risk that adversary military interventions return to a scale and intensity that would more directly threaten U.S. interests. U.S. planners, then, will need to track not only the current, smaller-scale military activities of U.S. adversaries but also evidence of the beginnings of significant, systemic shifts (domestic or international) that could reorient the way key adversaries think about the use of force.

Intervention Signposts Should Be Prioritized

The signposts we identified as possible early warning indicators of future interventions by key U.S. adversaries can serve more broadly to focus and prioritize the analysis and attention of U.S. military planners and intelligence officers. It is useful to think about the signposts at three levels relative to the adversary: outside its home region, within its home region, and domestic. Table 5.2 organizes our signposts into these three levels.

Although there are signposts at all three levels, the importance of signposts in the home region is shared across adversaries. According to our analysis of historical trends, alluded to earlier, these signposts in the home region also seem to be the most likely to trigger substantial

Table 5.2
Adversary Signposts Organized by Geography

Category	Russia	China	Iran
Outside home region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extraregional changes to the status quo that pose a threat to Russian influence or interests (loss prevention) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergence of new global threats to Chinese interests from nonstate actors or the U.S. rivalry • Instability that threatens Chinese economic interests or nationals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified
Home region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developments in post-Soviet Eurasia that threaten Russian status or the regional balance of power • Violations of previously stated redlines or core interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developments at a Chinese flashpoint that threaten Chinese influence, status, or geopolitical interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developments in the Middle East region that threaten Iranian influence or the regional balance of power • Regional changes that pose a potential direct threat to Iran or the Iranian regime, including nonstate threats or the loss of crucial allies or partners • Events that threaten the security or status of neighboring Shia populations
Domestic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of military partnerships that suggest or enable new attitudes about the use of military force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified

interventions (including those involving combat), making these home region signposts especially useful for planners and analysts. At the home region level, analysts might benefit most from watching for any evidence of a shift in the regional balance of power or change to the status quo that threatens the adversary's influence or national status. In the case of Russia, for example, developments in Russia's near abroad challenge Russian national status or imply the potential for a loss of influence or power in such places as Georgia, Belarus, or Ukraine. For China, similarly, changes in its home region are most likely to present new external threats or new challenges to national status and regional power balances and seem to be the strongest predictors of military activity. Developments around China's regional flashpoints (Taiwan, its borders with Central Asia, and the South China Sea) could be especially significant. Notably, both China and Russia have regions or territories that are particularly sensitive when it comes to military interventions and about which each country has been clear and explicit when it comes to the consequences of a response. These redlines should be natural focal points for military analysts. Areas where the spheres of influence for China and Russia might overlap in Central Asia are also worth watching. Although these regions are increasingly important to China's economic expansion through the BRI, they also remain important to Russia's national status and to its desire for a favorable regional balance of power. Finally, as noted earlier, Iran responds almost exclusively to developments in the greater Middle East and seems very sensitive to changes in that region that threaten the status quo, create new adversaries, or pose threats to coethnic populations. Such changes could occur almost anywhere in the region with a sizable Shia population but seem especially likely in weaker states and where Iran can gain significant influence with relatively limited investments. Investing in regional expertise can help the U.S. Army and DoD ensure that they are able to discern which regional developments are most worrisome from the U.S. perspective and can also help identify U.S. responses that can safeguard U.S. interests without causing further damage or escalating adversary threat perceptions.

Table 5.2 also indicates that signposts in regions farther from key adversaries exist and are most relevant to Russia and China. Specifi-

cally, Russia and China are both sensitive to developments outside their home regions that imply changes to the status quo that could affect their security, economic, or other interests. For China, threats to its emerging transnational economic infrastructure seem most likely to trigger a military response, whereas Russia is sensitive to challenges to its international influence and its geopolitical status and reputation. China and Russia may also be sensitive to changes outside their home regions that signal the emergence of new threats or intensified rivalries with the United States. We discuss the potential for such a shift and its implications in the next section. For U.S. planners, our assessment of these factors identifies several key developments that should provide an early warning of the heightened potential for intensified adversary military interventions in the regions where these signposts occur. These developments overlap with key factors mentioned earlier and include instability or changes in the status quo that infringe on Chinese economic interests or that imply a strategic loss for Russia, the emergence of a new transnational threat (such as violent nonstate actors), or the emergence of more-conflictual relations between the United States and China or Russia. Purely domestic signposts seem somewhat less common.

Our signposts suggest that, where military and intelligence analysts are forced to make decisions about how to prioritize resources, these analysts could benefit most by prioritizing the home region level of analysis. Signposts for outside the home region do exist but might occur less frequently or might provide more-ambiguous signals of future interventions; domestic signposts seem least likely to occur, albeit with significant consequence if they do. Home region signposts, regardless of their level, can inform U.S. decisions about posture, partnerships, and investments. For example, U.S. forces, seeing evidence of one of these signposts, might choose to increase deterrent presence to prevent an adversary action, increase support to key partners in the region that might be targeted or affected by such an intervention, or use military exercises, diplomacy, or other means to signal U.S. commitments, intentions, or red lines in the region or country of interest. The United States could act similarly to prevent identified signposts

from emerging (for example, to maintain stability and status quo in regions of strategic importance).

Of the Three Adversaries, China Has the Greatest Prospects for Increased, Extraregional Interventions

Of the three adversaries considered here, China has the greatest potential to shift adversary intervention trends in a more concerning direction. China has substantially greater resources and, in some areas, capabilities than Russia or any other current U.S. adversary. It also has an expanding set of strategic interests and ambitions outside its home region. We also identified several possible domestic changes that could trigger a more aggressive approach to the use of military force by China. However, even with expanded capabilities, China still lacks the ability to project combat power in a meaningful way over long distances outside its neighborhood, though China could of course intervene to conduct noncombat activities. Moreover, Chinese military interventions have been quite limited in scope over the past three decades and have been largely confined to efforts such as UN peacekeeping or counterpiracy that are, at worst, neutral for U.S. interests.

Dramatic changes in China's approach to military interventions, were they to occur, would likely have the largest effect on overall trends in adversary military interventions that U.S. Army planners would need to contend with. There are many possible scenarios that could lead to an increased frequency of Chinese military interventions with an expanded set of implications for U.S. interests. First, as discussed earlier, such a shift in Chinese intervention decisionmaking could occur following any sharp deterioration in U.S.-Chinese relations, which would place the two states firmly on opposite sides of an intense, militarized rivalry. Closer to China's neighborhood, a larger-scale Chinese combat intervention could also occur more suddenly over several existing hot spots, such as Taiwan or along the BRI, where Chinese economic interests could be threatened. However, the likelihood of such an intervention would also be affected by the overall tenor of Chinese relations with the United States and other neighbors and China's military capabilities at the time. China is also the most likely U.S. adversary to build a network of client states that are able

to initiate their own interventions, given China's wider economic and geopolitical reach, similar to what the Soviet Union did through client states (such as Cuba and East Germany) during the Cold War. Such a development could create new security threats to the United States.

Assessing the likelihood of such a dramatic deterioration in U.S.-Chinese relations is beyond the scope of this report. We also emphasize the potential for increased cooperation with China in military interventions designed to increase regional stability or counter malign nonstate actors. But the drivers of Chinese military interventions bear particular attention because of their greater ability to adversely affect overall levels of U.S. adversary military interventions and because of the risks that such interventions have the potential to pose to a wider range of U.S. interests.

Directions for Future Research

We have alluded to several key questions deserving of future research. First, interventions below the 100 person-year threshold and interventions by proxy forces are both deserving of additional research. Neither was included here, but both have key strategic implications for the United States that are worth investigating in more detail.

Second, future research should expand the analysis of factors relevant to intervention decisionmaking by constructing a complete database of noninterventions by U.S. adversaries to accompany the database of interventions that was used for the analyses presented here. As noted previously, the combined database of interventions and noninterventions could be used to more rigorously assess which key factors are associated with military interventions rather than the decision to delay or forgo such an intervention.

Third, there are ways in which the data we have collected for this report could be improved to provide more insight into adversary intervention behavior. Chief among these possible additions are information on the fatalities associated with each intervention and information on the resources expended. Both would provide better insight into the costs of adversary interventions and therefore better insight into the

adversary's willingness to sustain higher costs under different circumstances. Additional details on adversary forces deployed, including specific types of units or forces, would also be useful but likely would be difficult to reliably collect across interventions, adversaries, and time.

Full List of Adversary Intervention Cases

Table A.1 shows a complete list of the adversary military interventions that we identified post-1945.

Table A.1
List of Adversary Military Interventions, by Year (1946–2018)

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
Soviet Union	Post–World War II Occupation of Austria	Austria	1946	1955
Soviet Union	Ili Rebellion/Soviet Assistance to Second East Turkestan Republic	China (East Turkestan)	1946	1946
Soviet Union	Post–World War II Occupation of Manchuria	China (Manchuria)	1946	1946
Soviet Union	Post–World War II Occupation of Bornholm Island	Denmark (Bornhold Island)	1946	1946
Soviet Union	Post–World War II Occupation of Eastern Europe	East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria	1946	1954
Soviet Union	Soviet Cold War Deterrence Posture in Finland	Finland (Porkkala)	1946	1955
Soviet Union	Iran-Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946	Iran (Autonomous Azerbaijan)	1946	1946
Soviet Union	Post–World War II Occupation of Korea	North Korea	1946	1948
Soviet Union	Soviet Cold War Deterrence Posture in Manchuria	China (Port Arthur/Lushon/Dalian Naval Bases)	1947	1955
Soviet Union	Soviet Advisory Mission in the DPRK	North Korea	1948	1950
Soviet Union	Shanghai Air Defense	China	1950	1950
China	Post-Chinese Civil War Clashes with Taiwan/Battle of Dongshan Island	Dongshan Island (Taiwan occupied)	1950	1950
Soviet Union	Korean War	North Korea, China	1950	1953

Table A.1—Continued

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
North Korea	Korean War	South Korea	1950	1953
China	Korean War	South Korea, North Korea	1950	1953
China	Post-Chinese Civil War Clashes with Taiwan/Hainan Island Campaign	Taiwan (Hainan Islands)	1950	1950
China	First Indo-China War (Advisory/Assistance Mission)	Vietnam	1950	1956
China	Chinese Incursions into Disputed Burmese Territory	Burma/Myanmar	1952	1956
China	Post-Korean War Reconstruction of DPRK	North Korea	1953	1958
China	First Taiwan Straits Crisis	Taiwan (Taiwan Straits)	1954	1955
Soviet Union	Soviet Cold War Deterrence Posture in Eastern Europe	East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania	1955	1991
Soviet Union	Hungarian Revolution	Hungary	1956	1958
Soviet Union	Poznan Riots (I, II)	Poland	1956	1956
Soviet Union	Soviet Cold War Deterrence Posture in Syria	Syria (Tartus and Latakia Naval Bases)	1956	1991
China	Second Taiwan Straits Crisis	Taiwan (Taiwan Straits)	1958	1958
China	Sino-Indian Border Crisis at Longju	India (Longju region)	1959	1960

Table A.1—Continued

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
Vietnam (North Vietnam)	Vietnam War	South Vietnam	1960	1975
China	Chinese Incursions into Burma Against Kuomintang Guerrilla Bases	Burma/Myanmar	1961	1961
Soviet Union	Soviet Training, Advisory, and Assistance Mission to Cuba	Cuba	1961	1991
Vietnam (North Vietnam)	Vietnamese Intervention in Laotian Civil War	Laos	1961	1975
Soviet Union	Soviet Cold War Advisory/Assistance Mission in Algeria	Algeria	1962	1991
Soviet Union	Cuban Missile Crisis	Cuba	1962	1962
China	Sino-Indian War	India (Assam)	1962	1962
Soviet Union	North Yemen War	North Yemen	1962	1968
Cuba	Cuban Advisory and Training Mission in Algeria/Algerian-Morocco Border Dispute of 1963	Algeria	1963	1964
Vietnam (North Vietnam)	Vietnamese Force in Cambodia	Cambodia	1965	1977
Cuba	Cuban Advisory and Training Mission in Congo-Brazzaville (I) and Zaire	Congo-Brazzaville; Congo-Kinshasa (Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC])	1965	1968

Table A.1—Continued

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
Soviet Union	Soviet Advisory and Training Mission During Vietnam War	North Vietnam	1965	1974
China	Vietnam War	North Vietnam	1965	1971
North Korea	Vietnam War	North Vietnam	1966	1968
North Korea	Second Korean Conflict	South Korea (Demilitarized Zone), South Korean waters	1966	1969
Soviet Union	Soviet Training, Advisory, and Assistance Mission to Egypt	Egypt (Alexandria and Marsa Matruh Naval Bases)	1967	1976
Soviet Union	Six-Day War	Egypt (Sinai)	1967	1967
China	Sino-Indian Border Clashes at Nathu La and Cho La	India	1967	1967
China	Chinese Road Construction and Defense in Laos	Laos	1967	1978
Soviet Union	Soviet Cold War Deterrence Posture in Mongolia	Mongolia	1967	1991
China	Myanmar Insurgency	Burma/Myanmar	1968	1971
Soviet Union	Invasion of Czechoslovakia/Prague Spring	Czechoslovakia	1968	1969
Soviet Union	Sino-Soviet Border Conflict/Zhenbao Island Incident	China (Ussuri River, Zhenbao Island)	1969	1969
China	Sino-Soviet Border Conflict	Soviet Union (Ussuri River, Zhenbao Island)	1969	1969

Table A.1—Continued

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
Soviet Union	War of Attrition	Egypt	1970	1970
Soviet Union	Soviet Deterrence and Advisory Mission in South Yemen	Yemen (Socotra and Aden Naval Bases)	1970	1990
Soviet Union	Sudanese Civil War	Sudan	1971	1971
Soviet Union	Soviet Cold War Deterrence and Advisory Mission in Somalia	Somalia	1972	1977
Libya	Libyan Support to Idi Amin	Uganda	1972	1972
East Germany	East German Training and Advisory Mission to Angola/Congo-Brazzaville	Angola, Congo-Brazzaville	1973	1989
Libya	Libyan Occupation of the Aouzou Strip	Chad (Aouzou Strip)	1973	1994
North Korea	Yom Kippur War	Egypt	1973	1973
Soviet Union	Yom Kippur War	Egypt, Syria	1973	1973
Cuba	Cuban Military Advisory and Training Mission in South Yemen	South Yemen	1973	1990
Cuba	Cuban Forces in Syria/Golan Heights During and After the Yom Kippur War	Syria (Golan Heights)	1973	1975
Soviet Union	Soviet Cold War Deterrence and Advisory Mission in Libya	Libya (Tripoli and Tobruk Naval Bases)	1974	1991
China	Battle of the Paracel Islands	Paracel Islands	1974	1974

Table A.1—Continued

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
China	Chinese Advisory and Training Mission to Angolan Guerrillas in Zaire/DRC	Zaire/DRC	1974	1975
Soviet Union	Soviet Cold War Deterrence and Advisory Mission in Angola/Angolan Civil War	Angola	1975	1991
Cuba	Cuban Military Mission in Angola and Congo-Brazzaville (II)	Angola, Congo-Brazzaville (including airstrikes in Namibia in 1988)	1975	1991
Vietnam (North Vietnam)	Sino-Vietnamese Border Clashes	China	1975	1979
Vietnam (North Vietnam)	Vietnamese Military Support to Communist Government in Laos	Laos	1975	1991
China	Sino-Vietnamese Border Clashes	Vietnam	1975	1979
North Korea	North Korean Training and Advisory Mission in Zaire	Zaire	1975	1976
Libya	Arab League Security and Deterrent Force in Lebanon	Lebanon	1976	1976
Cuba	Cuban Military Advisory and Training Mission in Mozambique	Mozambique	1976	1990
Cuba	Cuban Military Advisory and Training Mission in Somalia	Somalia	1976	1977

Table A.1—Continued

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
Vietnam (North Vietnam)	1977–1978 Vietnamese-Cambodian Border Skirmishes	Cambodia	1977	1978
China	Chinese Training and Advisory Mission in Cambodia	Cambodia	1977	1978
Libya	Libyan-Egyptian Border War	Egypt	1977	1977
Cuba	Cuban Forces in Ethiopia	Ethiopia	1977	1989
East Germany	East German Training and Advisory Mission to Ethiopia	Ethiopia	1977	1989
North Korea	North Korean Training and Advisory Mission in Ethiopia	Ethiopia	1977	1985
Soviet Union	Soviet Cold War Deterrence and Advisory Mission in Ethiopia/Ethio-Somali (Ogaden) War/Ethio-Eritrean War	Ethiopia (Ogaden, Eritrea, Dhalak Archipelago Naval Bases)	1977	1990
Soviet Union	Soviet Cold War Advisory Mission in Mozambique	Mozambique	1977	1990
Soviet Union	Soviet Advisory and Assistance Mission to People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan Government in Afghanistan	Afghanistan	1978	1979
Vietnam (North Vietnam)	Vietnamese Invasion of Cambodia	Cambodia	1978	1979
Libya	First Libyan Military Intervention in Chad	Chad, Sudan (airstrikes in 1981)	1978	1981

Table A.1—Continued

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
East Germany	East German Training and Advisory Mission to Guinea	Guinea	1978	1989
Libya	Ugandan-Tanzanian War	Uganda, Tanzania (airstrikes in 1979)	1978	1979
Soviet Union	Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan/Mujahideen Insurgency	Afghanistan	1979	1989
Vietnam (North Vietnam)	Vietnamese Occupation of Cambodia	Cambodia	1979	1991
East Germany	East German Training and Advisory Mission to Mozambique	Mozambique	1979	1989
North Korea	North Korean Training and Advisory Mission in Uganda	Uganda	1979	1983
China	Sino-Vietnamese War (Third Indochina War)	Vietnam	1979	1979
Soviet Union	Soviet Deterrence of the People's Republic of China in Vietnam	Vietnam	1979	1991
East Germany	East German Training and Advisory Mission to Algeria	Algeria	1980	1989
Cuba	The Flamingo Incident	Bahamas (Cay Santo Domingo)	1980	1980
Iran	Iran–Iraq War/Advisory and Assistance Mission to Iraqi Kurds	Iraq	1980	1988

Table A.1—Continued

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
Soviet Union	Soviet Cold War Deterrence Posture in Vietnam	Vietnam (Cam Ranh Bay)	1980	1991
Libya	Gulf of Sidra Incident I	Gulf of Sidra	1981	1981
East Germany	East German Training and Advisory Mission to Libya	Libya	1981	1989
Cuba	Cuban Training, Advisory, and counterinsurgency Mission in Nicaragua	Nicaragua	1981	1990
China	Naval Activities in the South China Sea	South China Sea	1981	Ongoing
China	1981 Sino-Vietnamese Border Clash	Vietnam	1981	1981
North Korea	North Korean Training and Advisory Mission in Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	1981	1983
Cuba	Cuban Training and Advisory Mission in Grenada/Defense of Grenada During U.S. Invasion	Grenada	1982	1983
Iran	Lebanon War	Lebanon	1982	1982
North Korea	North Korean Training and Advisory Mission in Madagascar	Madagascar	1982	1989
North Korea	North Korean Training and Advisory Mission in Mozambique	Mozambique	1982	1988
Soviet Union	Operation "Kavkaz-2"	Syria	1982	1983
Libya	Second Libyan Military Intervention in Chad	Chad	1983	1987

Table A.1—Continued

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
Libya	Libyan Forces in Northern Lebanon	Lebanon	1983	1984
Soviet Union	Nicaraguan Civil War	Nicaragua	1984	1991
Iran	“Tanker War”/Clashes with U.S. Navy/Reflagged Kuwaiti Oil Tankers During Iran–Iraq War	Persian Gulf	1984	1988
Libya	Libyan Bombardment of Omdurman	Sudan	1984	1984
China	Chinese Occupation of Laoshan and Dongshan	Vietnam	1984	1992
North Korea	North Korean Training and Advisory Mission in Angola	Angola	1985	1987
Libya	Libyan Advisory, Training, and Humanitarian Mission in Sudan; Libyan Support to Chadian Rebels in Darfur	Sudan	1986	1987
Vietnam (North Vietnam)	Sino-Vietnamese Naval Battle in the Spratly Islands/ Johnson Reef Skirmish	Spratly Islands	1988	1988
China	Sino-Vietnamese Naval Battle in the Spratly Islands/ Johnson Reef Skirmish	Spratly Islands	1988	1988
Iraq	Iraqi Invasion and Occupation of Kuwait	Kuwait	1990	1991
Iraq	Persian Gulf War (including airstrikes in Israel)	Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Israel	1991	1991
Russia	Armenian Deterrence Presence/Armenian-Azerbaijani Border Conflict	Armenia	1992	Ongoing

Table A.1—Continued

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
Russia	Russian Deterrence Presence in Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan	1992	2013
Yugoslavia/ Serbia	Yugoslav Support to Serb Nationalists in Bosnia and Croatia	Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia (Krajina, East Slavonia)	1992	1995
China	UN Peacekeeping Operations in Cambodia	Cambodia	1992	1993
Russia	UN Peacekeeping Operations in Croatia	Croatia	1992	1997
Yugoslavia/ Serbia	Yugoslav Forces in Dubrovnik, Post-Croatian Independence	Croatia	1992	1992
Russia	Abkhazia Separatist Insurgency	Georgia (Abkhazia)	1992	1994
Russia	Russian Peacekeeping Forces in South Ossetia	Georgia (South Ossetia)	1992	2008
Iran	Airstrikes Against Kurdish and Mojahedin-e-Khalq Rebel Bases in Iraq	Iraq	1992	2001
Russia	Transnistria Deterrence Presence	Moldova (Transnistria)	1992	Ongoing
Russia	Transnistria War	Moldova (Transnistria)	1992	1992
Russia	Russian Peacekeeping Forces in Moldova	Moldova (Transnistria)	1992	Ongoing
Russia	Tajikistan Border Presence	Tajikistan	1992	2005
Russia	Tajik Civil War	Tajikistan	1992	1997
Russia	NATO/UN Peacekeeping Operations in Bosnia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1994	2002

Table A.1—Continued

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
Russia	Russian Peacekeeping Operations in Abkhazia (Commonwealth of Independent States)	Georgia (Abkhazia)	1994	2008
Russia	UN Peacekeeping Operations in Angola	Angola	1995	1999
Russia	Tajikistan Base	Tajikistan	1997	Ongoing
Russia	Sevastopol Base	Ukraine	1997	2014
Russia	Russian Participation in NATO Peacekeeping Operations in Kosovo	Kosovo	1999	2003
North Korea	First Battle of Yeongpyeong	South Korean maritime border	1999	1999
Russia	UN Peacekeeping Operations in Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	2000	2005
Cuba	Cuban Military Advisers in Venezuela	Venezuela	2000	2015
Libya	Libyan Presidential Protection and Stabilization Force in Central African Republic	Central African Republic	2001	2002
North Korea	Second Battle of Yeongpyeong	South Korean maritime border	2002	2002
China	UN Peacekeeping Operations in DRC	DR Congo	2003	Ongoing
Iran	Iranian Forces in Iraq Post-Saddam: U.S. Occupation of Iraq and Islamic State Insurgency	Iraq	2003	Ongoing
Russia	Kyrgyzstan Deterrence Presence	Kyrgyzstan	2003	Ongoing
China	UN Peacekeeping Operations in Liberia	Liberia	2004	2017

Table A.1—Continued

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
China	UN Peacekeeping Operations in Lebanon	Lebanon	2006	Ongoing
China	UN Peacekeeping Operations in Sudan	Sudan, South Sudan	2006	Ongoing
Russia	UN Peacekeeping Operations in Sudan/South Sudan	Sudan, South Sudan	2006	2012
China	Counterpiracy Mission to the Gulf of Aden/Base in Djibouti	Djibouti, Gulf of Aden	2008	Ongoing
Russia	Russo-Georgian War	Georgia	2008	2008
Russia	South Ossetia/Abkhazia Deterrence Presence	Georgia	2008	Ongoing
Iran	Antipiracy Naval Operations off Horn of Africa	Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Bab al-Mandab	2008	Ongoing
China	UN and African Union Peacekeeping Operations in Darfur	Sudan (Darfur)	2008	Ongoing
Russia	UN Peacekeeping Operations in Chad/Central African Republic	Chad	2009	2010
North Korea	Battle of Dacheong Island	South Korean maritime border	2009	2009
North Korea	Cheonan Sinking	South Korean maritime border	2010	2010
Iran	Syrian Civil War	Syria	2011	Ongoing
China	UN Peacekeeping Operations in Mali	Mali	2014	Ongoing

Table A.1—Continued

Adversary	Intervention Name	Intervention Location	Start Year	End Year
Russia	Annexation of Crimea	Ukraine	2014	2014
Russia	War in Donbas/Intervention in Eastern Ukraine	Ukraine	2014	Ongoing
Russia	Syrian Civil War	Syria	2015	Ongoing
Iran	Iran Launches Rockets into Golan	Israel (Golan)	2018	2018

Coding of Adversary Case Studies

Table B.1 provides the coding of the individual cases for each adversary.

Table B.1
Key Factors in Adversary Case Studies

Factor	Chinese Counterpiracy Intervention and Establishment of Djibouti Base (2008–Present)					
	Chinese Intervention in Vietnam, 1979	Chinese Counterpiracy Intervention and Establishment of Djibouti Base (2008–Present)	2008 Russo-Georgian War	Russian Intervention in Syria (2015–present)	Iranian Intervention in Syria	Iranian Intervention in Iraq
Regional power balance	High	High	High	High	High	High
External threat to sovereignty	High	High	High	High	High	High
National status concerns	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Medium
Alliance or partnership concerns	High	High	High	Moderate	High	High
Domestic politics and legitimacy	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
Economic interests	Low	High	Low	Low	Low	Low
Coidentity group populations in host	Moderate	Low	Low	Low	High	High
Leadership and personality	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Medium	Low
Ideology	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Enablers	Low	Moderate	Low	High	Low	Low

Key Factors for Other U.S. Adversaries

Chapter Four covers the drivers of military interventions for the three key U.S. adversaries with the most extensive military intervention activity. In this appendix, we cover three smaller U.S. adversaries (or former adversaries) that have intervened less often and with fewer troops but that are still worth exploring in more detail. We again highlight those factors that were most important for adversaries' military intervention decisionmaking.

Cuba

During the Cold War, Cuba was the most prolific intervener in the developing world among all of the Socialist-bloc satellite states. Nearly all Cuban Cold War interventions occurred in Africa and Latin America, except twice in the mid-1970s, when Cuban pilots and soldiers deployed to the Middle East (Syria and South Yemen). With the exception of major combat deployments to Angola (1975) and Ethiopia (1977), all of these interventions were relatively small training, advisory, and assistance missions with typically between a few hundred and 1,000 personnel. However, Havana's adventurism was incremental and potentially escalatory.

Cuban interventions in Africa fall into two distinct periods (1963–1966 and 1975–1990), during which the scope of Cuban interventionism in Africa differed greatly but the fundamental factors driving Cuban interventions remained relatively constant. Each phase was largely set in motion by the process of decolonization: first, the

emergence of independent states from the French and Belgian colonial empires in the early 1960s and then the sudden independence of former Portuguese colonies after the coup in Lisbon in 1974. But whereas fewer than 2,000 Cubans deployed to Africa (cumulatively) between 1961 and 1974, some 30,000 Cubans entered Angola between October 1975 and April 1976 alone.¹ At its peak from 1977 to 1978, Cuba may have deployed upward of 40,000 to 50,000 troops in Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Congo-Brazzaville.

In Latin America, Castro began attempting to foment regional revolutions with small expeditionary missions as early as June 1959, but these tiny preliminary efforts were ineffective.² Following the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis, Cuban support to Latin American revolutionaries became focused almost exclusively on providing training in Cuba, as well as financing, arms, and equipment instead of on deploying foreign forces throughout the hemisphere.³ Cuba did not succeed in establishing a large foreign presence in the region until Nicaragua in the early 1980s, when upward of a few thousand personnel deployed to support the new Sandinista government and, for the first time in the Cold War, to train significant numbers of Latin revo-

¹ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959–1976*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2002, p. 9.

² These efforts all involved a Cuban ground force equivalent of less than 100 person-years and therefore did not meet our size threshold to qualify as foreign interventions. In 1959 alone, small covert Cuban expeditionary forces reportedly deployed to Panama, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti to foment insurrection and help overthrow the conservative regimes of Ernesto de la Guardia, Luis Somoza, Rafael Trujillo, and Francois Duvalier, respectively. See Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), “Foreign Intervention by Cuba,” undated, declassified on November 1, 2001, document # CIA-RDP77M00144R00040010003-7, p. 1. See also Servando González, *The Secret Fidel Castro: Deconstructing the Symbol*, Oakland, Calif.: InteliBooks, 2001, pp. 108–111.

³ Piero Gleijeses explains Havana’s strategic calculations as follows:

Very few Cubans, however, joined the guerillas in Latin America. Havana’s revolutionary fervor was tempered by self-preservation . . . [After the Missile Crisis,] Cuba did not want to give the United States a pretext for intervention, and the export of Cuban guerillas would be far more provocative than the import of hundreds of Latin Americans to train on the island (Glejeses, 2002, p. 23).

lutionary guerrillas on foreign soil in the Western Hemisphere.⁴ After 1990, Cuban foreign military adventurism greatly diminished until its most recent advisory mission in Venezuela (early 2000s to present), about which little is currently known in open sources.

Across this arc of Cuban Cold War military interventions, a handful of factors appear to have weighed most heavily on Havana's decisions to commit its forces abroad. First and foremost, ideological drivers mattered.⁵ The imperative to support fellow revolutionary socialist movements and global struggles against colonialism, racism, and U.S., Western, and Israeli⁶ imperialism undergirded every Cuban intervention (small or large) in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.⁷ After Castro's first early, failed efforts to export revolutionary ideology in Latin America, his first deployment of major conventional forces abroad—a 500–700-man tank brigade to Algeria to support Ahmed Ben Bella's regime during its brief border war with Morocco in 1963⁸—was driven largely by a sense of ideological solidarity with the

⁴ During the 1960s and 1970s, Cuban support flowed to revolutionary groups in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. However, until the Sandinistas' victory, the best currently available archival research indicates that Cuba never deployed more than a handful of advisers to these conflicts and therefore they are not coded as foreign interventions in our data set (see Gleijeses, 2002, p. 23).

⁵ It is important to note, however, that unlike fellow revolutionary leader Che Guevara, ideologically “[Castro] was not a Marxist-Leninist when he came to power” (Gleijeses, 2002, p. 18).

⁶ From 1959 to 1967, Cuban-Israeli relations were actually “rather cordial”; only after the Six-Day War in 1967 and Yom Kippur War in 1973 did Castro increasingly equate Zionism with U.S. and Western imperialism (see Allan Metz, “Cuban-Israeli Relations: From the Cuban Revolution to the New World Order,” *Cuban Studies*, Vol. 23, 1993, pp. 113, 123).

⁷ See, for instance, Pamela S. Falk, “Cuba in Africa,” *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1987; William J. Durch, “Revolution from a F.A.R.: The Cuban Armed Forces in Africa and the Middle East,” Washington, D.C.: Center for Naval Analyses, September 1977a; William J. Durch, “The Cuban Military in Africa and the Middle East: From Algeria to Angola,” Washington, D.C.: Center for Naval Analyses, September 1977b; Fidel Castro, “Funeral Ceremony: Cubans Who Died in Grenada,” speech delivered at the Plaza de la Revolución, Havana, Cuba, November 14, 1983.

⁸ Prior to the Algerian deployment, Cuba also reportedly deployed a small number of advisers to Ghana to support Kwame Nkrumah's young regime and to train anticolonialist

veterans of the Algerian Revolution.⁹ These ideological drivers deepened the following year as the wave of postcolonial revolutions intensified. As Gleijeses explains,

Cuba's interest in sub-Saharan Africa quickened in late 1964. This was the moment of the great illusion, when the Cubans, and many others, believed that revolution beckoned in Africa. Guerrillas were fighting the Portuguese in Angola; armed struggle was accelerated in Portuguese Guinea and beginning in Mozambique; in Congo Brazzaville, a new government was loudly proclaiming its revolutionary sympathies. And above all, there was Congo Leopoldville (later called Zaire) where armed revolt had been spreading with stunning speed since the spring of 1964, threatening the survival of the corrupt pro-American regime.¹⁰

In 1964–1966, therefore, relatively small contingents of Cuban forces led by Che Guevara and Jorge Risquet deployed to sub-Saharan Africa for largely ideological reasons: to demonstrate solidarity with and to assist Zairean rebels (in Tanzania and Congo-Kinshasa), the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (in Congo-Brazzaville), and the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (in Guinea-Bissau) and to defend the newly independent regime in Congo-Brazzaville.¹¹ However, after the covert Guevara-led mission to U.S.-supported Zaire collapsed in November 1965, Castro began

guerrillas. Little is known about this deployment, however, which ended in 1965–1966 and probably never numbered more than 100 advisers. Dennis Laumann, “Che Guevara’s Visit to Ghana,” *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, New Series, No. 9, 2005.

⁹ Citing remarks from Cuban intellectual Roberto Gonzalez, Gleijeses writes,

A very close bond, a kind of spontaneous “brotherhood,” developed between the Cuban revolution and the Algerian revolution even before 1959, because they were evolving along parallel paths. The Cuban people identified with the Algerian struggle to a degree that would not be repeated until, perhaps, the Nicaraguan revolution (Piero Gleijeses, “Cuba’s First Venture in Africa: Algeria, 1961–1965,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, February 1996, p. 161).

¹⁰ Piero Gleijeses, “Havana’s Policy in Africa, 1959–76: New Evidence from Cuban Archives,” *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Nos. 8–9, Winter 1996/1997, p. 6.

¹¹ These missions never numbered more than a few hundred.

to withdraw from the Congo, “no longer deluded that revolution was around the corner.”¹² With the exception of persistent, low-level support to the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde,¹³ Cuba essentially disengaged from Africa until 1975, when tens of thousands of Cuban troops deployed to support the socialist governments of Angola, Ethiopia, Congo-Brazzaville, Mozambique, and Somalia and to demonstrate solidarity and provide support to the other ongoing, national revolutionary and anti-Apartheid movements based partly in Angola (the South West Africa People’s Organization, African National Congress, Zimbabwe African National Union, and Zimbabwe African People’s Union).¹⁴

Closely related to these revolutionary ideological factors, geopolitical factors—in particular, a desire to affect regional power balances and enhance Cuba’s national status—also factored heavily in Cuban intervention decisionmaking. The tiny island nation was the only Socialist-bloc client state to project significant power beyond its neighborhood during the Cold War, winning Cuba “a degree of attention and international prestige which far outweighed the island’s size and resources.”¹⁵ Enhancing Havana’s role and extending its influence

¹² Gleijeses, 1996/1997, p. 6.

¹³ According to Gleijeses’ recent archival research, Jorge Risquet, the commander of Cuban forces in the Congo, notified Cabral in September 1966 that Cuban forces would soon be withdrawing from Congo-Brazzaville, offering, “If you want, I can ask Fidel to send them to Guinea-Bissau instead.” Cabral, however, declined these offers of support; contrary to other contemporaneous U.S. intelligence reports that assessed the number of Cuban forces in Guinea as being in the hundreds, Gleijeses concludes that the number of Cubans attached to the Cuban Military Mission in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau averaged only about 50 to 60 both in Conakry and at rear bases in Guinea-Bissau. Nonetheless, this limited contingent of advisers and doctors remained until the war’s end and played a “decisive” role in the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde’s victory, becoming Cuba’s longest and most successful foreign deployment until the intervention in Angola. Gleijeses, 2002, p. 8; Piero Gleijeses, “The First Ambassadors: Cuba’s Contribution to Guinea-Bissau’s War of Independence,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, February 1997, p. 51.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Jorge Domínguez, “Cuba in the 1980s,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 1, Fall 1986, pp. 130–131.

¹⁵ Carla Anne Robbins, *Looking for Another Angola: Cuban Policy Dilemmas in Africa*, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1979, p. 1; Gleijeses, 2002, p. 9.

in the developing world was a paramount driver of Cuban training and advisory missions,¹⁶ as was establishing leadership credentials in the Middle East and deepening political ties with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and Arab allies, particularly after 1973.¹⁷ During Cuba's first wave of African interventions in the 1960s, Castro's grand rebalancing ambition was to create a "new, Cuban-led radical alliance of Third World Nations."¹⁸ During the second wave of African interventions a decade later, Cuban objectives echoed these earlier geopolitical ambitions; Cuban policy initially sought to remake the Horn of Africa into a Cuba-Soviet-led strategic alliance of socialist states (Ethiopia, Somalia, and Yemen) that would control access to the Red Sea, Suez Canal, Arabian Gulf, and Indian Ocean—a "federation of four radical states."¹⁹ At the same time, these Cuban interventions all functioned to undermine perceived U.S. and Western imperialist influence in these regions, particularly in regard to the major proxy war battlefields in the Horn of Africa, the Congo, Angola, and Nicaragua.²⁰

More recently, in Cuba's only post-Cold War military intervention, Havana has reportedly deployed advisers to Venezuela, partly to strengthen new regional multilateral organizations, such as the Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra America and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, while neutralizing "the influence of the Organization of American States and other inter-American institutions that once sustained a hemispheric agenda, particularly in

¹⁶ See, for instance, National Security Archive, "Response, Presidential Review Memorandum-36: Soviet-Cuban Presence in Africa, 18 August 1978," Washington, D.C., 1978, p. 15; David Malcolm Stone, "Namibia 1979: Another Angola?" thesis, Monterey, Calif.: Naval Postgraduate School, March 1979, p. 83; and Gleijeses, 1996, p. 185.

¹⁷ Metz, 1993, pp. 113, 123; Ishan Tharoor, "How Fidel Castro Was at the Heart of Middle East Politics," *Washington Post*, November 29, 2016.

¹⁸ Laumann, 2005, pp. 62, 69.

¹⁹ Robbins, 1979, pp. 20–22; David B. Ottaway, "Castro Seen as Mediator in Africa Talks," *Washington Post*, March 18, 1977.

²⁰ See, for instance, Falk, 1987; Durch, 1977a; and Durch, 1977b.

the area of democracy and human rights.”²¹ Unlike Cold War revolutionary socialist ideological factors, regional power balance motives are thus likely to persist as an important driver of future Cuban interventions.

A third closely related geostrategic factor consistently affecting Cuban interventionism in the Cold War was the need to preserve (and deepen) Havana’s few strategic partnerships and alliances abroad. As previously noted, it is no coincidence that Castro’s first military adventures in Africa were to come to the aid of his only political allies remaining on the continent after the Cuban Missile Crisis: Ahmed Ben Bella in Algeria and Nwame Nkrumah in Ghana. As one contemporaneous U.S. State Department analysis concluded (emphasis added),

Che Guevara’s three-month African trip [in 1964–1965] was part of an important new Cuban strategy . . . based on Cuba’s belief that a new revolutionary situation existed in Africa and that Cuba’s own interest lay in the spreading of revolution there because in so doing it would *gain new friends who would lessen her isolation and, at the same time, weaken U.S. influence.*²²

After military coups deposed Ben Bella and Nkrumah in 1965 and 1966, Cuba lost its two closest allies on the continent and committed more attention to protecting friendly “progressive” governments in Congo-Brazzaville and Guinea from internal threats.²³ Nearly ten years later, Cuba again came to the aid of friends in distress in Syria, supporting Hafez al-Assad’s socialist, nationalist regime (1973), and in Yemen, supporting the Marxist Arab People’s Democratic Republic

²¹ Ted Piccone and Harold Trinkunas, “The Cuba-Venezuela Alliance: The Beginning of the End?” Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, June 2014, p. 2.

²² Thomas Hughes, State Department Director of Intelligence and Research, quoted in Gleijeses, 1996/1997, p. 12. The original archival materials are located at the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library (see Thomas Hughes, “Che Guevara’s African Venture,” memorandum to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, April 19, 1965, National Security File Country File: Cuba, Box 20, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library).

²³ See, for instance, Gleijeses, 1996/1997, pp. 6–7; Durch, 1977a, pp. 5–10; and Durch, 1977b, p. 34.

of Yemen government against instability.²⁴ Cuba's post-independence buildup in Angola was, in part, motivated to protect a strategic partner by defending President Agostinho Neto's allied government from overthrow by U.S.-backed National Union for the Total Independence of Angola rebels, as was Cuba's buildup of forces in Mozambique to defend the friendly socialist government of the Mozambique Liberation Front against South African-backed Mozambican National Resistance insurgent forces.²⁵ In Nicaragua, the desire to reduce Cuba's isolation was a precursor to the deployment of Cuban advisers. As discussed earlier, Havana has apparently deployed troops to Venezuela, in part to protect its lone hemispheric ally from internal instability and coup attempts.²⁶

An enormous body of scholarship also focuses on the dynamics of the Soviet-Cuban alliance and the degree to which this client-patron relationship affected Havana's foreign adventurism decisionmaking during the Cold War. Persuasive academic evidence abounds on both sides of the analytical spectrum: that, on the one hand, Havana's military decisionmaking was highly independent of Soviet policy influence, while, on the other hand, Cuba sometimes behaved more as a client (if not a puppet) state beholden to Soviet whims.²⁷ According to this line of argument, Cuban troops in Ethiopia and Angola essentially functioned as the "Soviet Union's Afrika Corps"—cheap infantry for the superpower.²⁸ Relatedly, we note that the Soviet Union's provision of massive quantities of arms and equipment to Cuba constituted another secondary factor that enabled Havana to project power abroad during the Cold War.

The extent to which existential threat perceptions directly affected Cuban Cold War decisions to deploy forces abroad is somewhat diffi-

²⁴ Durch, 1977a, p. 9; Tharoor, 2006.

²⁵ See, for instance, Piero Gleijeses, "Moscow's Proxy? Cuba and Africa 1975–1988," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2, Spring 2006, p. 12; Falk, 1987; and Durch, 1977a.

²⁶ Simon Romero, "Venezuela's Military Ties with Cuba Stir Concerns," *New York Times*, June 14, 2010.

²⁷ For a representative survey of this literature, see, for instance, Gleijeses, 2006.

²⁸ Gleijeses, 2002, p. 9.

cult to assess. In the first place, it is difficult to assess the severity of the external threat that Cuban leaders perceived that they faced. After Castro's initial covert attempts to export revolution in 1959, the Eisenhower administration began planning Castro's overthrow, at least as early as 1960.²⁹ However, following the CIA-backed Bay of Pigs invasion, President John F. Kennedy offered Castro a "noninvasion pledge" as part of the terms of the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Some scholars, such as John Lewis Gaddis, have therefore contended that "whatever the prospect of an American attack on Cuba before the missile crisis, there was never a serious one after it."³⁰ Others, such as Piero Gleijeses, qualify that Kennedy left himself ample "wiggle room" in this "hollow" guarantee and that Castro had "no reason to believe an American president's assurances."³¹ Therefore, U.S. capabilities and proximity may have at least indirectly constituted a persistent external—if not existential—threat to the Castro regime, though exactly how this threat was assessed in Havana is not clear.³²

Further, how these fears increased (or decreased) the likelihood of Cuban interventions abroad is also ambiguous. On the one hand, some analysis has suggested that this dynamic may have encouraged greater interventionist tendencies in Castro's near abroad, at least early in the Cold War:

The US might threaten or create difficulty for one Cuba standing alone, but – Castro may have thought – the presence of two

²⁹ Gleijeses, 2002, p. 14.

³⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 279.

³¹ Gleijeses, 2002, p. 20.

³² As Gleijeses explains,

History, after all, taught that no government could survive in the region against the will of the United States, and Castro had no assurances that the Soviet Union would befriend Cuba, a fragile outpost in the American backyard (Gleijeses, 2002, p. 14).

or more revolutionary regimes [in Latin America] would force an American accommodation to the new reality.³³

On the other hand, as discussed earlier, Castro refrained from large interventions in his near abroad after the Cuban Missile Crisis until Nicaragua (1981–1990), precisely because he feared eliciting a U.S. response. At the same time, the persistent external threat posed by Washington likely increased Havana’s propensity to deploy troops to proxy wars further abroad, outside the Americas, where Cuban involvement was less likely to provoke a direct U.S. response. Perhaps paradoxically, then, Castro’s external threat perceptions may have reduced the likelihood of interventions in Cuba’s near abroad while increasing the likelihood of interventions outside the Western Hemisphere, where Castro could more safely pursue other objectives.

Our analysis found relatively weaker evidence to support the hypothesis that economic factors were among the top drivers of Castro’s Cold War military interventions, though we caveat, of course, that for an isolated, deeply sanctioned economy such as Cuba in the 1960s to 1980s, the prospects of expanded trade and investment ties via strengthened bilateral partnerships were likely always at least secondary motives.³⁴ More directly, some analysis has suggested that access to mineral wealth resources (petroleum, diamonds, timber, etc.) may have been an important Cuban interest in some Cold War proxy fights, particularly Angola and the Congo, but it is unclear whether these interests actually motivated Castro to deploy forces abroad.³⁵ At a minimum, Cuban forces during the late 1970s and the 1980s played a significant role guarding petroleum installations against National Union for the Total Independence of Angola insurgents in the oil-rich

³³ George C. Denney, Jr., “Memorandum to SecState,” U.S. State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research, September 15, 1967, pp. 3–4, quoted in Gleijeses, 2002, p. 21.

³⁴ In 1975, collective sanctions imposed by the Organization of American States were lifted “in part because Cuba [had] turned from supporting insurgencies in the Americas” during the period 1964–1975. It is unclear whether this temporary easing of sanctions emboldened greater Cuban proxy adventurism in Angola and Ethiopia in 1975–1977 (see Domínguez, 1986, p. 129).

³⁵ Falk, 1997.

enclave of Cabinda and guarding critical oil pipelines from Zimbabwe to Mozambique. During the Cold War, Cuba also frequently deployed military personnel to oil-rich countries, such as Libya, Algeria, and Iraq, and the host nations financially compensated Havana for these technicians.³⁶ Likewise, Cuba's strongest economic motives for deploying tens of thousands of troops to Angola and Ethiopia may have been as *quid pro quo* for repaying economic debts owed to Moscow and stimulating more Soviet military assistance.³⁷ More recently, however, economic factors appear to have been among the strongest drivers of Havana's only post-Cold War military intervention that satisfied our case criteria: the deployment of military advisers (and civilian technicians) to Venezuela beginning in the early 2000s. Although very little has been written about this intervention in open sources, it is clear that the Cuban economy has received heavily subsidized Venezuelan crude and refined petroleum products as direct payment for Cuban military services.³⁸

Finally, we note that we found weaker evidence for a handful of other potential factors that could have affected Cuban intervention decisionmaking. First, the presence of coidentity ethnic, racial, and/or coidentity populations was not a driving factor in any Cuban intervention since the 1959 revolution. Second, we were not able to confidently assess the degree to which domestic politics and Castro's personality and psychology were decisive factors in sending Cuban troops abroad during the Cold War, given the dearth of access to Cuban archival and primary source materials. Anecdotally, we note that one post-Cuban Missile Crisis CIA assessment concluded that the way that Castro stood up to the Americans and Soviets "probably boosted his position

³⁶ Historical details are sketchy on these deployments. In Libya and Algeria, a limited number of Cuban advisers appear to have supported Polisario Front rebels, but our overall analysis of the evidence suggests that Cuban personnel in these countries were operating mostly as technicians providing logistical support on Soviet weapon systems.

³⁷ Robbins, 1997, p. 1.

³⁸ Piccone and Trinkunas, 2014, p. 1; Kirk Semple, "With Spies and Other Operatives, a Nation Looms over Venezuela's Crisis: Cuba," *New York Times*, January 26, 2019.

at home.”³⁹ Likewise, a 1959 U.S. intelligence assessment shortly after the Cuban Revolution observed that Castro “is inspired by a messianic sense of mission.” Although an assessment of Castro’s psychology was beyond the scope of this study, we recognize that personality and leadership factors may have played a secondary role.⁴⁰

In the final years of the Obama administration, diplomatic relations between Washington and Havana entered a historic thaw: With the end of sanctions in 2015, we no longer consider Cuba a U.S. adversary for the purposes of this analysis. Nonetheless, as related earlier, we note that current Cuban activities in Venezuela suggest that economic motives and regional power-balancing might endure as the most likely drivers of future Cuban interventions in Latin America. Table C.1 summarizes the importance of the key factors for Cuba during the Cold War.

Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

Throughout its history, North Korea has engaged in two primary types of military interventions beyond its borders. The first is a series of military actions taken directly against South Korea and the U.S. forces stationed there. These include the massive invasion of 1950, the border raids and incursions of the 1960s, and the naval raids of the 1990s and 2000s, as well as a variety of smaller incidents that were not large enough to be included in our data set.⁴¹ The second type of military intervention undertaken by North Korea includes its many military aid missions to friendly nations across the globe, especially

³⁹ Declassified CIA assessment quoted in Gleijeses, 2002, p. 20. The original archival materials are located at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library (see CIA, [CIA] Annex 3, enclosed in McGeorge Bundy, “The Cuban Problem,” April 21, 1963, NSF, Box 38, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library).

⁴⁰ Gleijeses, 2002, p. 12. For a comprehensive personality profile study on Castro, see, for instance, Gonzalez, 2001.

⁴¹ See, for example, Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, “The Quiet War: Combat Operations Along the Korean Demilitarized Zone, 1966–1969,” *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 64, No. 2, April 2000.

Table C.1
Summary of Importance of Key Factors for Cuba

Factor	Importance	Summary Explanation
Ideology	High	Revolutionary ideology (anti-imperialism, anticolonialism, antiracism, Social-Marxism) undergirded every Cuban intervention, big or small, regardless of location.
Alliance or partnership with host	High	Reducing Cuban isolation and demonstrating solidarity and direct support with its few strategic, revolutionary allies were common currents in nearly all Cold War interventions (e.g., Algeria, Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Congo-Brazzaville). This factor is closely linked with ideological and realist power-balancing factors.
Regional power balance	High	Enhancing Cuban regional influence (while reducing U.S. influence) was a common factor in all interventions. Cuban ambitions repeatedly focused on creating new (or strengthening existing) international structures and coalitions as alternatives to existing ones dominated by U.S. influence.
External threat to sovereignty	Moderate	The acuteness of Castro's external threat perceptions vis-à-vis Washington is challenging to assess. After the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis, nonintervention pledges were made. Havana, however, certainly viewed the U.S. pledge as hollow and persistently feared U.S. intervention.
National status concerns	High	Enhancing international prestige and regional leadership and demonstrating Cuban capacity to project power abroad were relatively important second-tier factors.
Military capabilities	Moderate	Soviet provision of massive amounts of arms and equipment likely functioned as an enabler of Cuban interventions, but this dynamic probably had a stronger effect on how Castro intervened abroad (i.e., size and duration) rather than why, when, and where.

Table C.1—Continued

Factor	Importance	Summary Explanation
Leadership and personality	Moderate	Castro's charisma, personal psychology, and iconic stature as a revolutionary leader played some role in Cuban military adventurism, but these factors are difficult to assess and appear to have been of secondary importance.
Economic interests in host	Moderate	Soviet and host economic compensation for Cuban soldiers and technicians may have partially incentivized some African deployments. Some analysis also points to Cuban interests in host nations' natural resources, particularly in Angola, Cuba, and Venezuela.
Domestic politics and legitimacy	Low	This factor likely played some role in Castro's decisionmaking, but its importance is unclear, given government media control.
Coidentity group populations in host	Low	There is no evidence to support ethnic, racial, or religious coidentity populations as drivers of foreign interventions.

in the 1970s and 1980s. Different factors appear to be associated with these different types of military interventions. We will explore each set of factors next.

North Korea's invasion of South Korea in 1950 and other subsequent military actions against Seoul were driven in large part by a nationalist ideology that insisted that all of Korea was one nation and should fall under one government, with the North Korean, communist leadership at the head. Several key factors are present in the drive for a unified Korea and DPRK interventions against the South, including a focus on ideology (in this case, the belief that Korea should be one, unified nation under DPRK communist regime rule), concern with the balance of power on the peninsula (between the DPRK and the Republic of Korea and foreign forces), and fear over the external threat to its existence posed by the United States and South Korea. U.S. forces almost completely overran North Korea during the Korean War, and the United States continued to issue nuclear threats against North Korea throughout the Cold War.⁴² Many of North Korea's interventions on or near the Korean Peninsula during the Cold War and after have been focused on splitting the South Korean–U.S. alliance and getting the Americans off the Korean Peninsula.⁴³ Even before the formation of the regimes in Seoul and Pyongyang, Korean conservatives and leftists fought (sometimes violently) for control over what most expected would be a unified Korea. In some ways, the Korean War was a continuation of this ideological conflict, albeit with both sides supported by their superpower patrons.⁴⁴ North Korea's decision to launch the Korean War was driven by Kim Il Sung, who pleaded with other (often reluctant) Communist leaders in China and the Soviet Union to support his effort to unify the country under his rule.⁴⁵ After the war, he clearly continued to harbor hopes that he could destabilize South

⁴² Leon V. Sigal, *Disarming Strangers*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 20–21.

⁴³ Sarantakes, 2000.

⁴⁴ Max Hastings, *The Korean War*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987, pp. 36–45, 50–51.

⁴⁵ Steven Hugh Lee, *The Korean War*, New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 37–41.

Korea and convince the Americans to leave, paving the way for unification on his terms.⁴⁶

It is tempting to assume that Kim's personality, given his domination of North Korean politics, was a major driver of direct military interventions against South Korea. Kim no doubt had a major impact on the diplomatic and military stratagems Pyongyang employed to bring about reunification, but he was hardly the only politician or general pushing to conquer South Korea. It seems likely that any North Korean leader in his position would have been comparably driven.⁴⁷

The second category of North Korea's foreign military interventions is its military assistance missions to other developing countries, which began during the Cold War. For North Korea, these were also a part of its ideologically driven and security-driven conflict with Washington and Seoul. North Korea evidently hoped that its courtship of these countries would secure their support in the UN General Assembly and increase its national status and influence on international debates about the Korean Peninsula. This effort was relatively successful in the 1970s and 1980s, enabling Pyongyang to use parts of the UN, which had been hostile to its interests, to put some diplomatic pressure on the United States and South Korea.⁴⁸ The fact that many of these countries established institutes dedicated to the thought of Kim Il Sung also helped increase the regime's international status and domestic legitimacy and no doubt appealed to Kim's ego.⁴⁹ Although North Korea's military relationships with third-world states would eventually become a source of much-needed hard currency and economic resources, they

⁴⁶ Bernd Schafer, *Overconfidence Shattered: North Korean Unification Policy, 1971–1975*, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, December 2010.

⁴⁷ For example, President Syngman Rhee of South Korea was, in some ways, even more committed than Kim, deliberately sabotaging the efforts of his international patrons to make peace with the Communists in order to prevent a peace that left the peninsula divided. See Hastings, 1987, pp. 323–324.

⁴⁸ Jide Owoeye, "The Metamorphosis of North Korea's African Policy," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 31, No. 7, July 1991, pp. 632–634.

⁴⁹ Charles K. Armstrong, *Tyranny of the Weak: North Korea and the World, 1950–1992*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2013, pp. 192–193.

generated little revenue during the Cold War and may have actually represented a net loss for the North Korean government.⁵⁰

After the end of the Cold War and the death of Kim Il Sung, North Korea's motivations for continuing to launch provocations against South Korea became more unclear. It is possible that some elements within North Korea, potentially including Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un, still harbored fantasies of fulfilling Kim Il Sung's dream of conquering South Korea and reuniting the Korean nation.⁵¹ In this sense, the presence of coethnic populations living under separate rule and influenced by foreign powers was another important motivator; Kim Il Sung emphasized the two states' cultural ties, ignoring whether South Koreans similarly wanted unification on his terms. Still, it is difficult to see how small-scale interventions, such as North Korea's sinking of the South Korean ship *Cheonan* or the bombardment of Yeongpyeong Island, could have substantially weakened the South Korean government. It seems more likely that these interventions were either driven by a need to secure greater economic concessions and resources in negotiations with other countries or driven by the efforts of North Korean leaders to shore up their domestic legitimacy among regime elites.⁵² It should be noted that, in its naval provocations since the late 1990s, North Korea has tended to challenge South Korea's claimed western maritime border between the two countries, which puts lucrative fishing grounds on the South Korean side.⁵³

⁵⁰ Armstrong, 2013, p. 192. Although North Korea continues to periodically sell military equipment and training to many of the countries that it sent aid missions to in the 1970s and 1980s, very little hard data are available on these arrangements, presumably because all parties involved are aware that they are in violation of UN sanctions. Using these limited data, we concluded that none of these arrangements qualified as a military intervention large enough to be included in our data set.

⁵¹ Jack David, "The Kim Family Business: After Singapore, What's Next?" *National Review*, June 19, 2018.

⁵² Bruce Klingner, "The *Cheonan*: A Retrospective Assessment," Heritage Foundation, March 25, 2011; Robert Daniel Wallace, *North Korea and the Science of Provocation: Fifty Years of Conflict-Making*, Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Company, 2016, p. 115; Gilberto J. Algar-Faria, "How Does North Korea Signal to Other Regional Actors?" *POLIS Journal (Journal of Politics and International Studies)*, Vol. 6, Winter 2011/2012.

⁵³ "North Korea: Pushing the Northern Limit Line?" Stratfor, May 31, 2009.

Although there have been a variety of factors behind North Korea's many foreign military interventions, its conflict with South Korea and the United States looms over all of them. This conflict was, in turn, driven by North Korea's nationalistic ideology and the threat that both Seoul and Washington posed to the Pyongyang regime. The ever-present influence of the U.S. and South Korean threat to North Korea's existence has remained after the Cold War, but North Korean military interventions since the 1990s seem to be more focused on securing economic resources, maintaining domestic legitimacy, and keeping Washington and Seoul at bay, rather than on the conquest of South Korea. It is worth noting that the DPRK's limited resources and more limited power projection capabilities continue to limit its ability to intervene militarily outside its region. Although the country has a large military and both conventional and nuclear weapons, its military ambitions remain constrained to its immediate area for the time being. Table C.2 summarizes the importance of these factors for the DPRK.

Vietnam

North Vietnam and, later, unified communist Vietnam engaged in several large-scale foreign military interventions from the 1960s to the early 1990s, all in its immediate geographic neighborhood. These interventions were initially focused on North Vietnam's nationalist drive to unite the whole Vietnamese nation under its rule by conquering South Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh was a nationalist revolutionary before he became a communist, and foreign communist officials were sometimes disturbed by the strong vein of nationalism running through the movement he created.⁵⁴ The Vietnamese communists only accepted the partition of the country in 1954 under strong pressure from their allies and with the understanding that they soon would be able to reunify

⁵⁴ David L. Anderson, "Introduction: The Vietnam War and Its Enduring Historical Relevance," in David L. Anderson, ed., *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, pp. 15–16.

Table C.2
Summary of Importance of Key Factors for North Korea

Factor	Importance	Summary Explanation
Regional power balance	High	Interventions in East Asia aimed at limiting foreign influence that would shift the balance of power and focused on unifying Korea.
External threat to sovereignty	High	Post-1950 interventions in the region were strongly influenced by the threat posed by the U.S. presence and the fear of U.S. and South Korean attack.
Ideology	High	The Korean War had substantial ideological roots, as did many DPRK Cold War interventions in the developing world.
National status concerns	Moderate	DPRK interventions in the developing world aimed to advance North Korea's national standing and win influence in the UN.
Domestic politics and legitimacy	Moderate	Many interventions aimed to demonstrate national power and toughness to key elites and to consolidate support.
Coidentity group populations in host	Moderate	Interventions against South Korea originally aimed to unify the Korean people under DPRK rule.
Military capabilities	Moderate	A decline in military capabilities helps explain a decline in out-of-region intervention activity.
Economic interests in host	Moderate	Early interventions did not aim to produce economic benefits, though more-recent interventions against South Korea may be motivated by a desire to extract economic concessions.
Leadership and personality	Low	Leadership personalities do not seem to have strongly influenced intervention decisions, outside of ideology.
Alliance or partnership with host	Low	The DPRK pursued limited interventions in communist partners during the Cold War, but motivations seem to have been purely instrumental, desiring a quid pro quo rather than expressing concern for the security needs of partners per se.

both Vietnams under their control.⁵⁵ They remained ideologically and nationalistically committed to conquering and absorbing South Vietnam and uniting not only the territory but also the Vietnamese people (given their deep cultural ties and coethnic population), a feat they completed in 1975.

North Vietnam and unified Vietnam were also very concerned with the regional balance of power, using cross-border interventions to consolidate its influence and to prevent South Vietnam, Cambodia, or Laos from acting in a truly independent way. To the North Vietnamese, the security of all three nations was inextricably linked, and the success of friendly forces in Laos and Cambodia was important to North Vietnam's security and its ability to unite all of Vietnam.⁵⁶ The Vietnamese communists tended to be relatively ambivalent about respecting the international boundaries within Indochina, frequently using cross-border operations from within one state to influence the military balance in another.⁵⁷ Once Vietnam was unified, the Vietnamese communists continued to seek to control the foreign and defense policy of all Indochinese states, leading them to invade Cambodia in late 1978 to topple the fanatically anti-Vietnamese Khmer Rouge regime, and they continued to maintain large military missions supporting friendly regimes in both Laos and Cambodia.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Mark Philip Bradley, "Setting the Stage: Vietnamese Revolutionary Nationalism and the First Vietnam War," in David L. Anderson, ed., *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, pp. 115–116.

⁵⁶ Chang Pao-Min, *Kampuchea Between China and Vietnam*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1985, p. 13; Paul F. Langer and Joseph J. Zasloff, *North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao: Partners in the Struggle for Laos*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970, p. 176.

⁵⁷ Chang, 1985, p. 25. Note the frequent incursions from North Vietnam into Laos to launch or blunt major offensives on behalf of the Pathet Lao and the use of Laotian and Cambodian territory to infiltrate supplies and soldiers into South Vietnam. See Kenneth J. Conboy and James Morrison, *Shadow War: The CIA's Secret War in Laos*, Boulder, Colo.: Paladin Press, 1995, pp. 99–101; and Andrea Matles Savada, ed., *Laos: A Country Study*, Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, 1995, pp. 43, 51.

⁵⁸ Merle L. Pribbenow, "A Tale of Five Generals: Vietnam's Invasion of Cambodia," *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 70, No. 2, April 2006.

Another factor that may have affected Vietnam's decision to intervene in Laos and Cambodia, both during the Vietnam War and after, was Vietnam's historic relations with these two nations and its sense of cultural superiority over them. In many ways, its interventions postindependence and during the Cold War reflected efforts to reassert this national status as the dominant state in its immediate region. Prior to the French conquest of Indochina in the 1800s, Vietnam had strong influence in Southeast Asia for centuries and competed with Thailand for dominance in the region. When the French arrived, Vietnam was in the process of absorbing Cambodia and was actively working to convert the culture and values of the people there.⁵⁹ Although French rule preserved the existence of Cambodia and Laos, it also reinforced Vietnamese suzerainty over them by placing the administrative center of all of Indochina in Hanoi and by recruiting Vietnamese bureaucrats to help govern it.⁶⁰ Ho Chi Minh's Vietnamese Communist Party was renamed the Indochinese Communist Party mere months after its creation,⁶¹ and although this party purported to represent all of the peoples of Indochina, its leadership was mostly Vietnamese. After it split into national parties, its Vietnamese offshoot continued to dominate and control the Laotian and Cambodian communist organizations through most of the 1960s.⁶² Although Vietnam's historical domination of Indochina may not have been a sufficient motivation for the invasions the Vietnamese communists launched into Cambodia and Laos throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, it likely made such interference a more natural choice. It may also have helped predispose the Vietnamese to see the existence of pliable regimes in Indochina as a natural component of Vietnamese security and a way to uphold Vietnam's national status.

⁵⁹ Chang, 1985, pp. 5–7.

⁶⁰ Langer and Zasloff, 1970, p. 177; Chang, 1985, pp. 7–8.

⁶¹ However, it should be noted that this change was Moscow's idea, not Ho's, and Ho remained much more focused on Vietnam. See Carlyle A. Thayer, *Security Issues in Southeast Asia: The Third Indochina War*, delivered to conference on "Security and Arms Control in the North Pacific," Canberra, Australia, August 12–14, 1987.

⁶² Langer and Zasloff, 1970, pp. 172–173, 178; Chang, 1985, pp. 8–9.

Although it is difficult to determine the extent to which concerns over the future status of Laos and Cambodia (as opposed to an ideologically motivated drive to conquer South Vietnam) motivated Vietnamese communist incursions into Laos and Cambodia before 1975, geostrategic concerns are likely what extended ongoing interventions after the fall of Saigon. As noted earlier, Vietnam historically has seen the existence of friendly or even subservient regimes in Indochina as important to its security and has used interventions in these neighbors to protect itself against external threats.⁶³ Vietnamese general Vo Nguyen Gap reiterated this sentiment in 1950, claiming that Vietnam would not be free as long as Cambodia and Laos were controlled by “imperialists” and that Cambodian territory had been used to invade Vietnam in the past.⁶⁴ Cambodia’s violently anti-Vietnamese Khmer Rouge government launched repeated raids into Vietnamese territory throughout the 1970s, and its alliance with China made it a clear strategic threat.⁶⁵ Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia in late 1978 enabled it to set up a friendly regime there, and its continued support to that regime (as well as to its allies in Laos) ensured that it would not have to fear attacks from the rear as it turned its attention to confronting China.

The only Vietnamese intervention outside mainland Indochina was its conflict with China over the Spratly Islands in 1988. This battle was one part of a larger push by Vietnam to assert its territorial rights following the end of the Vietnam War, a push that led to conflict with both China and Cambodia.⁶⁶ Although the rich natural resources around the Spratly Islands likely were a motivating factor for this conflict, the fact that Vietnam also violently pressed its claims to mountainous territory along its land borders, which was of much less clear

⁶³ Chang, 1985, p. 13.

⁶⁴ Thayer, 1987, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Kosal Path, “China’s Economic Sanctions Against Vietnam, 1975–1978,” *China Quarterly*, No. 212, December 2012, p. 1048.

⁶⁶ Path, 2012, p. 1043.

economic value, suggests that a nationalistic desire to protect sovereign territory from external threat was also a key driver of the conflict.⁶⁷

In 1989, as the Soviet Union was crumbling, relations with China were warming, and economic reforms were beginning to reshape life within Vietnam, Hanoi pulled out of Cambodia and ended its large-scale military interference in Indochina. After 1975, the nationalist need to use Laotian and Cambodian territory for reunification disappeared: Evidently, Vietnam now believed that whatever security it gained from dominating its two Indochinese neighbors would not be worth the cost. Hanoi remains interested in its two smaller neighbors, and their economic and political ties remain strong. However, the age in which Vietnam was willing to launch large-scale military interventions in their affairs appears to be over. Interestingly, the factors that drove Vietnam to clash with China in 1988 do not appear to have similarly faded, and it is possible that the Johnson South Reef Skirmish, which was something of an outlier among Vietnam's earlier interventions, may yet prove a harbinger of things to come. Table C.3 summarizes the importance of these factors for Vietnam.

Summary

Our review of the intervention drivers for smaller U.S. adversaries reveals both similarities and differences with larger powers. Smaller states, for instance, seem less concerned with national status than larger states are, but they seem equally focused on responding to threats to their sovereignty as well as shifts in the regional balance of power that disadvantage them in key ways. Smaller states may be less likely to intervene in response to alliance or partnership commitments because they may have fewer of these relationships or be the more junior part-

⁶⁷ Michael Studeman, "Calculating China's Advances in the South China Sea: Identifying the Triggers of 'Expansionism,'" *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 51, No. 2, Spring 1998, pp. 70–74. Much of the conflict over the land border revolved around remote ridges, such as Laoshan and Dongshan, which were of questionable economic or strategic value. See Xiaoming Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping's Long War: The Military Conflict Between China and Vietnam, 1979–1991*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2015, pp. 150–151.

Table C.3
Summary of Importance of Key Factors for Vietnam

Factor	Importance	Summary Explanation
Regional power balance	High	Multiple interventions within Indochina to maintain a favorable regional power balance.
External threat to sovereignty	High	The interventions' focus on neighbors is fundamentally oriented toward protecting Vietnam from external attack.
Ideology	High	Vietnamese nationalism was a fundamental driver of the desire to unify Vietnam, which motivated interventions.
Coidentity group populations in host	Moderate	Interventions in South Vietnam aimed to unify the Vietnamese people, but this factor only indirectly bears on other interventions.
National status concerns	Moderate	Vietnamese interventions in Laos and Cambodia were driven, in part, by a belief in a justified, dominant Vietnamese regional role.
Alliance or partnership with host	Low	Vietnam has intervened in neighboring partners but to safeguard other Vietnamese interests.
Domestic politics and legitimacy	Low	No evidence that interventions were launched for a domestic audience.
Economic interests in host	Low	Vietnam has used interventions to gain access to resources in limited cases, but this has not frequently been a factor.
Leadership and personality	Low	Personality does not seem to influence Vietnamese interventions, outside of ideologies that are widely shared.
Military capabilities	Low	Vietnam's military capabilities seem sufficient to support its ambitions, which are focused on its immediate neighborhood.

ner in the partnerships that they do maintain. They may also be less concerned with national status in the geopolitical context and more concerned with advancing, protecting, and safeguarding their sovereignty. We found that ideology was an important intervention driver for smaller powers, such as Vietnam and the DPRK. The notably higher role of ideology in smaller state interventions that we observed partly reflects that more of the military interventions of smaller states occurred during the more ideologically contested Cold War period, as shown in Chapter Three. Adversaries such as Cuba, the DPRK, Vietnam, and East Germany either ceased to exist or substantially curtailed their military interventions in the post-Cold War period, in ways that larger states (such as Russia and China) did not. Because interventions tended to be more ideologically motivated during the Cold War for all states, this temporal pattern is also reflected in a difference in the importance of ideology across adversaries. That said, this pattern also reflects the fact that several key interventions by smaller states were conducted for important nationalist motivations, such as those to complete projects of national unification in Korea and Vietnam. Nationalism can, of course, also affect the decisions of larger U.S. adversaries, such as Russia, China, and Iran, but those larger states tend not to have been divided in the aftermath of World War II, limiting their need to pursue similar interventions. China's claim to Taiwan represents an important exception to this pattern. The greater ideological motivations of smaller adversaries may therefore reflect that these states could be more likely to have nationalist goals that larger states may have already largely achieved.

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Concern about the potential for military interventions by U.S. adversaries to affect U.S. interests has risen over the past decade, driven by high-profile interventions, such as the Russian missions in Ukraine and Syria, Iranian activity in Iraq and Syria, and expanding Chinese military activity in Africa. Despite these concerns, relatively little is known about the intervention behavior of these countries.

There are many reasons for U.S. policymakers to be concerned about the interventions of adversaries. First, adversary interventions might pursue outcomes that undermine U.S. interests. Second, adversary interventions might affect the activities and objectives of U.S. forces when they intervene in the same places. Finally, adversary interventions may directly threaten U.S. forces or U.S. allies.

In this report, the authors explore where, how, and how often U.S. adversaries (specifically, Russia, China, and Iran) have intervened militarily since 1946 and identify why these adversaries have initiated military interventions and why they might do so in the future. Three companion reports consider Chinese, Russian, and Iranian military intervention behavior. The insights and signposts identified can inform U.S. decisions about military posture, partnerships, and investments.

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