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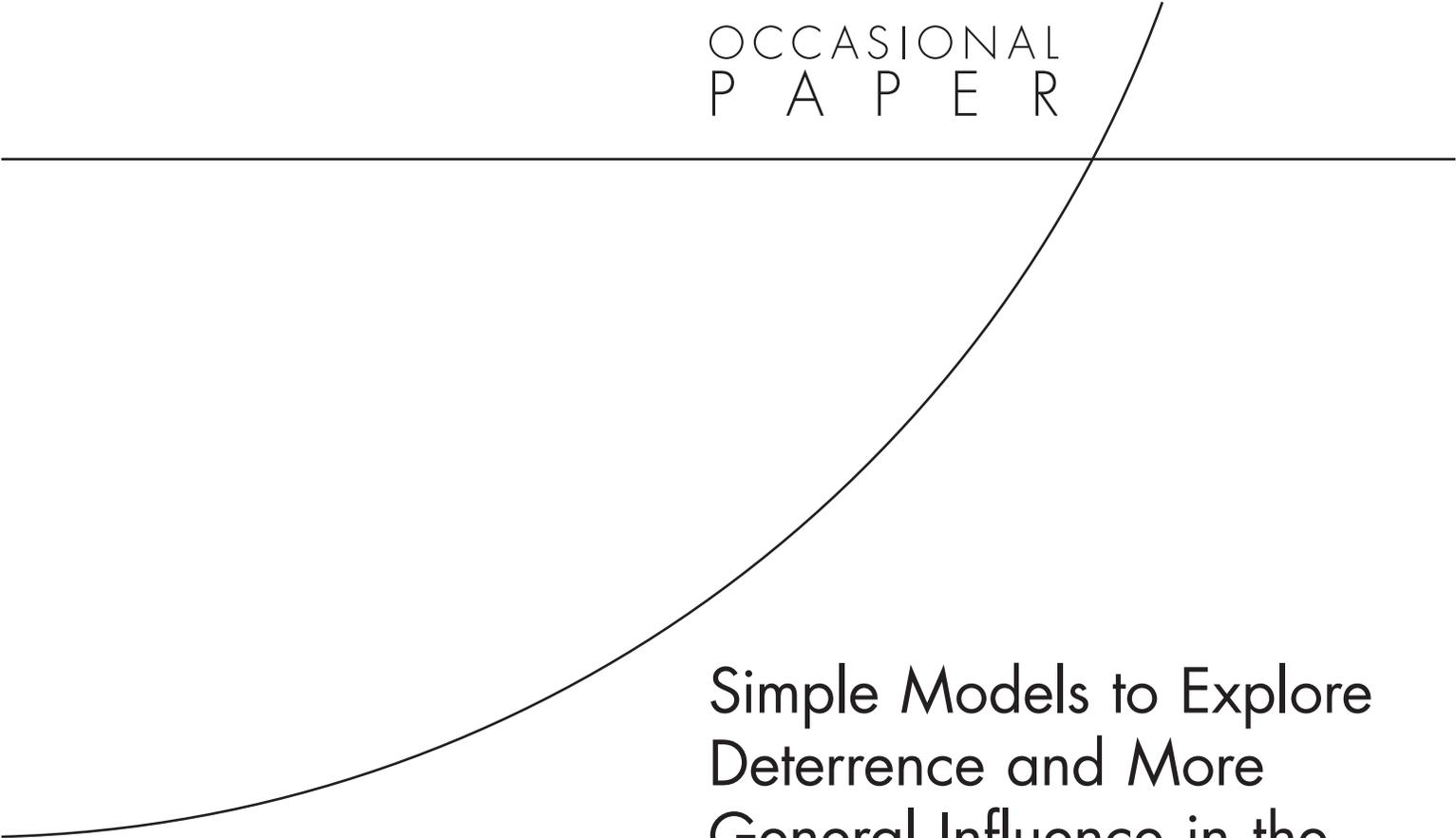
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P A P E R



Simple Models to Explore Deterrence and More General Influence in the War with al-Qaeda

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Prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited



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The research described in this report was prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). The research was conducted in the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by OSD, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community under Contract W74V8H-06-C-0002.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available for this publication.

ISBN: 978-0-8330-4979-7

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Published 2010 by the RAND Corporation
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Summary

Deterrence of terrorism is best approached as part of a broader effort to *influence* elements of the terrorist system. Although efforts to deter or otherwise influence will only sometimes succeed, to forgo attempting influence because of uncertainty would be to squander the *possibility* of extremely valuable effects (e.g., averting a terrorist mass-casualty attack). That is, deterrence and other influence efforts are desirable because of their upside potential rather than the certainty or expectation of good results. This paper selectively reviews prior work on such matters and then goes on to argue that a useful way to find influence stratagems with high upside potential is to construct plausible alternative models of adversary decisionmaking and behavior—models that also allow for variability. A stratagem found worthless if assessed with a best estimate of adversary behavior might instead look attractive when viewed with plausible alternative models. This is significant because best estimates are often wrong when made about people in different cultures and settings being viewed emotionally from afar. Further, the mind-sets and behaviors of terrorists—like those of people more generally—vary with circumstances and recent history. Thus, opening our minds to *possibilities* can be valuable and alternative models can help. To protect against wishful thinking and other problems, of course, a proposed stratagem must also be assessed by its cost and potential side effects.