



Research Report

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Assessing the Value of Overseas Military Campaigning in Strategic Competition

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About This Report

This report documents research and analysis conducted as part of a project entitled *Evaluating the Return on Army Activities in Competition*, sponsored by Futures and Concepts Center, Army Futures Command. The purpose of the project was to develop a framework for assessing the cost-benefit trade-offs of different types of competitive activities and apply the framework to select activities to help the U.S. Army better calibrate and prioritize its responses to Chinese and Russian hostile measures.

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Summary

In strategic competition against one or more competitors that can outspend the United States (either individually or collectively), it is important to understand not only the *efficacy* but also the *efficiency* of campaigning measures. Unfortunately, neither the efficacy nor efficiency of military campaigning measures beneath the threshold of armed conflict is well understood. In this report, we seek to address this gap and provide the foundations of a strategic evaluation and decision-support tool to inform U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) campaign planning—more specifically, to assist in choosing overseas operations, activities, and investments (OAI) in a logically linked and sequenced plan in support of specific strategy-aligned objectives. We focus on five questions:

- What is the range of U.S. goals in competition?
- What are the overseas campaigning instruments through which DoD contributes to those goals?
- Which of those instruments—and under what conditions—appear to be most effective? Which run substantial risks of counterproductive outcomes?
- At a rough-order-of-magnitude (ROM) level, what are the costs of different categories of campaigning tools?
- Which instruments appear to represent relatively more cost-efficient tools for obtaining certain objectives in particular types of contexts?

Analytic Approach

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger reportedly said that policymaking is the art of “making complicated bets about the future.”¹ The analysis in this report is intended to help decisionmakers understand the odds so that they can make well-informed bets. It is fundamentally a *probabilistic* analysis; that is, we look at past patterns to determine which outcomes have generally been more likely to follow the use of a given campaigning instrument in a given set of circumstances. Decisionmakers and planners can use this analytic baseline to inform their judgments about specific decisions.

To establish a baseline set of expectations, we need to look at more than a few instances of campaigning tools. Because there will always be exceptional cases, we need to examine hundreds or even thousands of interactions between the United States and its competitors or its allies and partners to discern broad patterns. To be able to conduct a cost-effectiveness

¹ Cited in Michael C. Horowitz, Julia Ciocca, Lauren Kahn, and Christian Ruhl, *Keeping Score: A New Approach to Geopolitical Forecasting*, white paper, Perry World House, February 2021.

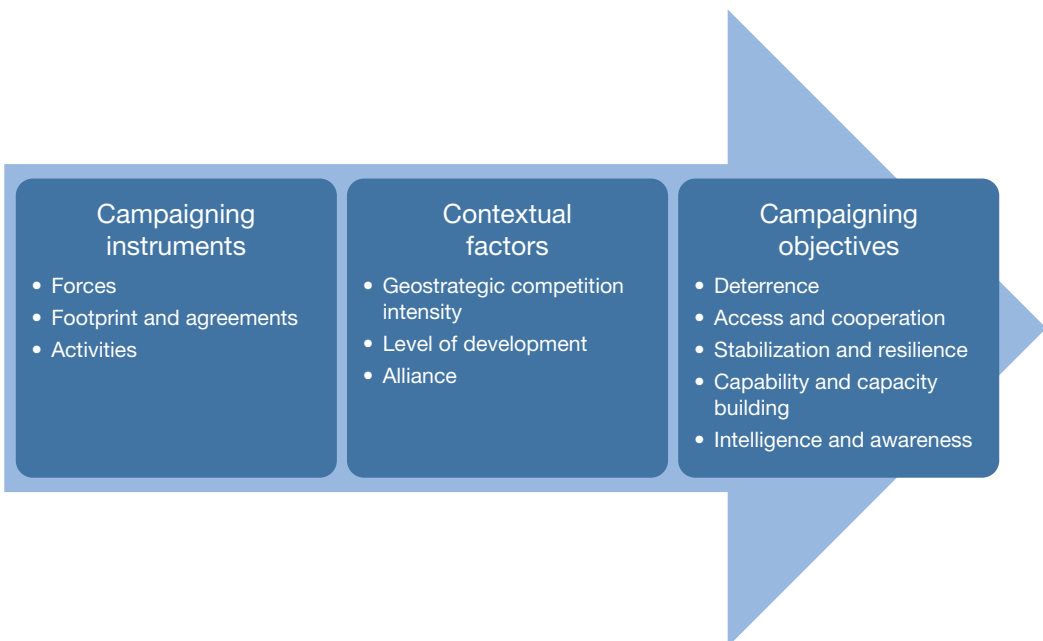
analysis, we also need some way to measure the extent of the gains (or losses) accruing to particular U.S. policies. Case studies are not practical for either of these purposes. Instead, we rely on statistical analysis.

We break campaigns down into three sets of factors: overseas campaigning instruments (or inputs), campaigning outcomes, and contextual factors that are likely to influence the effectiveness of campaigning instruments. These three factors are summarized in Figure S.1. For each of them, we collected quantitative data from U.S. government or other sources that are broadly considered to be among the best available sources. We were unable to find reliable data on all overseas campaigning inputs and outcomes of interest. Consequently, our analysis does not provide a full reckoning of campaigning relationships. For example, one objective of campaigning activities is to build the capabilities of U.S. allies and partners, but we were unable to locate appropriate data on capability building. Our analysis nonetheless captures a wide range of overseas campaigning relationships and could provide a foundation for future, more expansive efforts.

To uncover broad patterns among thousands of interactions between the United States and its competitors and allies and partners, we conducted statistical analyses on the quantitative data that we assembled. These analyses provide a probabilistic understanding of patterns of interaction in competition—that is, historically, have U.S. strategic objectives been more or less likely to be achieved when the United States employs a given overseas campaigning tool?

This analysis is *correlational*—that is, it relies on observed correlations between U.S. OAI and changes in conditions (such as adversary or allied activities) in the period following the

FIGURE S.1
Elements of the Analytic Framework



U.S. action. Such an approach has its limitations. Most importantly, this approach does not, by itself, distinguish between causes and effects. For example, when an adversary escalates hostilities in the period after a U.S. action, it is not clear whether that escalation was a consequence of the U.S. action or whether U.S. decisionmakers undertook the action precisely because they anticipated an elevated risk of conflict. In the latter case, events might have turned out even worse in the absence of U.S. preventive actions, in which case the statistical analysis would miss evidence of a positive outcome.

We cannot eliminate such challenges to causal identification, but we employ two strategies to reduce the risk of spurious correlations. First, we employ several statistical methods—including two-stage propensity-weighted models and, in some cases, the synthetic control method—to help guard against such challenges as reverse causation. Second, we scrutinized all our statistical findings, ensuring that we had a strong logical explanation (grounded in military doctrine or academic theory) for our results and specific instances in which qualitative experts believed that a given outcome occurred for the reasons our results suggest. We also discuss the implications for our statistical analysis of decisionmakers' anticipating future outcomes before making decisions about OAI.

Summary of Results

Summary of Campaigning Evaluations

Each of our three focus categories of campaigning outcomes—deterrence, access and cooperation, and stabilization and resilience—displays broad patterns:

- **Deterrence:** The persistent presence of U.S. forces overseas and treaty alliances appear to be the strongest, most consistent tools for deterrence. Multilateral military exercises also show some indication of deterrent value, although favorable outcomes are greater over time than in the short term, suggesting that exercises might be more useful for building capabilities than as short-term signals of U.S. resolve. Materiel transfers, on the other hand, are associated with patterns of escalation. Overseas DoD contracting might similarly have such unfavorable outcomes, although we are less confident in these results because of limitations of the data.
- **Access and cooperation:** U.S. overseas campaigning instruments appear to contribute relatively consistently to improved military-to-military cooperation under steady-state conditions. These benefits come with an important caveat: We were not able to test their effects on contingency access, which is, at least in some cases, what the United States most desires to obtain. These tools also appear to improve the probability of diplomatic cooperation, at least at the margins. These gains, however, do not routinely extend to public opinion. Only humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations are routinely associated with improved public perceptions of the United States, at least in the short term. DoD contracting and materiel transfers might also yield some public

opinion gains in the countries in which they take place, at least in certain circumstances. Although they are associated with improved perceptions of the United States in high-income states,² materiel transfers are associated with poorer perceptions in low-income countries.

- **Stabilization and resilience:** Nearly all U.S. overseas campaigning instruments appear to pose some risk of triggering increased terrorist attacks, although often this risk is associated only with some implementation environments. Many instruments are also associated with an elevated risk of human rights violations by U.S. allies' or partners' security forces. As with deterrence results, materiel transfers appear to be the tool bearing the highest risk of unfavorable outcomes—in this case, including a higher risk of civil conflict in lower-middle-income states.

These results are summarized in Table S.1. To simplify our statistical results, we used icons for each correlation between U.S. OAI and outcomes of interest. Green icons indicate outcomes that are favorable (from a U.S. perspective), red icons ones that are unfavorable, and gray icons ones that show no statistical relationship or ones we were unable to model. The shading of these icons indicates our degree of confidence in these findings, with darker shades representing greater confidence. Where a given correlation appears only in certain types of environments, we indicate this conditional relationship with half-circle icons.

Summary of Campaigning Cost Analysis

Due to both limitations of data and the enormous variety of ways that campaigning tools are used, our cost analysis attempted to provide only ROM cost estimates. Even such rough approximations, however, can be useful rules of thumb for assessing the cost implications of campaigning tools.

For the purposes of this analysis, we assumed that the dollar costs of negotiating treaties and agreements approached zero (at least relative to the other campaigning instruments). We also differentiated between materiel sales, which are essentially costless for the United States, and materiel provided through security assistance. Due to challenges in interpreting the contract data, we set those costs aside. For the remaining campaigning tools, we used U.S. government data. In the case of persistent U.S. overseas force presence, we employed cost models developed by RAND to approximate the costs using a consistent methodology. Figure S.2 summarizes the results of this analysis.

ROM cost estimates have their limitations. They can, however, provide useful rules of thumb for weighing costs relative to benefits. Two findings in particular stand out. First, as in earlier RAND research, this analysis (which employed revised cost models) found that

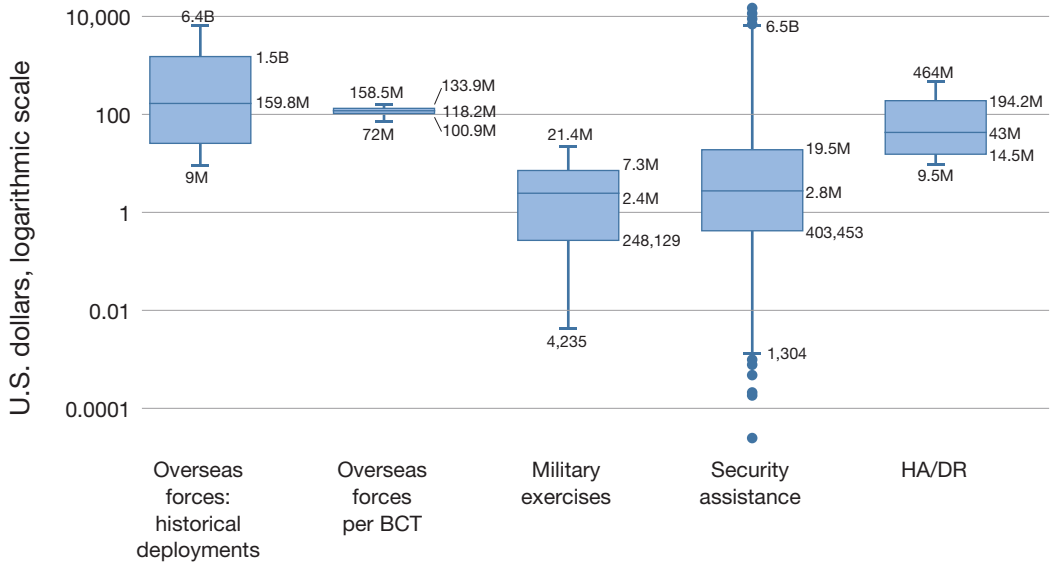
² Our income measure delineates low- and lower-middle-income states in comparison with upper-middle-income and high-income states according to categorizations of GDP per capita from the World Bank. For cut points, see World Bank Data Team, “New Country Classifications by Income Level, 2019–2020,” *Data Blog*, July 1, 2019.

TABLE S.1
Summary of Campaigning Evaluation Results

Campaigning Tool	Armed Conflict	Military Intimidation	Proxy Wars	Economic Coercion	Military Agreements	Materiel Transfers	Military Trainees	Public Opinion	UNGA Security Votes	Terrorism	Civil War	Human Rights Violation
Overseas forces												
Defense treaty												
Military agreement												
Local contracting												
Multilateral exercises												
Materiel transfers												
HA/DR												

NOTE: Color and the direction of the arrows indicate favorable (green and upward arrows) or unfavorable (red and downward arrows) relationships between campaigning tools and a given outcome. Shading indicates the degree of confidence we have in a specific finding, with darker shading indicating more confidence. Half-circles, two-way arrows, and bi-color circles indicate outcomes, relationships, and degrees of confidence that appear in only certain implementation environments. Whole gray circles represent a lack of significant findings, while gray circles with a slash represent relationships we could not test (either because they were true by definition or we lacked appropriate data or models). UNGA = United Nations General Assembly.

FIGURE S.2
Rough-Order-of-Magnitude Historic Cost Estimates



SOURCE: RAND Arroyo Center researchers' analysis based on U.S. government data; see Chapter 6.
 NOTE: B = billion; BCT = brigade combat team; M = million.

permanent deployments of U.S. forces cost roughly the same as heel-to-toe rotational deployments, at least if facilities are either largely provided by the host nation or are amortized over a sufficiently long period. Second, persistent presence and HA/DR operations typically involve costs one to two orders of magnitude greater than military exercises or security assistance. For instance, according to our cost estimates, deploying one U.S. brigade overseas for one year on average costs nearly as much as the costs of security assistance in 2018 for the 100 states receiving the lowest levels of such assistance *combined*.

These results suggest stark trade-offs between the likelihood of realizing U.S. objectives and the need to operate within a budget constraint. The persistent presence of U.S. overseas forces, for instance, appears to be perhaps the single-best deterrent tool available to the United States, and it appears to have among the fewest unfavorable second-order effects (in particular, in terms of stabilization and resilience). But the United States can typically conduct dozens of exercises or provide security assistance to dozens of allies and partners for the average cost of one brigade-sized overseas deployment. Given this enormous discrepancy in costs, it is clear that a new commitment of U.S. forces is a tool that can be used in only the highest-priority cases.³ This trade-off between efficacy and cost has important policy implications, discussed next in the recommendations.

³ To these dollar costs must be added other costs, of course, such as the risks of potentially making these forces unavailable for other contingencies. Such opportunity costs were outside of our analysis.

Recommendations

As discussed above, our primary intention for this research was to provide a decision-support tool for U.S. decisionmakers and planners. Our results constitute an analytic baseline about the likely outcomes and ROM costs for various campaigning instruments, but decisionmakers and planners will want to revise these baseline estimates upward or downward for a specific decision according to what they know about the circumstances affecting that decision. Consequently, we do not make specific recommendations about which policies the United States should pursue in any given case. Instead, we offer two broad sets of recommendations, one on campaigning instruments in general terms and a second on the process of decisionmaking and evaluation for campaigning.

Recommendations: Campaigning Instruments

Although context is important for each decision, we observed several patterns between overseas campaigning instruments and their typical outcomes. These patterns can be used as rules of thumb when facing uncertainty and are as follows:

Employ U.S. Forces Selectively for the Highest-Priority Targets

Our analysis highlights that the persistent presence of significant U.S. forces appears to be the most reliable tool for deterrence. Unfortunately, positioning U.S. forces overseas is expensive—more expensive by nearly two orders of magnitude than a typical security assistance package for a U.S. ally or partner. These costs suggest that the United States must use such deployments sparingly and only when a careful risk assessment and cost-benefit analysis (including analyses of these forces' vulnerability) suggest they are warranted. Future analyses might build on this one to develop frameworks for such assessments.

Commit to Multilateral Military Exercises as a Long-Term Investment

Our analysis suggests that multilateral military exercises have some deterrent potential. These apparent effects, however, became greater in magnitude over time. This finding suggests that exercises' primary value does not lie in their immediate utility as a signal but rather as a means of slowly building capabilities, both among U.S. allied or partner militaries and within the U.S. military itself.

Use Campaigning to Promote Cooperation While Being Aware of Its Limits

Many U.S. campaigning tools appear to be effective in promoting military-to-military cooperation under steady-state conditions. However, we were not able to test their ability to contribute to contingency access, and there may be little correlation between military access in peacetime conditions and access during conflict. Moreover, some forms of campaigning appear to worsen public perceptions of the United States in low-income countries.

Use Risk Assessments and Plan Risk Mitigations for Low-Income Countries

Among lower-income states, most campaigning instruments reviewed in this report appear to have at least some unfavorable consequences for these countries' stability and resilience. Decisionmakers might decide that the use of these tools is still warranted for other U.S. strategic objectives. For these cases, DoD offices and military commands should use risk assessments to anticipate potential second-order consequences of U.S. actions and should plan appropriate mitigations.

Recommendations: Process of Decisionmaking and Evaluation for Campaigning

Although our analysis was not comprehensive, it might serve as the groundwork for an expanded and refined decision-support tool for DoD offices and military commands. There are several steps that DoD might take to build on this and similar work.

Improve Data Collection, Knowledge Management, and Analytic Capabilities

Elements of DoD typically collect data to support their own decisionmaking or to comply with regulatory requirements (or both). Consequently, data are often not collected, stored, or disseminated in ways that benefit analysis in service of the broader DoD enterprise. Interviews and declassified archival records suggest that decisionmakers and planners at all levels struggle to understand the implications of their campaigning decisions in the competition space. They would clearly benefit from data that were systematically collected and available to inform such decisions and from additional analytic capabilities that could help to make sense of these data.

Adapt Planning Processes to Incorporate Evaluations

Evaluations such as the one presented in this report might be incorporated into the decision-making processes of DoD offices and military commands. Where outcomes have historically been poor, a decision to move forward with a given campaign instrument might be subject to additional scrutiny. For example, a decision might be contingent on additional staff work from either military commands or the intelligence community to investigate the relevant risks and provide an in-depth analysis of the extent of those risks and potential mitigation strategies.

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Introduction

The 2017 National Security Strategy and 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) signaled a decisive shift in U.S. security policy toward so-called *great-power competition* (later termed *strategic competition*) with China and Russia.¹ Despite several years of effort, however, the concept of competition remained ill-defined, leading many critics to warn that it was a recipe for U.S. strategic overcommitment.² The more recent shift to the concepts of *integrated deterrence* and *campaigning* in the 2022 NDS has emphasized the importance of ensuring that specific operations, activities, and investments (OAI) are prioritized according to the NDS and logically linked as part of a whole-of-government effort.³ Despite the change in terminology and emphasis, the potential for overcommitment—or at least a failure to appropriately prioritize U.S. actions—remains.

Strategic overcommitment was a common concern in the later years of the Cold War.⁴ But the need for careful prioritization and synchronization of U.S. activities is even greater now. The Soviet economy was a fraction of the size of the United States'. In contrast, the Chinese economy rivals that of the United States in size and, increasingly, in sophistication. When a competitor can spend equivalent or greater resources on strategic competition in relation to the United States' expenditure, the *efficiency* of converting resources into desired strategic effects becomes essential.⁵

In this report, we explore—in very broad terms—the rate of return on U.S. military overseas competition activities. More specifically, we focus on five questions:

- What is the range of U.S. goals in competition?

¹ Office of the President, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017; U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge*, January 1, 2018.

² See, for instance, Richard Fontaine, "Washington's Missing China Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, January 14, 2022; and Emma Ashford, "Great-Power Competition Is a Recipe for Disaster," *Foreign Policy*, April 1, 2021.

³ DoD, "Fact Sheet: 2022 National Defense Strategy," October 27, 2022.

⁴ See, for instance, Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, Vintage Books, 1989.

⁵ A. W. Marshall, *Long-Term Competition with the Soviets: A Framework for Strategic Analysis*, RAND Corporation, R-862-PR, 1972, p. viii.

- What are the overseas campaigning instruments (i.e., OAI) through which DoD contributes to those goals?
- Which of those instruments—and under what conditions—appear to be most effective? Which run substantial risks of counterproductive outcomes?
- At a rough-order-of-magnitude (ROM) level, what are the costs of different categories of overseas campaigning tools?
- Which instruments appear to represent relatively more cost-efficient tools for obtaining certain objectives in particular types of contexts?

Research Objective: A Strategic Evaluation and Decision-Support Tool

The primary objective of this research is to understand how the United States can more efficiently spend its scarce resources on overseas OAI in pursuit of strategic goals. There are two key stages in pursuing this objective: (1) establishing baseline trends about the apparent effectiveness and costs of OAI as shown by prior outcomes and (2) using these baseline trends as one element to inform judgments about future commitments. The first objective can be called a strategic evaluation of historical performance. The second objective calls for a decision-support tool to assist practitioners.

A Strategic Evaluation of Past OAI

The objective of this research is one that closely aligns with existing and recent DoD and service guidance. The 2022 NDS, for instance, states that “[s]uccessful campaigning begins with focused planning that specifies how an initiative supports our defense priorities, establishes clear connections with the Department’s ways and means, and incorporates feedback loops.”⁶ The 2018 NDS states that DoD will “continuously [deliver] performance with affordability” and emphasizes the need to reform DoD’s “business practices for greater performance and affordability.”⁷ The Army’s foundational regulation governing the process of planning, programming, budgeting, and execution (PPBE) states, “Resource-informed decisions support making effective trade-offs to achieve the best possible use of limited resources. . . . The Army PPBE process will . . . [u]se various analytical tools to estimate life-cycle costs and benefits of programs and different options in resource-informed decision making.”⁸ Some campaigning-related processes now require some form of cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness

⁶ DoD, 2022, p. 12.

⁷ DoD, 2018, pp. 4 and 5.

⁸ Army Regulation 1-1, *Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution*, U.S. Department of the Army, May 23, 2016, p. 14.

analysis. DoD's recently introduced Significant Security Cooperation Initiative (SSCI) procedures, for instance, emphasize the need for such analysis.⁹

Despite this guidance, DoD has made relatively little progress toward cost-efficiency or return-on-investment analysis for its campaigning instruments, and for very good reason: The challenges involved in any traditional version of such analyses are enormous. Two challenges in particular have hampered such efforts: poor data quality and highly complex methodological issues.

Data quality issues arise both internally and externally. Internally, DoD has often failed to collect the data necessary to evaluate its campaigns. A lot of OAI data are collected by categories that facilitate financial accounting, not evaluations. Data are frequently not collected the same way over time, making it extremely difficult to understand trends over any substantial period. Externally, many of the data that would be necessary for a full evaluation of campaigning efforts simply do not exist. In many cases, it is too expensive to collect data regularly across a large number of countries over extended periods (e.g., regular public opinion polls), or it is impossible to collect data within existing political constraints (e.g., detailed data on the quality of nonallied military forces with which the United States cooperates). In other cases, outcomes of interest suffer from complex definitional challenges (e.g., *terrorism*) or are inherently hard to measure (e.g., diplomatic cooperation). We had to operate within the constraints of the data currently available. These data generally took the form of publicly available U.S. government data (such as the U.S. Agency for International Development's "Greenbook" data on security assistance) or datasets developed by and widely used among academics. In some cases (such as exercise cost data), we relied on U.S. government data that are unclassified but not publicly available.

We were not able to conduct detailed analyses of specific programs (e.g., the International Military Education and Training or IMET program). Instead, we conducted what is known as a *strategic evaluation*.¹⁰ In contrast to programmatic evaluations, strategic evaluations do not provide answers to what specific programs the United States should invest in. Instead, they provide broad, strategic-level insights into the *kinds of programs* that the United States might prioritize. To borrow a market analogy, the difference between a programmatic and strategic evaluation is like the difference between determining which specific stock an investor might buy and conducting an overall analysis of their portfolio of assets to determine whether they should be more heavily invested in stocks, bonds, real estate, or some other class of assets. Our analysis is of the latter sort.

⁹ DoD, "Standards and Guidelines for Security Cooperation Performance Monitoring—Annex: How to Develop a Performance Monitoring Plan for Significant Security Cooperation Initiatives (SSCIs)," April 26, 2021.

¹⁰ On the difference between programmatic and strategic evaluations, see, for instance, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Security Cooperation, "Assessment, Planning and Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation Overview for Security Cooperation," undated, p. 11.

The second set of challenges to a cost-effectiveness analysis is methodological. First, every overseas campaigning tool normally has multiple—and indeed, often a large number of—objectives. It can be difficult to weight the value of one objective relative to another. If a particular U.S. policy reassures U.S. allies but potentially provokes U.S. competitors, for instance, should we value the reassurance benefit more or less than the cost in terms of provocation? The answer will likely depend on the person making the judgment, the context in which the decision is made (how important are the allies, how dangerous the provocation?), and so on.¹¹

Second, the causal relationship between overseas campaigning tools and outcomes of interest is often unclear.¹² It is notoriously difficult to determine, for instance, whether a U.S. competitor did not launch an act of aggression because of U.S. deterrence or because it had no intention to act aggressively.¹³ Moreover, the relationship between the U.S. input and the overseas outcome might differ depending on context (e.g., which countries are involved), and it might change over time (e.g., it might have short-term payoffs but at the price of long-term costs). Campaigning tools may also have different outcomes depending on which other policies and activities the United States is pursuing at the time (a U.S.-led multilateral military exercise might be deterring when undertaken with a treaty ally, for instance, but provocative when undertaken with a new partner).¹⁴

It is almost certainly impossible for any one framework to address all these challenges. Our analysis is predominately directed at the second set of challenges: helping decisionmakers to understand the likely consequences of campaigning tools in various contexts across a wide range of outcomes. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger reportedly said that policymaking is the art of “making complicated bets about the future.” He reportedly added that he wished “intelligence would supply him with estimates of the relevant betting odds.”¹⁵ This report seeks to provide a framework and analysis for understanding those odds—not just for any one objective that the United States might pursue, but across multiple, competing objectives.

¹¹ See, for instance, John M. Treddenick, “Cost-Effectiveness in Defence Expenditure,” *International Journal of Management Science*, Vol. 7, No. 5, 1979; and Francois Melese, Anke Richter, and Binyam Solomon, “Introduction: Military Cost-Benefit Analysis,” in Francois Melese, Anke Richter, and Binyam Solomon, eds., *Military Cost-Benefit Analysis: Theory and Practice*, Routledge, 2015.

¹² Even U.S. military doctrine calling for rigorous evaluation of U.S. competition activities notes the difficulty involved. Joint doctrine on security cooperation, for instance, notes, “Often, it is challenging to determine if these activities have contributed to US objectives—whether at the level of national security, department or agency, Service, or [combatant command]—and if so, by how much or in what ways” (Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Security Cooperation*, Joint Publication 3-20, May 23, 2017, p. V-1).

¹³ Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, “Rational Deterrence Theory: I Think, Therefore I Deter,” *World Politics*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 1989.

¹⁴ Raymond Kuo and Brian Blankenship, “Deterrence and Restraint: Do Joint Military Exercises Escalate Conflict?” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 66, No. 1, 2022.

¹⁵ Cited in Michael C. Horowitz, Julia Ciocca, Lauren Kahn, and Christian Ruhl, *Keeping Score: A New Approach to Geopolitical Forecasting*, white paper, Perry World House, February 2021.

The Beginnings of a Decision-Support Tool

Our analysis is intended to provide a baseline set of expectations about the probabilities of achieving U.S. strategic objectives. Decisionmakers and military planners can use these baseline probabilities as one important decisionmaking input as they consider a particular commitment. On average, does such a commitment appear likely to deter or provoke potential aggressors? Improve cooperation with allies and partners? Contribute to the internal stability of an ally or partner—or, conversely, risk its destabilization? Are the apparent consequences only marginal changes to the status quo, or are they substantial? And are such commitments inexpensive enough that the United States can afford to place lots of small bets on the potential for good outcomes—or are they so prohibitively expensive that they should be pursued to advance only vital U.S. interests?

Our findings provide insights into only the average case of a given type. Decisionmakers and planners, however, do not plan for the average case; they plan for specific cases. *Our analysis cannot tell practitioners what to do in any individual instance.* This qualification is critically important. For example, even if forward posture generally deters, U.S. forces positioned within the first island chain could be extremely vulnerable to Chinese missiles, making them an uncertain deterrent.

Our analysis nonetheless can serve two important purposes. First, it can inform decisions when the details of specific cases are not known. When the United States decides to invest in force structure, such as the Army's Security Force Assistance Brigades, or in such facilities as an overseas military base, it must do so without knowing exactly how that force structure or those facilities will be used a decade in the future. Our analysis can help to establish expectations to inform these decisions. Second, for near-term decisions, where the context of a decision is clearer, our analysis can serve as a baseline set of expectations that decisionmakers and planners can then adjust up or down depending on their knowledge of specific cases and their confidence in the quality of the case-specific evidence available. Even if a particular campaigning instrument has proven ineffective in most cases, it might fare better in particularly promising circumstances. Decisionmakers and planners should use their own judgment to decide what to do in such cases. If they repeatedly find themselves arguing that all decisions are exceptions, however, they are likely to be disappointed in the results of their investments. This approach—having a rigorous baseline set of expectations that can be nudged upward or downward depending on context—is similar to ones advocated by many experts who study how decisionmaking can be most effective.¹⁶

¹⁶ Philip E. Tetlock, *Expert Political Judgment: How Good Is It? How Can We Know?* Princeton University Press, 2006; Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011. This approach is similar to the distinction between *best practices* and *good practices*. Many policy observers have become skeptical of the notion that there is any such thing as a best practice that can provide universal guidance. Instead, they recommend good practices that are often applicable but will commonly need to be adapted to particular situations. On the superiority of the concept of good practices over best practices, see, for instance, Olivier Serrat, "Identifying and Sharing Good Practices," in *Knowledge Solutions: Tools, Methods, and Approaches to Drive Organizational Performance*, Asian Development Bank, 2017.

In short, our analysis is not intended to be deterministic; it is not intended to tell decisionmakers or military planners what to do in any given instance. Rather, it is intended as the beginnings of a decision-support tool to facilitate improved decisionmaking by practitioners.¹⁷ Further work would be needed to expand this tool, incorporating factors outside our analysis, to make it better adapted to informing specific military decisions.

Research Approach and Outline of the Report

To establish a baseline set of expectations, we need to look at more than a few instances of campaigning tools. Because there will always be exceptional cases, we need to examine hundreds or even thousands of interactions between the United States and its competitors or its allies and partners to discern broad patterns. To be able to conduct a cost-effectiveness analysis, we also need some way to measure the extent of the gains (or losses) accruing to particular U.S. policies. Case studies are not practical for either of these purposes. Instead, we rely on statistical analysis.

Statistical analysis is commonly used in operations research on technical defense processes, and it is also common in analyses of fields of U.S. foreign policy, such as development assistance. It is much less frequently applied to strategic analyses of U.S. defense policy. While there are many reasons why such analyses are uncommon, at least two are worth highlighting. First, while operations researchers and development economists are trained in advanced statistics, most strategists and military planners are not. Statistical analyses can be filled with jargon and assumptions that are difficult for nonspecialists to understand. Second, the complexity of the subjects being analyzed can make statistical analysis of defense policy much more challenging than in other fields. There are numerous assumptions and modeling choices that go into developing statistical models in this field, and data are of uneven quality. It can be difficult to disentangle cause and effect. Especially for nonspecialists, these assumptions, choices, and data limitations are not always clear, giving the analysis a black box quality, with correspondingly low confidence in the results.

We attempt to address these issues in two ways. First, we have divided the documentation of our analysis into two volumes. This, the main report, is written for practitioners without any training in statistics. It avoids jargon, frequently uses historical examples, and provides numerous figures to illustrate findings in intuitive ways. A separate annex provides a collection of appendixes that document all the work underlying this report (the technical annex is available at www.rand.org/t/RR1798-2). Second, we have attempted to maximize the trans-

¹⁷ Having a baseline set of expectations is only one component—albeit an important one—in military planning. In the terms of earlier RAND work on planning, our analysis helps planners to understand the “no surprises” future. But because of the high levels of uncertainty involved in military planning—especially planning over long time horizons—it is also important to develop plans that are flexible and resilient to unexpected events. See, for instance, Paul K. Davis and Zalmay M. Khalilzad, *A Composite Approach to Air Force Planning*, RAND Corporation, MR-787-AF, 1996, pp. 17–19.

parency of our analysis. For us to have high confidence in a finding, it is not enough for us to find a statistical relationship. We must be able to explain a finding logically, wherever possible grounded in years or decades of related theory and doctrine. We must be able to find good historical illustrations of our statistical findings—cases in which historians or other informed observers assert that a particular outcome occurred for the reasons our statistical analysis suggests. And we must have either strong consistency of results across the numerous statistical models we ran (in statistical terms, our results should be robust to alternative model specifications and sources of data) or strong reasons to assess that one set of models is superior. We assign an overall degree of confidence to our findings that reflects not only traditional measures of statistical significance but also these other criteria. Where we have less confidence in results, we explain why. And in the technical annex, we provide a detailed accounting of our data, our modeling approaches, and the full range of our findings so that specialists can understand exactly how we reached the results we did.

One challenge inherent in our analysis is important to discuss at the outset. The statistical analysis relies on correlations observed between OAI and changes in conditions (such as adversary or allied activities) in the period following the U.S. action. Such an approach has its limitations. Most importantly, this approach does not, by itself, distinguish between causes and effects. For example, when an adversary escalates hostilities in the period after a U.S. action, it is not necessarily clear whether that escalation was a consequence of the U.S. action or whether U.S. decisionmakers undertook the action precisely because they anticipated an elevated risk of conflict. In the latter case, events might have turned out even worse in the absence of U.S. preventive actions, in which case the statistical analysis would miss evidence of a favorable outcome. Alternatively, both U.S. and adversary actions might have been influenced by another set of actions entirely—that is, the relationship identified in our analysis might be spurious. We implemented several statistical procedures—including two-stage models with propensity weighting and, in some cases, the synthetic control method (SCM), as well as an array of control variables—to capture context and other potential causes to control for alternative explanations for the outcomes we observed. Beyond these technical approaches, we looked for strong doctrinal or theoretical explanations for each statistical pattern and historical example of the relationship. All these approaches increase our confidence in the findings, but they do not eliminate the risk that we have misidentified the cause of a given outcome. For this reason, when we detect a relationship between OAI and an outcome, we typically refer to the outcome as an *apparent effect* of OAI or state that the outcome is *associated with* the OAI. As noted above, we also indicate the extent of our confidence in each of our results. Readers should bear in mind two other limitations to this particular analytic method. First, we primarily look for changes in the year following a U.S. investment in some form of OAI. Longer-term consequences of OAI are difficult to model; many other factors change in the intervening time, making it challenging to isolate the effect of the initial OAI. In some cases, we implemented procedures that give us some insight into apparent consequences after more than one year. But in many others, we simply offer our findings with the caveat that we are examining only their apparent short-term impact. Second, the relation-

ships that we examine, such as the association between the incidence of multilateral exercises and greater military training, may be proxies for a broader array of relationships shaped by OAI. While we focus on specific OAI that we can identify, the relationships we identify may also reflect other, unobserved engagements that occur in support of and in addition to these OAI.

These challenges notwithstanding, we believe the analytic methods we employ are one important source of insight for decisionmakers and planners to incorporate into their decisionmaking processes.

Outline of the Report

In Chapter 2 of this report, we outline the framework we used to evaluate the competition outcomes of various campaigning tools. The framework captures what we understand to be the full range of objectives that the United States pursues and the full range of overseas military instruments that the United States employs to attain those objectives. With the data and other resources available to us, we were not able to evaluate every U.S. objective for overseas campaigning and every instrument it uses. Instead, we analyzed a substantial proportion of these objectives and tools and provide a framework by which this analysis might be extended to other parts of the competition space. In the next chapter, we provide a brief overview of our data and methods, while deferring extended discussion of these topics to the technical annex.

In Chapters 3 through 5, we analyze three classes of U.S. overseas campaigning objectives: (1) gaining access and influence among U.S. allies and partners (Chapter 3), (2) stabilizing and building resilience to adversary hostile measures among U.S. allies and partners (Chapter 4), and (3) deterring acts of armed conflict and other hostile measures (Chapter 5). In each case, we evaluate the extent to which U.S. overseas campaigning tools have contributed to these objectives and potential trade-offs between the objectives, illustrating our findings with concrete historical cases and visualizations of our data and results wherever possible.

In Chapter 6, we develop ROM cost estimates for different categories of U.S. campaigning tools. Because cost estimates for historical uses of these tools are often developed using very different models and assumptions and thus vary (sometimes wildly) in the price tags they assign to even the same events, we created a series of cost models to provide a standard methodology. Where possible, we compared our cost estimates with those available in the open-source literature to confirm that—at least at a ROM level of fidelity—our cost estimates are credible.

Finally, in Chapter 7, we apply the results of our evaluations and our costing models to various campaigning tools to determine broad patterns in which they appear most cost-efficient for particular security objectives in certain types of contexts. We conclude with recommendations about both U.S. campaigning practices and future ways to evaluate them.

Analytic Framework

This chapter provides a brief overview of our analytic framework and the methods and data we used in the analysis of likely outcomes associated with U.S. overseas campaigning tools. More specifically, we examine the core elements of U.S. forward posture: overseas forces, footprint and agreements, and activities. A detailed discussion of the methods and data used in the evaluation may be found in Appendix A in the separate technical annex. Methods and data used to evaluate likely costs (understood in U.S. dollar terms), on the other hand, may be found in Chapter 6.

Analytic Framework

Statistical analysis requires measurement of three categories of variables: the outcomes of interest, the factors that are assessed to be critical drivers or causes of those outcomes, and other factors that might have influenced the outcomes. We refer to these three categories as *campaigning outcomes*, U.S. overseas *campaigning instruments* (or *posture options*), and *contextual factors*, respectively. They are illustrated in Figure 2.1. We discuss each in the following sections.

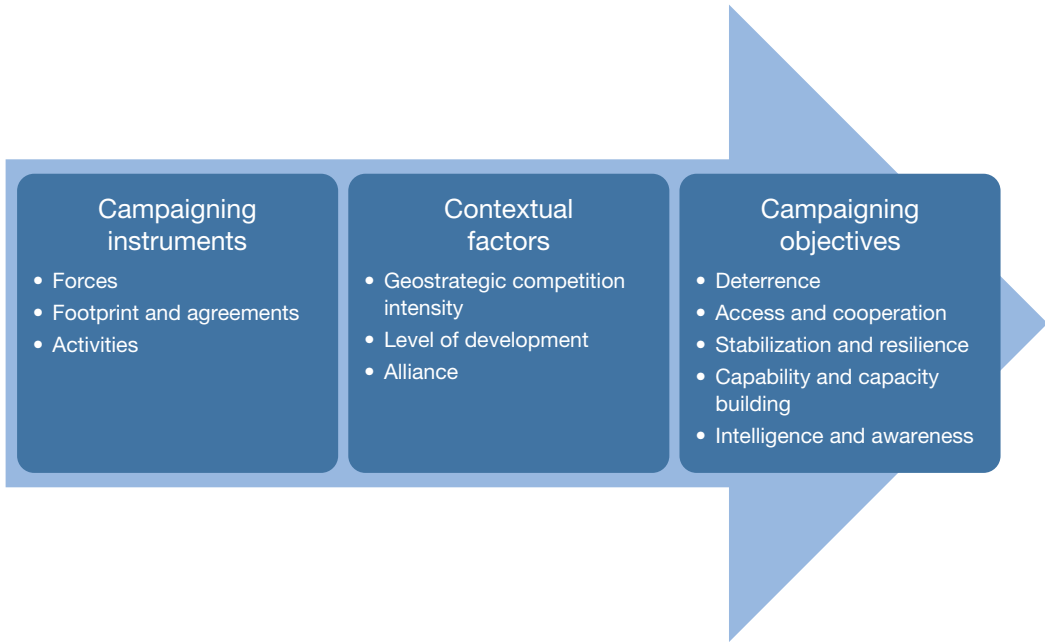
U.S. Campaigning Instruments

U.S. military campaigning activities can take a wide variety of forms.¹ It can include everything from declaratory actions (such as publicly announcing certain redlines to warn other countries against certain actions) to public disclosure of new or planned military capabilities. In this report, we focus on U.S. *forward military posture* (or simply *forward posture*). Forward posture is not synonymous with overseas campaigning, but, in practice, the large majority of campaigning tools consists of various forms of forward posture.² While most forms of over-

¹ The discussion that follows tracks closely with prior RAND research on forward military posture. See Stephen Watts, Bryan Rooney, Gene Germanovich, Bruce McClintock, Stephanie Pezard, Clint Reach, and Melissa Shostak, *Deterrence and Escalation in Competition with Russia: The Role of Ground Forces in Preventing Hostile Measures Below Armed Conflict in Europe*, RAND Corporation, RR-A720-1, 2022.

² Doctrinally, *integrated campaigning* is defined as “(proactive) Joint Force and interorganizational partner efforts to enable the achievement and maintenance of policy aims by integrating military and aligning

FIGURE 2.1
Elements of the Analytic Framework



seas campaigning involve forward posture, it is not necessarily the case that most forward posture is a part of campaigning. Campaigning involves integrating various instruments in a logical sequence to achieve strategic objectives. The research in this report seeks to help practitioners distinguish between forward posture in support of campaigning and forward posture for its own sake.

Despite periodic U.S. posture reviews, no doctrinal definition of this or closely related terms exists.³ We define *forward military posture* broadly as the combination of U.S. overseas

non-military activities of sufficient scope, scale, simultaneity, and duration across multiple domains” (Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning*, March 16, 2018, p. 33). The same document goes on to state that “the Joint Force and its partners should conduct a broad array of activities: establishing access to critical areas, forward positioning units, establishing appropriate and timely presence, organizing exercises, sharing intelligence, employing unconventional measures, and conducting information operations to include efforts to counter and undermine the competitor’s narrative” (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018, p. 21).

³ The terms *posture*, *force posture*, *military posture*, and *forward posture* are undefined in the January 2020 version of DoD’s official dictionary of military terms (although related but narrower terms appear). See Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Staff, January 2020.

forces, footprint, agreements, and activities used to project military power.⁴ Each of these four elements, in turn, requires definition:

- *Forces* refers to all U.S. military forces overseas, both those permanently stationed and those on rotational or other deployments. In this report, we use the number of U.S. military personnel deployed in a given country as one measurable indicator of capability and U.S. commitment. It is, however, an imperfect measure of those two unobservable concepts, and practitioners should interpret our results accordingly.
- *Footprint* refers to all U.S. overseas military facilities, prepositioned equipment and other stocks, and contracted logistics and sustainment support.
- *Agreements* are formal military agreements between the United States and its allies and partners that establish the formal obligations of both parties. They range from alliance treaties to status-of-forces agreements to agreements related to military movement.
- *Activities* include all official actions of U.S. overseas forces short of armed conflict. In practice, it principally refers to (1) security cooperation activities, such as multilateral military exercises and military training or exchanges; (2) shows of force, such as freedom of navigation operations; (3) intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) activities; and (4) humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HA/DR) operations.⁵

Table 2.1 summarizes the specific measures we use for these posture elements and the sources of data for each. As is clear in the table, there are several forms of U.S. forward posture for which we do not have good data—in particular, the elements of footprint (where we lack good historical data on facilities and prepositioned materiel independent of the military personnel stationed there) and activities (where we lack adequate data on nonmateriel forms of security cooperation; ISR activities; and routine shows of force, such as freedom of naviga-

⁴ This definition is consistent with broad DoD usage of the term. In the most recent DoD Instruction on global defense posture, the term *global defense posture* referred to “DoD’s forces, footprints, and agreements that support joint and combined global operations and plans in foreign countries and U.S. territories and in defense of the homeland” (Department of Defense Instruction 3000.12, *Management of U.S. Global Defense Posture*, U.S. Department of Defense, May 6, 2016, p. 2). In one of DoD’s posture reports to Congress, *posture* was defined as “a network of forces, footprint, and agreements that maintains U.S. global reach, projects and sustains power abroad, promotes the security interests of the U.S., its allies, and partners, and supports other foreign policy objectives” (DoD, *2012 U.S. Global Defense Posture Report to Congress*, May 2012). The *forces* component of these definitions was often taken to imply not only the size and capabilities of those forces but also their activities. In this report, we break out activities as a separate element.

⁵ For data reasons, we focus on relatively sizeable and overt activities. Broadly, activities such as senior leader engagements between a handful of officers would not be included, while a military field exercise involving thousands of personnel would be. Importantly, because special operations are typically small scale and often have low visibility by design, we do not include them in our analysis. For an overview of such activities in competition, see Stephen Watts, Sean M. Zeigler, Kimberly Jackson, Caitlin McCulloch, Joe Cheravitch, and Marta Kepe, *Countering Russia: The Role of Special Operations Forces in Strategic Competition*, RAND Corporation, RR-A412-1, 2021.

TABLE 2.1
U.S. Posture Options

Posture Element	Measure	Data
Forces	Number of overseas U.S. military personnel	Defense Manpower Data Center
Footprint	Facilities	Unavailable
	Prepositioned materiel	Unavailable
	Contracting support	Federal Procurement Data System
Agreements	Mutual defense treaties	Correlates of War Project's Formal Alliances dataset
	Military agreements ^a	Prior RAND Corporation dataset of military agreements
Activities	Shows of force	Unavailable
	ISR activities	Unavailable
	HA/DR operations	Prior RAND dataset of U.S. military operations
	Multilateral military exercises	Joint Military Exercises Data Set
	Materiel transfers (e.g., foreign military sales)	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfers dataset
	Training	Unavailable
	Advising and institutional capacity building	Unavailable
	Military-to-military engagements	Unavailable
	Joint research and development	Unavailable
	Information operations	Unavailable
Military construction	Unavailable	

^a Military agreements other than mutual defense treaties include access and status-of-forces agreements, legal agreements, agreements on materiel transfers, operational agreements, financial agreements, and other guarantees.

tion operations).⁶ We nonetheless have sufficient data to analyze almost half of the forms of overseas posture in the table, including the most prominent ones (notably including standing U.S. overseas military presence, defense agreements, exercises, and arms transfers).⁷

⁶ Raw data on some of these campaigning inputs are available for at least a subset of cases—especially for more-recent occurrences and ones that are more publicly visible. Future research might be able to piece together such data over a sufficient period to enable statistical analysis. With constrained time and resources, we were unable to explore the feasibility of developing such datasets.

⁷ Angela O'Mahony, Miranda Priebe, Bryan Frederick, Jennifer Kavanagh, Matthew Lane, Trevor Johnston, Thomas S. Szayna, Jakub Hlavka, Stephen Watts, and Matthew Povlock, *U.S. Presence and the Inci-*

Campaigning Outcomes

An examination of strategic guidance and the posture statements of the geographic combatant commands suggests that most campaigning objectives fit in one of five broad categories:

- **Deterrence:** We define *deterrence* as “the persuasion of one’s opponent that the costs and/or risks of a given course of action he might take outweigh its benefits.”⁸ We focus on the ability of the United States to deter acts of aggression against its allies and partners through military instruments (what is known as *extended deterrence*). We also focus on the United States’ ability to shape competitors’ and adversaries’ behavior over the long term rather than in specific crises (what is known as *general* rather than *immediate deterrence*). Finally, we are interested in the ability of U.S. military instruments to contribute to deterring acts of aggression below the threshold of armed conflict (termed *gray-zone activities*) and wars, even if military instruments are more of a contributing factor rather than the main line of effort in deterring these lesser activities.
- **Access and cooperation:** The United States seeks diplomatic and military cooperation with allies and partners (including reassuring them of U.S. support against perceived threats), and it often seeks their agreement to allow U.S. military forces access to their territory and airspace. Access most frequently is for limited purposes, such as combined military exercises with the host nation or routine military overflight rights. Less commonly, the United States seeks military basing rights, on either a permanent or contingency basis, or authorization to conduct large-scale military operations. In the realm of military cooperation, the United States frequently encourages allies and partners to purchase U.S. military platforms and systems and to send promising officers to U.S. military schoolhouses, both in an effort to improve relationships and enhance the potential for interoperability. The United States sometimes also tries to gain public support among allies and partners (e.g., through public affairs efforts to highlight U.S. assistance or military support) as a way of facilitating future access and cooperation.
- **Stabilization and resilience:** The United States often seeks to enhance the domestic stability of allies and partners, including their ability to prevent or defend against terrorism and insurgency or to be resilient against foreign efforts to subvert them through gray-zone activities. It also seeks to avoid having its military assistance misused by gov-

dence of Conflict, RAND Corporation, RR-1906-A, 2018; Bryan Frederick, Stephen Watts, Matthew Lane, Abby Doll, Ashley L. Rhoades, and Meagan L. Smith, *Understanding the Deterrent Impact of U.S. Overseas Forces*, RAND Corporation, RR-2533-A, 2020; Douglas M. Gibler, *International Military Alliances, 1648–2008*, CQ Press, 2008; Jennifer Kavanagh, *U.S. Security-Related Agreements in Force Since 1955: Introducing a New Database*, RAND Corporation, RR-736-AF, 2014; U.S. General Services Administration, “Federal Procurement Data System,” database, undated; Jordan Bernhardt and Lauren Sukin, “Joint Military Exercises and Crisis Dynamics on the Korean Peninsula,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 65, No. 5, 2021.

⁸ Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, Columbia University Press, 1974, p. 11.

ernment forces in human rights abuses and, among some partners, to help build responsible and accountable defense institutions that will refrain from such actions.

- **Capability and capacity building:** The United States often seeks to improve its allies' and partners' ability to defend themselves and contribute to combined military operations. Capability- and capacity-building programs can focus on the armed forces themselves (e.g., through arms transfers or training) or on helping to build the underlying institutions that sustain those military capabilities.
- **Intelligence and awareness:** Finally, the United States engages in overseas activities to gain intelligence on competitors and potential adversaries or to improve U.S. military personnel's familiarity with distant operating environments.

Table 2.2 summarizes specific measures of these five campaigning outcomes and the data we used for each measure. As with posture options, we do not have appropriate data to evaluate all these outcomes. We do, however, have data that are widely used in academic and analytic communities for nearly all of the major outcomes of interest, including many of the most important ones.⁹ Accordingly, in our analysis, we focus on deterrence, access and cooperation, and stability and resilience. Note that some of these outcomes (e.g., access agreements, U.S. arms imports) can also be U.S. campaigning inputs toward other objectives.

Contextual Factors

Contextual factors can be broken into two groups: conditioning and control variables. *Control variables* are factors that might influence outcomes independent of U.S. campaigning actions. *Conditioning variables* are those factors that directly interact with U.S. campaigning actions, influencing how the United States conducts its campaigning or how other actors respond. In practice, the distinction between the two is often not clear. We focused on three factors in particular as conditioning influences: the intensity of geostrategic competition, the level of development of the U.S. ally or partner, and the existence of an alliance. Table 2.3

⁹ Glenn Palmer, Vito D'Orazio, Michael R. Kenwick, and Roseanne W. McManus, "Updating the Militarized Interstate Dispute Data: A Response to Gibling, Miller, and Little," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 2, 2019; Gabriel Felbermayr, Aleksandra Kirilakha, Constantinos Syropoulos, Erdal Yalcin, and Yoto V. Yotov, "The Global Sanctions Data Base," *European Economic Review*, Vol. 129, 2020; Stephen Watts, Bryan Frederick, Nathan Chandler, Mark Toukan, Christian Curriden, Erik Mueller, Edward Geist, Ariane Tabatabai, Sara Plana, Brandon Corbin, and Jeffrey Martini, *Proxy Warfare in Strategic Competition: Military Implications*, RAND Corporation, RR-A307-3, 2023; Ralph Sundberg, Kristine Eck, and Joakim Kreutz, "Introducing the UCDP Non-State Conflict Dataset," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 2012; SIPRI, "SIPRI Arms Transfers Database," undated; Theodore McLauchlin, Lee J. M. Seymour, and Simon Pierre Boulanger Martel, "Tracking the Rise of United States Foreign Military Training: IMTAD-USA, a New Dataset and Research Agenda," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 59, No. 2, 2022; Erik Voeten, Anton Strezhnev, and Michael Bailey, "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data," Harvard Dataverse V30, 2009; Håvard Strand and Håvard Hegre, "Trends in Armed Conflict, 1946–2020," *Conflict Trends*, Vol. 3, 2021, p. 4; David L. Cingranelli and David L. Richards, "The Cingranelli and Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Data Project," *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2010.

TABLE 2.2
Campaigning Outcomes

Outcome	Measure	Data
Deterrence		
Deter direct armed conflict	High-intensity militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) (wars, armed clashes)	Correlates of War MID 5.0 dataset
Deter military intimidation	Low-intensity MIDs (shows of force, threats to use force)	Correlates of War MID 5.0 dataset
Deter proxy wars	State support to insurgency	Prior RAND dataset
Deter economic coercion	Economic sanctions (formal or informal)	Global Sanctions Database
Deter hostile information operations		Unavailable
Access and cooperation		
Improve public opinion	U.S. favorability ratings	Gallup world polls
Gain diplomatic support	United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) votes	UNGA voting dataset
Gain basing rights	Stationing of U.S. forces on foreign soil	Prior RAND dataset
Gain other military access	Access agreements for U.S. forces	Prior RAND dataset
Gain use of U.S. arms	Proportion of ally/partner arms imports from the United States	SIPRI Arms Transfers dataset
Provide U.S. military education	Foreign military training records	IMTAD-USA
Stability and resilience		
Prevent internal conflict	Number of civil wars (onset)	UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset
Prevent terrorism	Number of acts of terrorism	Global Terrorism Database
Prevent government human rights abuses	Number of government violations of bodily integrity rights	CIRI Human Rights Dataset
Capability and capacity building		Unavailable
Intelligence and awareness		Unavailable

NOTE: CIRI = Cingranelli-Richards; IMTAD-USA = International Military Training Activities Database–USA; UCDP/PRIO = Uppsala University Department of Peace and Conflict Research/Peace Research Institute Oslo.

summarizes the factors that we included in our models. Because various outcomes of interest are influenced by different combinations of factors, we did not include every control variable in every statistical model. Similarly, because outcomes of interest are interrelated, we generally included other outcomes as control variables in models in which that outcome was not the outcome of interest (i.e., the dependent variable of the model).

TABLE 2.3
Contextual Factors

Factor	Measure	Data
Conditioning variables		
Geostrategic competition intensity	Proximity to U.S. competitor	Diehl, Goertz, and Gallegos peace data; Gleditsch distance data; Correlates of War Project's contiguity data
	Existence of Cold War	Historical records 1946–1989
	Interstate rivalry	Thompson rivalry data
Level of development	GDP per capita	World Bank's World Development Indicators
Alliance	Mutual defense treaty	Correlates of War Project's Formal Alliances dataset
Control variables		
U.S. alliance	Mutual defense treaty	Correlates of War Project's Formal Alliances dataset
Level of democracy	Polity score	Polity IV Project
Level of development	GDP per capita	World Bank's World Development Indicators
Trade with U.S.	U.S. trade as percentage of total trade	World Bank's World Development Indicators
UN voting similarity	UNGA voting records	Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten UNGA voting data
Material capabilities	Index of material warmaking potential	Correlates of War Project's Composite Index of National Capabilities
Natural resources	Oil-producing country	World Bank's World Development Indicators
Geostrategic competition intensity	Existence of Cold War	Historical records 1946–1989
Geostrategic competition intensity	Interstate rivalry	Thompson rivalry data

NOTE: GDP = gross domestic product.

Summary

Campaigning is a complex activity with many objectives and many military instruments that might contribute to those objectives. For many of these inputs and desired outcomes, the quality of existing data is often insufficient to conduct a rigorous evaluation. We scoped our evaluation widely, but we were limited in the range of relationships we could test. Table 2.4 summarizes the inputs and outcomes that we examined, with checks indicating the relationships for which we had at least minimally sufficient data. Although our analysis is not com-

TABLE 2.4

Summary of Campaigning Instruments and Objectives

Element	Campaigning Instrument	Deterrence				Access and Cooperation						Stabilization and Resilience					
		Armed Conflict	Military Intimidation	Proxy Wars	Economic Coercion	Information Operations	Public Opinion	Diplomatic Support	Basing Rights	Other Military Access	Use of U.S. Arms	U.S. Military Education	Internal Conflict	Terrorism	Human Rights	Capability Building	Information and Awareness
Forces	Overseas U.S. military personnel	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Footprint	Facilities																
	Prepositioned materiel																
	Contracting support	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Agreements	Mutual defense treaties	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓			
	Access agreements	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Activities	Shows of force																
	ISR activities																
	HA/DR operations	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Activities	Multilateral military exercises	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			

Table 2.4—Continued

		Deterrence				Access and Cooperation					Stabilization and Resilience						
		Armed Conflict	Military Intimidation	Proxy Wars	Economic Coercion	Information Operations	Public Opinion	Diplomatic Support	Basing Rights	Other Military Access	Use of U.S. Arms	U.S. Military Education	Internal Conflict	Terrorism	Human Rights	Capability Building	Information and Awareness
Activities	Materiel transfers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓			
	Training																
	Advising and ICB																
	Military-to-military engagements																
	Joint research and development																
	Information operations																

NOTE: ✓ indicates a relationship for which we have adequate data to test.

✗ indicates a relationship in which inputs and outcomes are so similar that no causal relationship exists.

ICB = institutional capacity building.

prehensive, it captures many of the key elements of campaigning. It might also help to lay the groundwork for expanded evaluations in the future.¹⁰

Methods

Our empirical analysis of the relationships between U.S. campaigning instruments and the objectives of U.S. campaigning rests on three components. First, we developed theory-informed expectations about how and under what implementation environments U.S. campaigning instruments might contribute to U.S. campaigning objectives. These expectations reflect prior research about the impact of U.S. presence and activities on deterrence, access and cooperation, and stabilization and resilience. They, in turn, formed the basis for our statistical modeling strategy, including our identification of data sources and control variables noted in Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. Second, we conducted statistical analyses of each of the relationships included in Table 2.4. Third, we looked for cases in the broader literature to better understand the correlations identified in our statistical analyses. Using all three components, we then produced summary evaluations of the relationship between each campaigning instrument and objective.

Our Statistical Analysis Strategy

To identify broad relationships between campaigning instruments and campaigning outcomes, we undertook a statistical analysis that included 161 countries and spanned U.S. campaigning with these countries from 1945 to 2010.¹¹ We designed our analyses to drill down on the relationship between a particular campaigning instrument and outcome. This means our focus was on the marginal effect of the campaigning instrument, after controlling for other considerations that also affect the outcome. As a result, our models include the control variables listed in Table 2.3, as well as a one-year lag of the campaigning instrument to identify the short-term impact of the campaigning instrument.¹² To account for the fact that the United States might be particularly likely to implement certain policies only in especially difficult environments (e.g., stationing forces in countries, such as South Korea, that are at highest risk of conflict), we implemented two statistical methods to account for this biased process of selection: (1) two-stage models with propensity score weighting and (2) in some cases, synthetic control methods.¹³

¹⁰ Notably absent are outcome data for capability building and for information and awareness.

¹¹ This sample reflects data availability, as discussed in more detail in Appendix A in the technical annex.

¹² For continuous dependent variables, our models are ordinary least squares regressions. For dichotomous variables, our models are probit regressions. All models are run with a series of different error correction specifications, including country and year fixed-effects specifications.

¹³ Again, details of our statistical models can be found in Appendix A of the technical annex.

For relationships in which our theoretical expectations and cases suggest that there are important temporal dynamics to capture, such as the relationship between overseas presence and armed conflict, we also undertook a synthetic control analysis, in which we directly compared similar countries with which the United States undertook campaigning activities and those with which it did not.¹⁴ This allowed us to better track outcomes over time.

How to Interpret Our Results

We ran hundreds of statistical models to refine our understanding of the relationships between each campaigning instrument, in each implementation environment, for each campaigning objective. A critical part of this study, therefore, was to identify a holistic set of relationships that will be valuable for Army decisionmakers. *It is important to emphasize that all our results express probabilities.* They do not indicate that a given U.S. input will have a given outcome; they only indicate that such tools appear, on average, to improve the odds of achieving that outcome. As discussed in Chapter 1, our results by themselves do not tell a decisionmaker what to do or a planner how to plan in any given case. They instead point to broad trends that can help to inform long-term investments or can serve as an anchor point for judgments about specific actions.

To summarize our statistical results in a way that is easy to understand and facilitates comparisons across campaigning instruments and outcomes, we developed icons that capture three dimensions of our findings:

- **Direction:** The direction of a relationship indicates whether a given campaigning instrument is associated with outcomes that are favorable to the United States (such as successful deterrence or more diplomatic cooperation).
- **Implementation environment:** Some relationships apply across all implementation environments, while others vary by implementation environment.
- **Confidence:** To capture the extent to which the statistical results are consistent across different modeling techniques, we use three levels of confidence: *high*,¹⁵ *moderate*,¹⁶ and

¹⁴ These analyses were limited structurally by our ability to construct meaningful matches for treated and untreated cases. We discuss our synthetic control analyses in detail in Appendix A in the technical annex.

¹⁵ For aggregate results tables, we code a relationship as *high* confidence when the baseline model results are statistically significant at the 90-percent level, there is corroborating support at the 90-percent level in at least some of the sensitivity and implementation environments, the results comport with theoretical explanations, and we can identify illustrative cases in support of the relationship.

¹⁶ For aggregate results tables, we code a relationship as *moderate* confidence when the baseline model results are significant at the 90-percent level but the results in the sensitivity analyses or implementation environments are weaker. Alternatively, we code a relationship as *moderate* confidence when the statistical significance of the baseline model result falls between the 70- and 90-percent levels and there is strong support from the synthetic control models.

suggestive.¹⁷ (We discuss confidence in more detail below and in Appendix A of the technical annex.)

Table 2.5 presents the icons that we use throughout the report to capture the direction of each relationship, its applicability to each implementation environment, and our confidence in the relationship.

For us to have high confidence in a result, it must pass three tests. First, it must pass several statistical tests—results must not only be significant according to standard tests of statistical significance, but they must also be robust across a number of different model specifications, including ones using more-advanced statistical techniques, such as two-stage models with propensity weighting or SCM. Second, we must be able to explain those results with a compelling, logical explanation rooted in either military doctrine or academic theory (or both). Finally, we must be able to identify examples of such relationships—that is, historical cases in which experts using qualitative analytic methods have argued that a particular campaigning instrument had an outcome consistent with our statistical models. If the results pass all three tests, we have *high* confidence in them. If they pass only two of these tests, we have *moderate* confidence in them. And if they pass only one test, we have only *low* confidence in them. Low-confidence results still represent important information—they suggest that there may indeed be a relationship between given campaigning instruments and U.S. strategic objectives, but that relationship is uncertain enough that decisionmakers or military planners should likely conduct additional assessments or evaluations before placing high-cost or risky bets on such instruments.


















We do not assign confidence levels to nonfindings—that is, instances of campaigning instruments that did not appear to achieve a particular U.S. strategic objective, which are shown as gray circles in the subsequent tables in this report. How should readers interpret such results?

The most obvious interpretation is that no broad relationship exists. It could be, for instance, that some U.S. partners that receive security assistance later provide military access rights to the United States, but such instances are infrequent enough that they might simply be coincidences. The United States could continue to provide security assistance in hopes of obtaining access rights, but such choices would likely represent a highly inefficient use of resources (in this hypothetical example) if basing rights were the United States' primary objective.

There are, however, other possible explanations. It could be that a few select programs in a broader category of campaigning instruments (e.g., IMET) have positive outcomes but other programs do not. We do not have adequate data to test U.S. programs on a program-

¹⁷ For aggregate results tables, we code a relationship as *suggestive* if the statistical significance of the baseline model results is greater than 70 percent but less than 90 percent; or, for baseline models with 90-percent significance, if there is theoretically unexplainable inconsistency in the direction of the relationship across models.

TABLE 2.5
Interpretation of Findings

Finding Expressed by Icon	High Confidence	Moderate Confidence	Suggestive ^a	No Evidence of a Relationship
Favorable across all implementation environments				
Favorable in some environments				
Unfavorable across all environments				
Unfavorable in some environments				
Favorable in some environments and unfavorable in others				
Statistical results provide no evidence of a relationship				
Relationship was not tested				

^a For purely suggestive results, comments are included in results tables to identify potential relationships.

by-program basis. But a nonfinding in the broader category at least suggests that most such programs appear to be, at a minimum, highly inefficient mechanisms to achieve a particular U.S. strategic objective.

Alternatively, a given category of U.S. inputs might have positive outcomes among some partners but negative ones in others, so that, in aggregate, the two outcomes offset one another. If decisionmakers or planners have a strong reason to believe that a given case is promising, then resourcing such inputs might make sense for that particular case. But the fact that, historically, there is no strong relationship between the input and the desired outcome suggests that most prior decisionmakers and planners were unable to distinguish the circumstances in which the input would do what they wanted it to do, and, in fact, often their commitments had counterproductive results.

Finally, of course, nonfindings could result from our use of poor data or poor analytic methods. Although we have used data and methods that are normally considered among the best available, the challenges to measuring and analyzing campaigning relationships are substantial. We certainly do not claim that the findings in this report are definitive. That said, the moderate- and high-confidence findings have considerable support behind them. In such cases, beyond our own statistical analysis, various experts have found the logic of the underlying argument persuasive, and many experts using qualitative methods (such as academic historians or U.S. government analysts publishing in open sources) have found important examples of a particular campaigning instrument having the same results that our analysis found.

To return to Henry Kissinger's analogy from Chapter 1, although the findings in this report do not tell decisionmakers or military planners what to do in any particular case, they provide important information about the odds involved. We believe that they can help such practitioners place better bets and make more efficient use of limited resources in strategic competition.

Deterrence

This chapter reviews our findings on the relationship between different U.S. campaigning instruments and adversary acts of aggression, both above and below the threshold of armed conflict. It begins with a short overview of guidance, doctrine, and theory on deterrence. It then briefly discusses our analytic approach. The results from our analysis are divided into three sections: one providing an overview of the results, a second looking at changes in outcomes over time, and a third looking at the issue of tripwire forces (how much is enough to deter?). The chapter concludes by highlighting key findings. As with the rest of our analysis, a more-detailed discussion can be found in the technical annex.

Three caveats to this analysis are important to note at the outset. First, this chapter provides an analysis of deterrence, not warfighting. Some U.S. campaigning initiatives might help the United States prepare to fight wars while doing nothing to deter. For instance, activities in which the United States' and its allies' and partners' capabilities are difficult to judge, including covert activities, might do little to deter, as might activities that improve their capabilities while doing nothing to indicate the United States' will to fight a war on behalf of these allies and partners. Second, this analysis does not directly capture the benefits of campaigning, such as improved intelligence and awareness or improved military capabilities (including interoperability). Parts of the analysis nonetheless might offer indirect insights into these other areas. Third, this analysis does not directly address issues of burden sharing—and, more specifically, the argument that U.S. allies and partners would take measures to provide for their own defense if the United States did not. While these debates are important, they are beyond the scope of this analysis. We return to those caveats to address them at the end of the chapter.

Overview of Guidance, Doctrine, and Theory

Integrated deterrence is one the three core pillars of the 2022 U.S. NDS. According to DoD's fact sheet on the NDS, integrated deterrence “entails developing and combining our strengths to maximum effect, by working seamlessly across warfighting domains, theaters, the spectrum of conflict, other instruments of U.S. national power, and our unmatched network of

Alliances and partnerships.”¹ In this report, we focus on the deterrent potential of U.S. overseas conventional military presence. We largely defer the discussion of allies and partners to the following chapter. We discuss how U.S. military deterrence can help enhance the effectiveness of other instruments of national power, although our focus is on the military sphere.

The Logic of Deterrence

Deterrence is generally considered a form of armed or coercive persuasion; it is the attempt to convince a potential adversary that the costs of a potential act of aggression are greater than any possible benefit. To convince a potential adversary that an act of aggression would be self-defeating, a defender must demonstrate both the *capability* to defeat adversary aggression and the *will* or *commitment* to do so.²

Overseas U.S. military presence enhances its capabilities by helping to overcome the so-called tyranny of distance: Because moving large amounts of military materiel across the world requires considerable time, anything the United States can do to ensure effective power projection in a time of crisis potentially speeds the deployment of its combat power and thus its potential to deny an adversary a quick victory (assuming those investments can be protected from a debilitating first strike). At the upper end of the spectrum of capabilities for power projection, the United States can station large numbers of combat forces, along with much of their enablers and sustainment needs, in or near the country or region to be defended. At the lower end of the spectrum, the United States can secure access agreements and contract vehicles to support contingency deployments should the need arise but without any forward positioning of U.S. military personnel.³ The United States can also help to build the capabilities of its allies and partners.

Demonstrating a will or commitment to defend is more challenging. Deterrence theorists talk of demonstrating will in terms of so-called *costly signals* of U.S. commitment. Because less-resolved defenders would likely be unwilling to pay high costs to signal their intentions, extremely costly actions become an effective tool for signaling resolve. Stationing U.S. forces

¹ DoD, 2022, p. 2.

² See, for instance, James D. Fearon, “Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sinking Costs,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 1997; Robert J. Art and Kelly M. Greenhill, “Coercion: An Analytical Overview,” in Kelly M. Greenhill and Peter Krause, eds., *Coercion: The Power to Hurt in International Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2018; Michael J. Mazarr, Arthur Chan, Alyssa Demus, Bryan Frederick, Alireza Nader, Stephanie Pezard, Julia A. Thompson, and Elina Treyger, *What Deters and Why: Exploring Requirements for Effective Deterrence of Interstate Aggression*, RAND Corporation, RR-2451-A, 2018.

³ Prior RAND research found that Russia might be capable of seizing the Baltic states in as little as a few days. Projecting U.S. ground forces to the Baltic region would take months. For the authors of that study, the implication was clear: The United States needed to station more forces close to the Baltics if it desired the capability to defeat a Russian fait accompli. See David A. Shlapak and Michael Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO’s Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics*, RR-1253-A, RAND Corporation, 2016. The Indo-Pacific region poses even greater challenges to power projection.

in a country or region is a particularly costly signal of U.S. intent. Because those forces typically cannot be easily moved to another region (particularly in the case of heavy ground forces), they signal long-term commitment and a U.S. willingness to bear opportunity costs to support its allies and partners. Because they would almost inevitably become involved in hostilities if an aggressor attacked the country in which they were stationed, they also indicate a U.S. willingness to accept future costs to defend the host nation. U.S. forces stationed in West Berlin during the Cold War are perhaps the quintessential example of using U.S. forces as a signal of U.S. resolve. More recently, NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) battlegroups have fulfilled the same function in the Baltic states. By placing the United States' international reputation at stake, publicly declared mutual-defense treaties can also be an effective signaling mechanism. In contrast, episodic deployments of U.S. forces (such as for multinational military exercises), arms and other materiel transfers, and less-visible agreements and other military preparations (such as access agreements or contracts for local logistics support) indicate some level of U.S. support for an ally or partner, but they are much less costly and thus a much weaker signal of U.S. commitment.⁴

The Logic of Escalation

Any U.S. activity or investment with the potential to deter also has the potential to provoke unintended escalation.⁵ If deterrence requires that a potential aggressor be convinced that the costs of aggression outweigh the benefits, the converse is also true: A potential aggressor must believe that the benefits of peace outweigh the costs.⁶ If a country's leaders feel that strategic competition under peacetime is slowly eroding their country's security to the point where the country will become intensely vulnerable, they might choose even a high risk of defeat in war over what they perceive to be certain defeat in peace.⁷ The quintessential example is the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, motivated by what the Imperial Japanese regime believed to be the slow strangulation of its economy by the United States. More recently, Russian officials and strategic thinkers have claimed that Russia's invasion of Ukraine was precipitated by the slow encroachment of NATO and U.S. power toward its borders.⁸

⁴ See, especially, Fearon, 1997. See also Keren Yarhi-Milo, Alexander Lanoszka, and Zack Cooper, "To Arm or to Ally: The Patron's Dilemma and the Strategic Logic of Arms Transfers and Alliances," *International Security*, Vol. 41, No. 2, Fall 2016; and Roseanne W. McManus and Mark David Nieman, "Identifying the Level of Major Power Support Signaled for Proteges: A Latent Measure Approach," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 56, No. 3, 2019.

⁵ The classic statement of this dilemma is Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 30, 1978.

⁶ DoD, *Deterrence Operations Joint Operating Concept*, ver. 2.0, December 2006.

⁷ George and Smoke, 1974; Mazarr et al., 2018.

⁸ See, for instance, a recent interview with Sergey Karaganov in Serge Schemann, "Why Russia Believes It Cannot Lose the War in Ukraine," *New York Times*, July 19, 2022. Whether such claims should be taken at face value is another question.

It is important to note that the logic of escalation is not simply the inverse of the logic of deterrence. There are at least two important ways in which the two logics differ. First, while overseas U.S. forces are commonly expected to have the greatest deterrent impact, they are not necessarily the most escalatory in other circumstances. When the United States conducts multinational military exercises or provides materiel transfers without maintaining a persistent presence of U.S. forces on the ground, it might provoke a reaction from a competitor without having the means in theater to defend against such reactions. Moreover, when the United States holds large-scale overseas exercises, it introduces large numbers of forces into a theater in a short time—an action that has the potential to be misinterpreted as preparation for an attack.⁹ Thus, these and similar activities might prove more escalatory than deterrent—an argument that some have recently made about some exercises in the Baltic states and the Republic of Korea.¹⁰

Second, when the United States provides new capabilities to regional states through materiel transfers, training, or similar activities, it does not control what those states do with those capabilities. The United States thus loses some measure of control over potential escalation. These risks might be particularly acute for less politically stable countries. Some observers, for instance, argue that the former Soviet republic of Georgia became emboldened by increases in U.S. security assistance after 2003. The Tbilisi government adopted more assertive policies against Russian-backed breakaway regions in Georgia, touching off a spiral that these observers argue ultimately led to the 2008 Russo-Georgian war.¹¹ Thus, although any U.S. military action with the potential to deter also has the potential to provoke, it is not necessarily the case that the most powerful potential deterrents are also the most powerful potential sources of provocation. The persistent presence of U.S. military forces might provoke the greatest concern among potential U.S. adversaries. Unlike many other campaigning instruments, however, persistently forward-positioned U.S. forces are capabilities that remain within U.S. control and provide a persistent ability to respond to potential acts of aggression, making them particularly effective tools of deterrence.

⁹ Watts et al., 2022; Robert D. Blackwill and Jeffrey W. Legro, “Constraining Ground Force Exercises of NATO and the Warsaw Pact,” *International Security*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1989–1990.

¹⁰ Bernhardt and Sukin, 2021; Samuel Charap, Alice Lynch, John J. Drennan, Dara Massicot, and Giacomo Persi Paoli, *A New Approach to Conventional Arms Control in Europe: Addressing the Security Challenges of the 21st Century*, RAND Corporation, RR-4346, 2020.

¹¹ See discussions in Derek S. Reveron, *Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the U.S. Military*, 2nd ed., Georgetown University Press, 2016; John Feffer and Stephen Zunes, “U.S. Role in Georgia Crisis,” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, August 14, 2008; Rick Fawn, “Russia’s Reluctant Retreat from the Caucasus: Abkhazia, Georgia, and the US After 11 September 2001,” *European Security*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2002.

Extending the Logic of Deterrence and Escalation Below the Threshold of Armed Conflict

The logic of deterrence that applies to armed conflict also largely applies to adversary acts of aggression below the threshold of armed conflict. Whether in the context of armed conflict or lesser acts of aggression, overseas U.S. military presence is a costly signal of U.S. commitment to the host nation and potentially the wider region. U.S. military forces also have many capabilities that can help to defend other countries against acts of gray-zone aggression, including ISR capabilities and the ability to help allies and partners build their own capacity for defending against such hostile measures. U.S. military presence can also help to neutralize adversaries' or competitors' attempts at military intimidation. Finally, U.S. military presence can help to support other instruments of U.S. national power, such as diplomacy or economic sanctions. For example, some U.S. adversaries have responded to U.S. economic sanctions by either attacking the United States and its allies and partners or threatening to do so.¹² Overseas U.S. military presence can help to defend against such attacks (assuming it is sufficiently strong), thus preventing adversaries from “escalating their way out” of economic pressure.¹³

Unfortunately, the same logic of escalation that applies to armed conflict also largely applies to hostile measures below that threshold. Just as the United States sometimes uses multinational military exercises or arms transfers as a signal of its support for a country, U.S. competitors sometimes try to signal their unhappiness with such exercises or transfers or to impose costs on the United States or its allies for behavior that they believe threatens their interests. After the United States expanded security cooperation activities in the former Soviet republic of Georgia, for instance, Russia—believing that what it considered its privileged sphere of influence was being undermined—launched a series of hostile measures against the Tbilisi government, including economic sanctions, political subversion, and military intimidation.¹⁴ Similarly, North Korea repeatedly responds to combined U.S.–South Korean military exercises with various acts of military intimidation.¹⁵

In fact, escalation dynamics might be particularly acute at the level of gray-zone activities. If the United States successfully deters conventional acts of aggression, competitors or adversaries might instead seek to accomplish their goals through unconventional activities—a dynamic known during the Cold War as the *stability-instability paradox*.¹⁶

¹² The most dramatic example is the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. More recently, Iraq under Saddam Hussein attempted to put pressure on the United States to ease sanctions by appearing to threaten Kuwait in 1994. The U.S. response, Operation Vigilant Warrior (OVW), facilitated by the large U.S. footprint and access agreements in the Persian Gulf, persuaded Baghdad to back down, and the sanctions remained in place. On the OVW example, see Frederick et al., 2020.

¹³ For a discussion of the relationship between conventional military force and deterrence of hostile measures below the threshold of armed conflict, see Watts et al., 2022. See also Watts et al., 2021.

¹⁴ See the case study of Georgia in Watts et al., 2022.

¹⁵ Bernhardt and Sukin, 2021.

¹⁶ See, for instance, the discussion in DoD, 2006.

Summary

We can summarize the foregoing discussion in a handful of key points:

- Any U.S. campaigning initiative with the power to deter also has the potential to provoke.
- In general, the logic of deterrence suggests that we should expect U.S. overseas forces—if they can be protected from a devastating first strike by an adversary and if they are configured for combat effectiveness and capable of sustainment if needed—to demonstrate the strongest deterrent effects, while lesser U.S. commitments (such as arms transfers or multilateral military exercises) should demonstrate less success.
- The logic of deterrence that applies to armed conflict can be applied to hostile measures below the threshold of armed conflict. It is possible, however, that successful deterrence at the conventional level might lead to increased gray-zone aggression by U.S. competitors.
- Any transfer of U.S. capabilities to its allies or partners (such as arms transfers) poses some risk of their use in escalatory actions outside the United States' control.

In this section, we have outlined reasons why U.S. campaigning might either deter or provoke, and we have offered illustrations of both dynamics. To understand which effects predominate and in which contexts, it can be helpful to look beyond individual cases to patterns that hold across hundreds of cases. The remainder of this chapter presents the results of the analysis that we conducted to understand such patterns. It begins with a brief overview of our analytic approach (a technical discussion can be found in Appendix A of the technical annex). It then proceeds with an overview of our results, followed by a discussion of outcomes over time and threshold effects or tripwire forces. It concludes with a short summary of our findings.

Analytic Approach

To understand broad patterns of deterrence and escalation, we compared the records of allies and partners in which the United States employed its various tools of campaigning (persistent presence of U.S. forces, military agreements, combined military exercises, materiel transfers, HA/DR operations, and so on) with those of countries with which the United States did not cooperate (or cooperated at lesser levels). We examined both groups of countries on a year-by-year basis every year for the past several decades.¹⁷ Our intent was to understand whether the

¹⁷ The exact range of years varies depending on the data available, but typically we were able to examine at least the period from the 1970s to sometime in the late 2010s. We compared results in the Cold War with results from the post-Cold War period to ensure that patterns did not change significantly in recent years. More details on the periods involved in our analysis can be found in Appendix A of the technical annex.

countries with which the United States cooperated were more (in)frequent victims of aggression than those with which the United States did not cooperate.¹⁸

We examined four indicators of aggression, including both armed conflict and gray-zone acts of aggression or hostile measures:

- **armed conflict:** instances in which an aggressor uses military force, in the form of either war or an armed clash resulting in casualties, directly against a defender
- **military intimidation:** instances in which an aggressor uses shows of force or makes military threats against a defender
- **proxy war:** instances in which an aggressor provides military support (including arms and other materiel, training, and/or intelligence) to nonstate actors engaged in a civil conflict against a defending state
- **economic coercion:** instances in which an aggressor uses economic statecraft (either formal economic sanctions or informal measures) against a defender.¹⁹

Overview of Results

In broad terms, we found three major patterns. **First, we found relatively consistent evidence that overseas U.S. forces and defense treaties (such as the NATO alliance or the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan)²⁰ appear to deter aggression**—not just acts of war but, in some cases, hostile measures below the threshold of armed conflict, such as military intimidation or even economic coercion. These results do not imply that U.S. allies and partners protected by such measures are never the victims of aggression. But they are substantially less likely to be targeted. In some ways, these results are not surprising. Both forms of U.S. military commitment are widely believed to deter, and several academic and other analyses have found support for these propositions.²¹ What is perhaps more surprising is that these were the *only* U.S. campaigning instruments of those examined that appeared to deter aggression relatively consistently, at least in the short term.

¹⁸ In other research, RAND researchers have examined the possibility that U.S. allies or partners might be more likely to themselves initiate disputes or conflicts because of U.S. military support. See O'Mahony, Priebe, et al., 2018.

¹⁹ Data on armed conflict and military intimidation came from the MID dataset of the Correlates of War Project. Data on proxy warfare were taken from Watts et al., 2022. Data on economic coercion came from the Global Sanctions Database. Full details on these data can be found in Appendix A in the technical annex. All are used widely in academic analyses of international relations.

²⁰ Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan, San Francisco, California, September 8, 1951.

²¹ Although previous academic analyses found support for these relationships, we employed statistical techniques—specifically for our analysis of U.S. overseas troop presence—that we believe represent an important step forward in our understanding of these patterns. For reviews of the literature on deterrence, see, for instance, Mazarr et al., 2018; Art and Greenhill, 2018; and Paul K. Huth, “Deterrence and International Conflict: Empirical Findings and Theoretical Debates,” *American Review of Political Science*, Vol. 2, 1999.

Second, we found indications that U.S. multilateral military exercises might deter acts of aggression against the countries with which the United States conducts such activities, although these findings were less strong than those for U.S. overseas forces and defense treaties. More specifically, we found that such exercises were associated with lower levels of military intimidation (shows of force) in more-developed countries, although these results did not extend to lower-middle-income countries.²² There are at least two potential reasons why these results were confined to more-developed states. First, lower-middle-income countries are typically of less strategic significance to the United States.²³ Former U.S. Director of Policy Planning George Kennan’s containment policy, for instance, focused only on protecting the industrial hubs of Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom. Multilateral military exercises with less strategically significant states might be interpreted as a particularly weak indication of U.S. commitment. Second, exercises can (at least in theory) help to deter by increasing the capabilities of U.S. allies and partners to defend themselves. But several studies have suggested that less-developed countries with weaker institutions are typically less able to translate materiel assistance into usable military capabilities.²⁴

We also found that multilateral military exercises were associated with fewer acts of economic coercion against low-income states, but we have much lower confidence in these findings. We have no reason from deterrence doctrine or theory to believe that such effects would only appear in lower-income countries. Moreover, while U.S. military support appears able to deter at least some forms of aggression below the threshold of armed conflict, in general, we should expect that the deterrent impact of U.S. military activities would be greatest against armed aggression, where the relationship between U.S. military support and the form of aggression to be deterred is most direct. The fact that we see no indication that U.S. exercises deter armed conflict or military intimidation makes us more skeptical that these same exercises would deter nonmilitary forms of aggression. It is possible that there is, in fact, a deterrent relationship here, but without being able to explain it or offer concrete examples, we have low confidence in these particular results.

Third, we identified some findings that suggest reasons for U.S. decisionmakers and military planners to be cautious, in particular with U.S. materiel transfers and, to a much lesser extent, with overseas U.S. contracting. We did not find any evidence that materiel transfers themselves deter acts of aggression. As discussed earlier in this chapter, materiel transfers represent a much lesser commitment by the United States to a partner than such

²² Our income measure delineates low- and lower-middle-income states in comparison with upper-middle- and high-income states according to categorizations of GDP per capita from the World Bank. For cut points, see World Bank Data Team, “New Country Classifications by Income Level, 2019–2020,” *Data Blog*, July 1, 2019.

²³ Paul Huth and Bruce Russett, “Deterrence Failure and Crisis Escalation,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1988.

²⁴ See, for instance, Christopher Paul, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Beth Grill, Colin P. Clarke, Lisa Saum-Manning, Heather Peterson, and Brian J. Gordon, *What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity in Challenging Contexts?* RAND Corporation, RR-937-OSD, 2015.

instruments as force deployments or alliance treaties, so they are poor signaling devices. There are, in fact, several cases in which the United States provided arms to a partner but then did not come to its defense when it was invaded, including Georgia in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and Somali aggression against Ethiopia in the Ogaden in the 1960s and 1970s. Although these cases were not a part of our deterrence analysis, in several other cases, such as that of Iran under the Shah, the United States provided considerable materiel assistance to a partner but did not step in to protect it from revolution, civil war, or other internal threat. Most recently, although the United States has provided considerable indirect military support to Ukraine, it has not directly defended Ukraine against Russian aggression. U.S. competitors observe these instances and can draw their own conclusions about how committed the United States is to the defense of those countries to which it provides materiel assistance.

More worryingly, not only did we find no evidence that materiel transfers do not deter, but we also found that outside the most advanced industrialized countries, they are associated with *increases* in acts of aggression, including direct armed conflict, military intimidation, and proxy wars. There are at least three potential explanations for why we see these unfavorable outcomes concentrated in low- and lower-middle-income countries, such as Georgia or Ethiopia. The first two explanations are the same as those we suggested for the apparently stronger deterrent impact of U.S. exercises with more-developed countries: Advanced industrialized countries are typically of greater strategic significance to the United States, and they typically are better able to convert U.S. security cooperation into usable military capabilities. In addition to these two, there is a third potential explanation: Less-developed countries are more at risk of political instability. Political instability, in turn, can generate incentives to adopt aggressive security policies in an attempt to increase the legitimacy of the state.²⁵ In such cases, U.S. materiel assistance might embolden regimes in ways that ultimately prove self-defeating. Several observers, for instance, believe that U.S. assistance to Georgia led to more-aggressive policies by the Tbilisi government, which ultimately set it on a collision course with Moscow that ended in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War.²⁶

DoD overseas contracting also appears to be associated with increases in several types of aggression, but only at very high levels of U.S. spending. There are at least two possible explanations for this relationship. First, such U.S. spending might be interpreted as a sign of deepening U.S. relations with a partner country, and some states (particularly competitors of either the United States or the partner country) might find such deepening relations threatening. Second, one purpose of DoD overseas procurement is to maintain facilities (such as austere bases); prepositioned equipment, fuel, and other stocks; and other preparations for military contingencies. Such investments, especially at a large scale, might be seen as provocative. Russia, for instance, monitors U.S. investments in prepositioned materiel and preparations for reception, staging, and onward integration (RSOI) for U.S. force flows to

²⁵ Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and the Danger of War," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1995.

²⁶ Reveron, 2016; Feffer and Zunes, 2008; Fawn, 2002.

Europe and has argued that increasing U.S. and NATO infrastructure near Russia's borders is part of an intolerable threat to Russian security.²⁷ Unfortunately, our data for DoD overseas procurement—publicly available data from the Federal Procurement Data System—does not provide enough information for us to develop a clear picture of exactly how DoD overseas contracting functions, so we have low confidence in these results.

Table 3.1 provides a summary of our results. As discussed in Chapter 2, we use symbols to concisely summarize our results. Green, upward arrows indicate favorable (deterrent) relationships, while red, downward arrows indicate unfavorable (provocative) relationships. Our degree of confidence is indicated by the shading of each icon, with the darker shade indicating a higher degree of confidence. Where the results pertain only to a particular type of state (e.g., high-income states, or states in which the United States makes considerable defense investments), the icons are only half-shaded to indicate the partial results. We have also provided comments explaining any caveats to the findings.

How much confidence should we have in these results? With only two exceptions—the potentially deterrent impact of multilateral military exercises in less-developed countries and the potentially provocative impact of high levels of DoD overseas procurement spending—we believe our results are strong. For the potential deterrent impact of U.S. overseas forces, defense treaties, and multilateral military exercises with advanced industrialized countries, we have sound reasons grounded in deterrence doctrine or theory for believing that U.S. campaigning efforts can, in fact, deter. We have concrete examples from history of the United States using these tools to deter. Finally, although we defer all technical discussion of our statistical results to the technical annex for this report, we believe our statistical methods for analyzing deterrence are relatively strong—in some ways, an advance on prior work in this field.

Despite the use of statistical methods intended to account for spurious correlations, several concerns about causality remain. Decisionmakers might allocate OAI to only the places most likely to be targets of aggression, in which case unfavorable outcomes are not caused by OAI—rather, OAI is caused by the anticipation of unfavorable outcomes. Alternatively, U.S. decisionmakers might allocate OAI only to the places that they think are most likely to have positive outcomes, in which case our results would appear more favorable than is warranted. In general, however, we do not believe such concerns are a major problem for our analysis of deterrence. We have no reason to believe that the United States positions forces in or signs defense treaties with countries that are least likely to be targets of aggression; if anything, the United States tends to use such measures with countries, such as South Korea, that are *more* likely to be targets. The fact that decisionmakers anticipate problems means that the true deterrent value of U.S. forces and treaties might be even stronger than we suggest. The campaigning instrument for which we are most likely to observe unfavorable outcomes is materiel transfers. We have no reason to believe that U.S. decisionmakers are systematically providing materiel transfers to only the most difficult cases while offering U.S. forces and

²⁷ “NATO Blatantly Shifts Interaction with Russia into Confrontational Logic—Russian Diplomat,” Moscow Interfax, trans. by Open Source Center: CER2016062844167550, June 28, 2016.

TABLE 3.1
Overview of Deterrence Results

Campaigning Instrument	Armed Conflict	Military Intimidation	Proxy Wars	Economic Coercion	Comments
Overseas forces					Armed conflict: suggestive favorable relationships after the Cold War, with nonallies, and with high-income partners Proxy wars: suggestive unfavorable relationship after the Cold War but hampered by data availability
Defense treaty					Economic coercion: unfavorable relationship during the Cold War
Military agreement					Economic coercion: suggestive favorable relationship with allies
Local contracting					Data concerns with local contracting reduced our confidence in these relationships.
Multilateral exercises					Military intimidation: favorable relationship during the Cold War, suggestive favorable relationships after Cold War, with allies, and with high-income partners
Matériel transfers					Armed conflict: unfavorable relationships at all income levels, during the Cold War, and with allies Military intimidation: unfavorable relationships during the Cold War, with high-income partners, and with allies Economic coercion: favorable relationship with allies; suggestive favorable relationship with high-income partners; suggestive unfavorable relationships with nonallies and with low-income partners
HA/DR					

NOTE: Color and the direction of the arrows indicate favorable (green and upward arrows) or unfavorable (red and downward arrows) relationships between campaigning tools and a given outcome. Shading indicates the degree of confidence we have in a specific finding, with darker shading indicating more confidence. Half-circles indicate outcomes that appear in only certain implementation environments. Whole gray circles represent a lack of significant findings, while gray circles with a slash represent relationships that we could not test (either because they were true by definition or we lacked appropriate data or models).

defense treaties to the easiest cases. In short, while we cannot be certain the patterns that we observe are causal, we cannot think of a logical reason why our analysis would be biased in favor of U.S. overseas forces and defense treaties but biased against matériel transfers.

The study of deterrence—whether qualitative or quantitative—is inherently difficult. Without detailed and complete archival records (which are extremely rare for U.S. adversaries after World War II), when a state does not act, it is hard to know whether that is because the United States deterred it from aggression or because it had no intention of conducting an act of aggression. The patterns we observe, however, generally suggest that U.S. forces and

treaty alliances are important deterrents, while materiel transfers to less-developed countries are sources of concern.

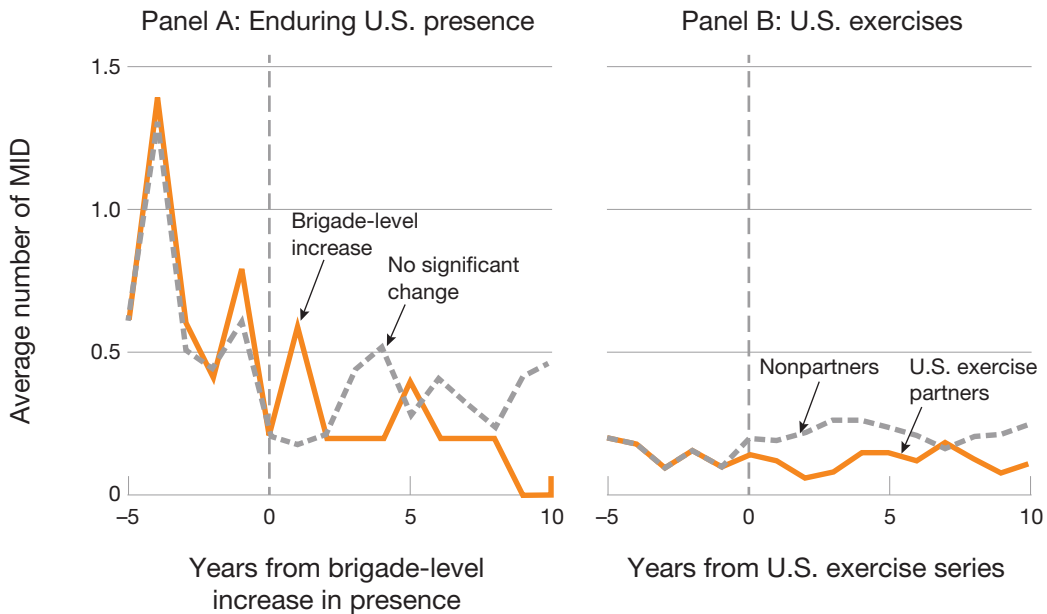
How Do Results Change over Time?

When analyzing data on a year-by-year basis, the simplest way to try to assess cause-and-effect relationships is to examine outcomes in the year following a particular input. Thus, if the United States increases its military exercises with a partner, we are interested in understanding what happens in the subsequent year. Of course, we are not only interested in what happens the following year; ideally, we would like some sense of what happens in the same year and what happens in later years.

To understand how patterns of deterrence and escalation might change over time, we used SCM to compare a group of states in which the United States used a given campaigning tool intensively against a weighted average of those states with which the United States either did not have a partnership or used the tool much less intensively. We observed patterns of aggression—in particular, armed conflict and military intimidation—over time in both groups of states. In the two examples below, we compared (1) states in which the United States deployed 5,000 or more uniformed military personnel (roughly the size of a reinforced U.S. Army brigade) with similar states that did not receive such forces and (2) states in which the United States went from conducting no military exercises to conducting five or more in 11 years with states that had one or no exercises with the United States in the entire 16-year period. We compared outcomes over the five years prior to such major changes in U.S. policy with outcomes in the subsequent ten years. Figure 3.1 summarizes the results of that analysis. The orange lines represent the number of interstate disputes over time experienced by a country that is supported by a given U.S. overseas campaigning instrument (enduring presence or multilateral military exercises). The dashed gray lines represent disputes experienced by the “control” group—that is, countries that were similar to those captured in the orange lines but that lacked such U.S. support. The dashed vertical lines represent the point in time at which the United States increased its persistent presence or its conduct of military exercises with those countries represented by the orange lines. The key dynamic of interest is how the lines representing the two groups of countries diverge after the change in U.S. policy.

There are at least four patterns worth noting in these graphs. First, the two groups of countries look remarkably similar in both graphs before the year in which the United States shifted its policy to support select states with more in-country forces or more military exercises (year 0, with years before the change in U.S. policy located to the left of the vertical dashed line). After the change in U.S. policy, though, the two groups of countries diverge significantly. Countries that either hosted substantial U.S. troop deployments or had substantial increases in U.S. multilateral military exercise activity experienced fewer cases of MID (either armed clashes or military intimidation) than those without such U.S. support. The reduction in any given country in any given year is not large. Over the course of several years and many

FIGURE 3.1
Comparisons over Time Between States Supported by U.S. Campaigning Instruments and Others



NOTE: Year 0 (highlighted with a vertical dashed line) is the year of a change in U.S. policy.

countries, however, these apparent deterrent outcomes would result in many fewer acts of aggression against U.S. allies and partners.

Second, the apparent deterrent impact of U.S. forces is substantially larger than that for even a large increase in U.S. exercise activity. This result is consistent with deterrence theory, which suggests that the persistent presence of in-country U.S. forces represents substantially greater capability and commitment by the United States than exercises without such forces.

Third, the short-term spike in cases of aggression immediately after U.S. troop deployments is noteworthy. This result is consistent with earlier RAND work that found a similar short-term increase in cases of aggression against countries that host U.S. forces.²⁸ Although our analysis did not examine individual cases to determine precisely why this pattern occurred, it could be the result of competitors either testing U.S. and host-nation resolve or attempting to impose costs on them. When the United States deployed ground-based intermediate-range ballistic and cruise missiles to Europe in the early 1980s, for instance, the Soviet Union reacted with a variety of hostile measures, including some of the largest military exercises the Soviets had conducted since World War II—held immediately next to the countries that hosted these U.S. missiles. The so-called Euromissile crisis followed precisely

²⁸ Watts et al., 2022.

the pattern represented in Figure 3.1: a short-term spike in military intimidation, followed by lower levels of activity and a tacit recognition that the status quo had irrevocably altered.²⁹

Fourth, the gap between U.S. exercise partners and those that do not participate in exercises with the United States (or do so much less intensively) appears to grow over time. Again, we did not analyze specific cases to determine precisely why this result occurred. This finding, however, is more consistent with the idea that U.S. military exercises deter primarily through their ability to enhance capabilities rather than with the idea that they deter through signaling U.S. military commitment to the partner in the event of a crisis. Exercises can provide training to U.S. partners' forces, increase U.S. military personnel's familiarity with the local operating environment, and improve interoperability between U.S. and partner forces. These improvements should be expected to grow over time, just as the decline in acts of aggression against U.S. partners in Figure 3.1 grows over time.

How Much Is Enough? Tripwires and Other Small Force Presence

How many U.S. forces are needed to deter? The question repeatedly arises, whether in the context of U.S. overseas troop drawdowns from Europe and Asia in the post-Cold War era, present-day Operation Atlantic Resolve in the countries of NATO's eastern flank, the current U.S. military presence in Iraq, peace operations in the Balkans over the past three decades, or elsewhere.

In general, our findings suggest that more forces are better than fewer; the likelihood of aggression decreased as the number of U.S. forces increased, with favorable results concentrated among cases of 5,000 or more U.S. forces. This result is consistent with qualitative research. A recent paper on tripwire forces, for instance, compared North Korean behavior in 1949 and 1950. In 1949, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung approached Soviet General Secretary Joseph Stalin to seek his support for an invasion of South Korea. Stalin asked how many U.S. forces were in the South; on hearing that up to 20,000 U.S. forces were there, he cautioned against war. Kim returned to Moscow the following year, after U.S. forces had drawn down to only a few hundred personnel as part of the broader return of forces to the United States following the end of World War II. This time, on learning how few U.S. forces remained, Stalin supported an invasion.³⁰

The precise number of forces required, though, will depend on such factors as the capabilities of potential adversaries, their intentions, the ability of the United States to rapidly reinforce its forward positions, and other instruments that the United States has available to

²⁹ John Van Oudenaren, *Soviet Policy Toward Western Europe: Objectives, Instruments, Results*, RAND Corporation, R-3310-AF, February 1986, pp. 45–50.

³⁰ Dan Reiter and Paul Poast, "The Truth About Tripwires: Why Small Force Deployments Do Not Deter Aggression," *Texas National Security Review*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Summer 2021.

emphasize its commitment to defending an ally or partner. Weaker adversaries presumably require fewer U.S. forces to deter than stronger ones (as suggested by the difference in scale between the United States' Cold War–era force presence in Europe and its current presence). Small numbers of U.S. forces might be sufficient to reassure states that do not want war with one another—as in the case of U.S. participation in the Multilateral Force and Observer (MFO) mission in the Sinai after the Camp David accords—while much larger forces would be required to deter a committed aggressor.³¹ If the United States can rapidly reinforce small numbers of forces with much larger contingents, even tripwire forces might be sufficient to deter. In 1994, for instance, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein marshalled three of his elite Revolutionary Guard armored divisions and sent them to the border of Kuwait. Observers disagree on his precise intentions, but most believe it was an act of military intimidation intended to force the United States to ease its economic sanctions against Iraq to defuse the crisis. Instead, within one week, the United States had nearly 20,000 new forces either in Kuwait or en route, with tens of thousands more in various stages of mobilization, as part of OVW. Saddam quickly backed down.³²

Small numbers of U.S. forces might be enough to deter violence in such places as Kosovo and the Sinai, where local parties are largely reconciled to the status quo and require only reassurance. And small numbers of forces—such as NATO forces currently in the eFP battlegroups in the Baltics—might be enough *if* they can be rapidly reinforced by much larger forces. Tripwire forces *might* also be sufficient if other mechanisms (such as NATO's Article V guarantees) are sufficiently persuasive that potential aggressors would have no doubt that the United States would bear extremely high costs to defend its allies. But our results caution against too much faith in such tripwire deployments unless there is very strong reason to believe that one of these other conditions pertains.

Conclusion

This chapter provided important evidence of the deterrent impact of U.S. forces persistently positioned overseas (whether through permanent basing or consistent rotations) and U.S. treaty alliances. Exercises appeared to register modest deterrent benefits, but likely only among more-developed allies and partners. Our analysis found no evidence for the deterrent

³¹ Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents Choices After Civil War*, Princeton University Press, 2008.





³² See the case study of OVW in Frederick et al., 2020. See also Kevin M. Woods, David D. Palkki, and Mark E. Stout, eds., *The Saddam Tapes, 1978–2001: The Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime*, Cambridge University Press, 2012; Frank P. Harvey and Patrick James, "Deterrence and Compellence in Iraq, 1991–2003: Lessons for a Complex Paradigm," in T. V. Paul, Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz, eds., *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age*, University of Chicago Press, 2009; and W. Eric Herr, "Operation Vigilant Warrior: Conventional Deterrence Theory, Doctrine, and Practice," master's thesis, Air University, June 1996.

impact of other tools, including lesser military agreements, overseas contracting, or materiel transfers, and indeed, materiel transfers in particular appear to carry a risk of escalation among less-developed (middle- and lower-income) allies and partners.

Table 3.2 summarizes select cases from throughout the chapter to illustrate many of these relationships. It is important to note that these cases are all offered as *potential* examples of the deterrence dynamics we have discussed. In some cases, the relationship between U.S. campaigning activities and deterrence outcomes has been well established; in others, it remains a matter of debate and will likely remain so unless and until full archival records become available from the states involved. While some of these examples are disputed, they nonetheless provide useful ways of thinking through the dynamics discussed in this chapter more concretely.

As we noted at the outset, there are several ways in which campaigning might contribute to U.S. preparedness for war (and that of its allies and partners) without contributing to deterrence. In the case of Ukraine, for instance, it is debatable whether the United States' arming of Ukraine in any way contributed to the Russian decision to invade in 2022, despite Moscow's claims that it acted in self-defense. It certainly did not deter Moscow. But it did make the Armed Forces of Ukraine much more capable of fighting when full-scale war erupted. Our analysis does not directly provide insights into warfighting preparedness, nor does it inform decisionmakers what weight they should place on deterrence goals relative to those of warfighting. It does, however, provide an important baseline set of expectations about the likely contributions of various U.S. campaigning tools to deterrence.

TABLE 3.2
Potential Deterrence Examples

Campaigning Instrument	Competition Outcome	Relationship	Potential Examples
Enduring presence	Armed conflict and intimidation		Cold War–era Germany South Korea OVW (1994) Multiple peace operations (e.g., Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo Force)
Defense treaty	Armed conflict and intimidation		NATO Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States and Japan
Materiel transfers	Armed conflict and intimidation		Georgia (2003–2008) Ukraine (2014–present)
Materiel transfers	Proxy wars		Georgia (2003–2008) Ethiopia (1960s–1974)

Access and Cooperation

Much of the campaigning work that the Army carries out is designed to strengthen the United States' relationships with its allies and partners, with the objectives of improving allies' and partners' capabilities, securing access for U.S. forces and materiel when needed, and improving overall cooperation (especially military and diplomatic cooperation). This chapter reviews our findings on the relationship between different U.S. campaigning instruments and improving access and cooperation with allies and partners. It begins with a short overview of guidance, doctrine, and theory. It then briefly discusses our analytic approach. A second section provides an overview of our results, and a final section highlights key findings. As with the rest of our analysis, a more detailed discussion can be found in the report's separate technical annex.

Overview of Guidance, Doctrine, and Theory

The 2022 NDS emphasizes that

mutually-beneficial Alliances and partnerships are an enduring strength for the United States, and are critical to achieving our objectives, as the unified response to Russia's further invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated. Answering this "call to action," the Department will incorporate ally and partner perspectives, competencies, and advantages at every stage of defense planning.¹

Strengthening allies and partners has been a consistent national security priority, appearing prominently as a key line of effort in the previous three NDSs, and its predecessor, the Quadrennial Defense Review.²

¹ DoD, 2022, p. 2.

² In the 2018 NDS, "strengthen alliances and attract new partners" was one of three lines of effort that DoD committed to executing (DoD, 2018). In 2014, one of the three pillars of the Quadrennial Defense Review was to "build security globally, in order to preserve regional stability, deter adversaries, support allies and partners, and cooperate with others to address common security challenges" (DoD, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014*, 2014, p. v).

In keeping with this overarching guidance, all geographic combatant commanders have emphasized the importance of cooperating with and strengthening allies and partners in their current posture statements. They have also integrated working with allies and partners into their operations and activities.³ Moreover, each theater has tailored its campaigning activities (and particularly security cooperation activities) with allies and partners to align with their theater objectives, with a focus in the Indo-Pacific on building capacity with high-end allies and in Europe on capabilities to deter Russian aggression.⁴ Army Headquarters has also increasingly prioritized allies and partners in Army strategic planning and has evolved a series of operational planning teams; working groups; and assessment, monitoring, and evaluation processes to make these efforts more systematic and effective.⁵ As a result, while not always a primary aim of any particular campaigning tool, most Army campaigning tools are, in part, planned to improve U.S. access and cooperation with allies and partners.

The logic underlying the use of Army campaigning tools to increase access and cooperation builds on a range of mechanisms; primarily, demonstrating the United States' credibility and value as a preferred partner; deepening understanding of shared values and priorities;

³ Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., "Posture Statement of General Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., Commander, United States Central Command, Before the Senate Armed Services Committee," U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, March 15, 2022; Tod D. Wolters, "Statement of General Tod D. Wolters, United States Air Force Commander United States European Command," U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, March 29, 2022; Philip S. Davidson, "Statement of Admiral Philip S. Davidson, U.S. Navy Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Before the Senate Armed Services Committee on U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture," U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, March 9, 2021; Glen D. Vanherck, "Statement of General Glen D. Vanherck, United States Air Force Commander United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command Before the Senate Armed Services Committee," U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, March 24, 2022; Laura J. Richardson, "Statement of General Laura J. Richardson, Commander, United States Southern Command Before the 117th Congress House Armed Services Committee," U.S. House Armed Services Committee, March 8, 2022.

⁴ Michael J. Mazarr, Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, Jonah Blank, Samuel Charap, Michael S. Chase, Beth Grill, Derek Grossman, Dara Massicot, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Lyle J. Morris, Alexander Noyes, Stephanie Pezard, Ashley L. Rhoades, Alice Shih, Mark Stalczyński, Melissa Shostak, David E. Thaler, and Dori Walker, *Security Cooperation in a Strategic Competition*, RAND Corporation, RR-A650-1, 2022.

⁵ Angela O'Mahony, Ilana Blum, Gabriela Armenta, Nicholas Burger, Joshua Mendelsohn, Michael J. McNerney, Steven W. Popper, Jefferson P. Marquis, and Thomas S. Szayna, *Assessing, Monitoring, and Evaluating Army Security Cooperation: A Framework for Implementation*, RAND Corporation, RR-2165-A, 2018; Angela O'Mahony, David E. Thaler, Beth Grill, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Jason H. Campbell, Rachel Tecott, and Mary Kate Adgie, *Prioritizing Security Cooperation with Highly Capable U.S. Allies Framing Army-to-Army Partnerships*, RAND Corporation, RR-A641-1, 2022; Bryan W. Hallmark, Christopher G. Pernin, Andrea M. Ablar, Ryan Haberman, Sale Lilly, Samantha McBirney, Angela O'Mahony, and Erik E. Mueller, *An Analysis of Alternative Approaches to Measuring Multinational Interoperability: Early Development of the Army Interoperability Measurement System (AIMS)*, RAND Corporation, RR-A617-1, 2021; Christopher G. Pernin, Angela O'Mahony, Gene Germanovich, and Matthew Lane, *Chasing Multinational Interoperability: Benefits, Objectives, and Strategies*, RAND Corporation, RR-3068-A, 2020.

improving U.S. and partner capabilities to accomplish joint operations; and transactionally providing benefits in exchange for partner access and services.⁶

Previous RAND research has found that campaigning tools have the potential to increase access and cooperation, although how effective Army campaigning is depends strongly on the implementation environment.⁷ Drawing broad conclusions from previous RAND research on the effectiveness of security cooperation and examining the contextual factors considered in this analysis, we found that Army campaigning tools are likely to be most effective at improving access and cooperation when (1) the United States and partners are aligned on their objectives and priorities, as occurs most often within *alliances*; and (2) partners have a greater *level of development*, which tend to have higher absorptive capacity and commitment to democratic governance. The impact of our third contextual factor, geostrategic competition intensity, has a less-clear set of expectations from previous literature.⁸ That said, activities that are conducted as part of a consistent, long-run commitment with a partner, which also help cement the United States as a partner of choice in competition, are associated with better access and competition results. While these findings draw on results across a range of objectives, given the logic of cooperation embedded in Army campaigning tools, we expect that they may form the basis for improvements in access and cooperation, as well.

The remainder of this chapter presents the results of the analysis that we conducted to understand such patterns. We begin with a brief overview of our analytic approach (a technical discussion can be found in Appendix A of the technical annex). We then proceed with an overview of our results. We conclude with a short summary of our findings.

Analytic Approach

To empirically examine the relationship between U.S. military activities and U.S. access and cooperation, we looked through the records of allies and partners for situations in which the United States employed its tools of campaigning to compare with those of countries with which the United States either did not engage or engaged at lesser levels on a yearly basis over the past several decades. We draw on this analysis to understand whether the countries with

⁶ Pernin et al., 2020.

⁷ For an overview of RAND research on security cooperation, see RAND Corporation, *Select RAND Research on Security Cooperation 2006–2019*, brochure, CPA614-3, 2021. For a deeper dive into the effectiveness of security cooperation and presence, see O’Mahony et al., 2018; Paul et al., 2015; O’Mahony et al., 2022; Mazarr et al., 2022; Stephen Watts, Kimberly Jackson, Sean Mann, and Stephen Dalzell, *A Developmental Approach to Building Sustainable Security-Sector Capacity in Africa*, RAND Corporation, RR-2048-AFRICOM, 2018; Patricia L. Sullivan, Brock F. Tessman, and Xiaojun Li, “U.S. Military Aid and Recipient State Cooperation,” *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 7, 2011; Brian Blankenship and Renanah Miles Joyce, “Purchasing Power: U.S. Overseas Defense Spending and Military Statecraft,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 64, Nos. 2–3, 2020; Stacie L. Pettyjohn and Jennifer Kavanagh, *Access Granted: Political Challenges to the U.S. Overseas Military Presence, 1945–2014*, RAND Corporation, RR-1339-AF, 2016.

⁸ Mazarr et al., 2022.

which the United States engaged were more or less likely to establish the preconditions for access, rely on the United States as a preferred partner for military education and materiel, or support the United States internationally; we also noted the countries in which the United States was viewed favorably by the population.

To capture relevant U.S. campaigning tools, we focused on all the instruments discussed in Chapter 2:

- **Enduring presence:** We measure U.S. enduring presence as the number of U.S. military personnel stationed overseas within the borders of each allied and partner nation in a given year—and not actively engaged in combat.
- **Footprint:** We capture U.S. footprint using DoD contracting data.
- **Agreements:** We examine two levels of U.S. military agreements: (1) mutual defense pacts between the United States and a given country; and (2) lesser agreements, including access and status-of-forces agreements, legal agreements, agreements on materiel transfers, operational agreements, financial agreements, and other guarantees.
- **Exercises:** We examine whether the United States participates in at least one exercise with the partner nation annually.
- **Materiel transfers:** We measure the level of arms that the partner imports from the United States in a given year.
- **HA/DR missions:** We examine whether the United States initiates a humanitarian mission in a given year.

We examined five proxy indicators to assess partners' and allies' level of access and cooperation with the United States:⁹

- **Access agreements:** all legal agreements pertaining to U.S. military access within a given country
- **Materiel transfers:** the quantity of arms that the partner imports from the United States versus other sources
- **Military trainees:** the number of partner country military trainees receiving U.S. training and education
- **Public opinion:** the percentage of respondents in nationwide samples who approve of U.S. leadership in the world
- **UNGA voting:** the similarity between each country's voting in the UNGA and U.S. voting on security-specific measures.¹⁰

⁹ These indicators and their sources are discussed in detail in Appendix A of the technical annex.

¹⁰ UNGA voting, particularly on specific issues, such as international security, are a well-validated measure of countries' foreign policy affinities (see Michael A. Bailey, Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten, "Estimating Dynamic State Preferences from United Nations Voting Data," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 2017). Looking more closely at how foreign aid provided by the United States affects countries' voting patterns in the UNGA, a 2008 analysis found that increased U.S. aid increased voting similarity for U.S. aid

Overview of Results

In broad terms, we found that **campaigning tools appear to have broadly favorable results for access and cooperation under steady-state conditions** (although it bears repeating that we did not undertake tests of their contribution to contingency access). Overall, we found support for the argument embedded in U.S. national security guidance that U.S. military presence, agreements and footprint, and activities can all contribute toward improving U.S. access and cooperation with partners and allies. That said, the impact of U.S. campaigning tools on access and cooperation is often mediated by the implementation environment, and, in some cases, U.S. campaigning tools can have a deleterious impact on access and cooperation. Three patterns stand out.

First, the positive relationship between U.S. campaigning tools and improved access and cooperation appears to be particularly robust among regularly programmed, annualized activities, such as local contracting, exercises, and materiel transfers. We find broadly statistically significant relationships between local contracting and access agreements, materiel transfers, and UN voting patterns and broadly suggestive patterns with military training, while the impact of local procurement on public opinion may be limited to lower-income countries.

Exercises appear to be broadly associated with increased partner training and materiel transfers, suggesting that U.S. efforts to be seen as a partner of choice can help cement partners' access and cooperation. The 2018–2019 Multi-Domain Task Force pilot program is an example of potentially improving access and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific by demonstrating U.S. capabilities and identifying opportunities for future U.S. campaigning. The impact of exercises on more strategic-level outcomes, such as UN voting propensity and access agreements, is somewhat more sensitive to the implementation environment. Exercises that occurred during the Cold War, with lower-income partners, or with nonallies were more strongly associated with improved UN voting similarity; access agreements were more closely associated with exercises held with allies and held during the Cold War. The ability of exercises to reinforce cooperation and access is a cornerstone of the exercise and assessment programs between the United States and its closest allies, such as NATO working groups and the multinational Joint Warfighter exercise series.

Second, although materiel transfers were more often than not associated with improvements in access and cooperation, the relationship between U.S. materiel transfers and outcomes in partner countries is complicated, particularly in lower-income countries. Materiel transfers were broadly associated with increased access agreements and training. They were also associated with improvements in UN voting affinity and public opinion toward the

recipients (Axel Dreher, Peter Nunnenkamp, and Rainer Thiele, “Does U.S. Aid Buy UN General Assembly Votes? A Disaggregated Analysis,” *Public Choice*, Vol. 136, No. 2, 2008). That said, caution is needed in applying the relationships between countries' UN voting behavior and activities carried out by the U.S. Army. While Army activities may contribute to countries' shared voting patterns, they are a small part of the overall relationship between countries.

United States in allied and high-income countries. In contrast, materiel transfers were associated with less favorable public opinion toward the United States and less UN voting support with lower-income partners. As we will discuss in more detail in Chapter 5, campaigning in lower-income and less-stable countries can have political consequences that ultimately prove damaging to U.S. objectives. Also, and reversing the causal arrow on materiel transfers, almost all U.S. campaigning tools appear to be broadly associated with higher levels of materiel transfers, suggesting that U.S. campaigning tools may be reinforcing. The exception to this pattern is HA/DR operations (which are also not part of planned partner engagements).

Finally, there were two areas—HA/DR operations and public opinion outcomes—where we did not identify robust patterns between U.S. overseas campaigning tools and access and cooperation.

- **HA/DR:** Except for improved public opinion toward the United States, we did not observe a robust relationship between U.S. HA/DR activities and improved access and cooperation. This may reflect that HA/DR activities are a crisis response rather than a consistent engagement. In the field of public opinion, however, HA/DR operations have frequently been associated with very large improvements in U.S. favorability ratings, at least in the short term. Cases include relief in Indonesia after the 2004 tsunami, Operation Tomodachi following the 2011 tsunami in Japan, and responses to the 2004 earthquake and 2010 floods in Pakistan.¹¹
- **Public opinion:** We did not find a strong relationship between U.S. campaigning and public opinion. Our lack of results in this area may reflect limitations in public opinion data: first, the Gallup polls' ability to capture fine-grained changes in public opinion to U.S. military activities; and, second, the limited range of data with regard to the number of countries and years covered. Furthermore, there may be a selection effect between where the United States chooses to engage and countries' public opinion of the United States—the United States may be disproportionately likely to engage with countries that are already favorable toward the United States.

These patterns are summarized in Table 4.1.

It is important to note the analytic challenges in this field. In particular, willingness to partner with the United States is a prerequisite for many of the OAI we analyzed. The favorable outcomes that we observe could thus be a function of this prior willingness to cooperate rather than an independent effect of the OAI. As discussed in Chapter 2, we implemented statistical techniques to address this challenge, but none of them is a perfect solution. As a result, some portion of our favorable results is likely the result of a general predisposition to

¹¹ Richard Wike, "Does Humanitarian Aid Improve America's Image?" Pew Research Center, March 6, 2012; Lena Kay, "Indonesian Public Perceptions of the U.S. and Their Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy," *Issues and Insights*, CSIS Pacific Forum, Vol. 5, No. 4, 2005; Tahir Andrabi and Jishnu Das, "In Aid We Trust: Hearts and Minds and the Pakistan Earthquake of 2005," *Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 99, No. 3, 2017.

TABLE 4.1
Overview of Access and Cooperation Results

Campaigning Instrument	Military Agreements	Materiel Transfers	Military Trainees	Public Opinion	UNGA Security Votes	Comments
Overseas forces						UNGA votes: favorable relationship with high-income partners
Defense treaty						UNGA votes: favorable relationship during the Cold War and with high-income partners
Military agreement						Materiel transfer: favorable relationship during Cold War; suggestive favorable relationship with low-income partners and with nonallies Military trainees: overall weak; suggestive favorable relationships with low-income partners and with nonallies
Local contracting						Public opinion: favorable relationship with low-income partners Data quality concerns led to an overall decline in confidence for local contracting results.
Multilateral exercises						Military agreements: favorable relationship with allies; suggestive favorable relationship during Cold War; suggestive unfavorable relationship after Cold War and with nonallies UNGA votes: favorable relationship during Cold War, with low-income partners, and with nonallies
Materiel transfers						Public opinion: favorable relationship with high-income partners; suggestive favorable relationship with allies; unfavorable relationship with low-income partners UNGA votes: favorable relationship with high-income partners and with allies; suggestive favorable relationship during Cold War; unfavorable relationship with low-income partners
HA/DR						Overall, results in this category are sensitive to environment and modeling. Military trainees: favorable relationship with high-income partners

NOTE: Color and the direction of the arrows indicate favorable (green and upward arrows) or unfavorable (red and downward arrows) relationships between campaigning tools and a given outcome. Shading indicates the degree of confidence we have in a specific finding, with darker shading indicating more confidence. Half-circles indicate outcomes that appear in only certain implementation environments. Whole gray circles represent a lack of significant findings, while gray circles with a slash represent relationships we could not test (either because they were true by definition or we lacked appropriate data or models).

cooperation rather than the effect of U.S. OAI. That said, we found many cases in which there was no clear relationship and some in which there was an unfavorable relationship, which certainly suggests that good outcomes are in no way guaranteed. Moreover, at least some of the patterns of unfavorable results can be explained in ways that some of the qualitative literature would suggest. In particular, in less-developed countries with weaker governing institutions and worse oversight over military forces, the partner's military—and, by extension, military cooperation with the United States—is often viewed by the public with suspicion.¹² Overall, we suspect some of our apparently favorable results might be ascribed to partners' preexisting disposition to cooperate with the United States, but the variability in outcomes suggests that U.S. OAI might be one important determinant of the patterns we observe.

Conclusion

This chapter provided evidence that U.S. campaigning tools—such as U.S. forces persistently positioned overseas, defense treaties, local contracting, and exercises—appear to have broadly favorable results for access and cooperation across different contexts and partners. The impact of these campaigning tools tends to be more favorable for higher-income partners and for allies. While materiel transfers appear to solidify access and cooperation in higher-income countries, they run the risk of undermining support for the United States in lower-income countries.

Table 4.2 summarizes select cases to potentially illustrate some of these findings. These cases are all offered as *potential* examples of the access and cooperation dynamics that we have discussed. They are not the result of in-depth case studies undertaken for this report, but they do reflect the judgments of expert observers (academics, analysts, or practitioners) of successful examples of U.S. campaigning tools that improve U.S. access and cooperation with partners. What stands out from these examples is that most are part of a broader portfolio of activities with partners to meet shared strategic objectives.

¹² See, for instance, David Gutelius, "Islam in Northern Mali and the War on Terror," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2007, p. 68; and Peter J. Quaranto, *Building States While Fighting Terror: Contradictions in United States Strategy in Somalia from 2001 to 2007*, ISS Monograph Series No. 143, Institute for Security Studies, May 2008, p. 55.

TABLE 4.2
Potential Access and Cooperation Examples

Campaigning Instrument	Competition Outcome	Relationship	Potential Examples
Enduring presence	Military cooperation and access	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interoperability in NATO • Combined exercises in the Persian Gulf region • Marine Rotational Force–Darwin
Defense treaty	Military cooperation and access	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NATO interoperability standards • Mutual Defense Treaty and command and control in the Republic of Korea
Local contracting	Military cooperation and access	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access rights for Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan • Access rights for Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti
Exercises	Military cooperation and access	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration effects of U.S. technology in exercises • Warfighter exercises for interoperability with allies
Materiel transfers	Military cooperation and access	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second-order effects of Japanese Excess Defense Articles • Access rights for Camp Lemonnier • Cold War–era Philippines basing rights
HA/DR	Public opinion	Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tsunami relief in Japan (2011) • Pakistan flood relief (2010) • Tsunami relief in Indonesia (2004)

Stabilization and Resilience

U.S. campaigning efforts are not just designed to protect allies and partners from external threats. In some cases, the United States seeks to protect them from internal threats as well, mitigating risks such as terrorism or civil war or government repression of their own populations. In some cases, the United States' primary goal in a particular country is to stabilize it or build its resilience to internal dangers. In other cases, stabilization or resilience is a secondary U.S. concern; the United States' campaigning efforts might be focused primarily on international competition, but U.S. decisionmakers might also seek to ensure that such efforts do not inadvertently destabilize their partners. In this chapter, we evaluate the extent to which U.S. campaigning instruments either positively contribute to allies' and partners' internal stability or at least do not undermine it.

Overview of Guidance, Doctrine, and Theory

In the 1990s, the prevention or termination of civil wars was a central U.S. foreign policy objective. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States sought to combat terrorism. Since the 2017 National Security Strategy (if not earlier), the United States' focus has shifted decisively toward strategic competition and the deterrence of major-power war. Yet the internal stability of other countries remained a secondary concern of U.S. foreign policy. The Global Fragility Act of 2019 directed the executive branch (with the Department of State in the lead and DoD in support) to launch an initiative “to stabilize conflict-affected areas and prevent violence globally.”¹ This act was followed by the promulgation of the “U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability.” This latter document directs departments of the U.S. government to “anticipate and prevent violent conflict and promote stability rather than reacting and responding to crises.”² In particular, it directs departments to “incorporate good governance and respect for democratic norms and human rights in

¹ U.S. House of Representatives, Global Fragility Act, Bill 2116, May 21, 2019.

² Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, “2022 Prologue to the United States Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability,” U.S. Department of State, April 1, 2022a.

security cooperation and capacity-building efforts.”³ U.S. guidelines for foreign assistance and doctrine for security cooperation similarly highlight these concerns. The guidelines for “Effective Justice and Security Sector Assistance in Conflict-Affected Areas,” for instance, note that the “manner and the amount in which governments administer justice and security sector assistance are inseparable from the persistent conflict dynamics in many countries.”⁴ And DoD Directive (DoDD) 3000.05, *Stabilization*, directs U.S. military planners to ask the question, “How do DoD operations and actions—including combat actions, partner selection, and security cooperation—impact stabilization efforts as well as indigenous political dynamics at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels?”⁵

In part, this guidance reflects U.S. values. But it also reflects very practical concerns. U.S. overseas OAI that enhance the stability and resilience of its allies and partners can help ensure the longevity of friendly governments. Conversely, OAI that fail to promote stability or inadvertently exacerbate instability or conflict pose several strategic risks:

- They create openings for foreign subversion.
- They risk crises that draw away U.S. attention and resources (including military capabilities) from other priorities.
- They can lead to spillover effects, in which armed conflict in one state spreads to neighboring states that might also be U.S. allies or partners (or even more broadly, as in the case of some transnational terrorism).
- They can damage the United States’ international reputation—a key resource for the diplomatic and informational elements of U.S. national power.
- They can threaten U.S. domestic political approval for U.S. support to allies and partners, as occurred, for instance, during the war in El Salvador in the 1980s.
- They can lead to blowback—the potential for a U.S.-supported regime to be overthrown and replaced by one that resents U.S. security assistance to the prior regime, as occurred after the fall of the Shah in Iran or the rise of the Derg in 1970s Ethiopia.⁶

Observers are divided about whether U.S. overseas military OAI, on balance, have a stabilizing or destabilizing effect and the conditions under which one or the other outcome is more likely.

³ Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, “United States Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability,” U.S. Department of State, April 1, 2022b.

⁴ U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, and U.S. Department of Defense, “Effective Justice and Security Sector Assistance in Conflict-Affected Areas: Guidelines for U.S. Government Assistance Planning, Design, and Implementation,” 2019–2020.

⁵ DoDD 3000.05, *Stabilization*, December 13, 2018, p. 5.

⁶ On the blowback phenomenon more generally, see Ely Ratner, “Reaping What You Sow: Democratic Transitions and Foreign Policy Realignment,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 53, No. 3, June 2009.

The Logic of Stabilization

U.S. military campaigning instruments might stabilize unstable countries through a variety of mechanisms. First, U.S. military commitment to a regime (either through the presence of U.S. forces or more-indirect measures, such as security assistance or agreements) might deter violent nonstate actors from initiating armed conflict.⁷ Such U.S. commitments might also reassure vulnerable actors that they are sufficiently secure that they can afford to make political compromises with opposition groups without fear of being exploited.⁸ U.S. and NATO military presence, for instance, appears to have helped assure the government of North Macedonia that ethnic Albanian separatism did not pose an acute threat, thus opening space for political negotiations that culminated in the Ohrid Agreement in 2001.⁹ Similarly, many political actors in Iraq have quietly implored the United States to maintain a military presence in the country to prevent the further “paramilitarization” of Iraqi politics.¹⁰

U.S. military support to a government also provides the United States with potential leverage over partners who consider crossing U.S. redlines. The United States, for instance, demanded the resignation of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and his replacement by a more unifying political figure before it would militarily intervene on behalf of Baghdad against the Islamic State.¹¹ In the case of security assistance, the so-called rehabilitation provision of the Leahy Amendment allows U.S. security assistance to resume to partner militaries responsible for human rights abuses—but only if they undertake a thorough overhaul of any unit credibly accused of such abuses.¹²

U.S. military support can also help to build the capabilities of allied and partner states, both directly and indirectly. Much of U.S. security assistance is intended to make states *security exporters* rather than *security importers*—that is, to improve their security governance and military functioning to the point that they are not only stable at home but can also contribute to stability abroad, such as through participation in peacekeeping missions. Indi-

⁷ Monica Duffy Toft, *Securing the Peace: The Durable Settlement of Civil Wars*, Princeton University Press, 2010; Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars*, Princeton University Press, 2002.

⁸ Barry Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 1993; James D. Fearon, “Ethnic War as a Commitment Problem,” Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, 1994.

⁹ For an overview of NATO operations, see NATO, “Peace Support Operations in North Macedonia (2001–2003),” May 19, 2022.

¹⁰ Crispin Smith, “Still at War: The United States in Iraq,” *Just Security*, May 18, 2022.

¹¹ See chapter 3 in Stephen Watts, Jeffrey Martini, Jason Campbell, Mark Toukan, and Inhyok Kwon, *Securing Gains in Fragile States: Using U.S. Leverage in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Beyond*, RAND Corporation, RR-A250-1, 2021.

¹² Sara Egozi, “Aid Is Key to Reform Local Forces on Rights, Leahy Says: Restricting U.S. Assistance Aims for Rehabilitation, Not Punishment,” U.S. Institute of Peace, February 12, 2016. See also Michael J. McNerney, Jonah Blank, Becca Wasser, Jeremy Boback, and Alexander Stephenson, *Improving Implementation of the Department of Defense Leahy Law*, RAND Corporation, RR-1737-OSD, 2017.

rectly, U.S. military campaigning instruments, such as overseas defense procurement, can help provide allies and partners with important revenue streams. Scholars have suggested, for instance, that large-scale U.S. military procurement in the Republic of Korea, along with the U.S. military deterrent presence in the country, was an important impetus to the extraordinary economic growth that Korea experienced in the postwar period.¹³

Finally, in at least some circumstances, close cooperation with the United States might help to “socialize” allied and partner personnel—that is, to come to hold common values (such as the principle of civilian control over the military or the importance of human rights) and/or a similar understanding of the likely consequences of certain actions (e.g., the perils of politicizing the armed forces). Many observers argue that the IMET program holds such potential.¹⁴ Prior research has found some evidence of such effects—especially where interactions with U.S. personnel are intensive and long term.¹⁵ Frequent interactions between U.S. and other Western forces and those of the former Warsaw Pact, for instance, are believed to have influenced the views of many Eastern European military officers.¹⁶

The Logic of Destabilization

Despite these potential benefits of U.S. overseas OAI, there are risks as well.¹⁷

First, any military capabilities that the United States helps an ally or partner build can be misused for repression.¹⁸ More subtly, if a government believes that it has sufficient military capabilities to quell dissent, it might become less interested in making the often painful political compromises necessary to coopt discontented subpopulations and give them more of a stake in the existing political system. Some observers believe, for instance, that U.S. military

¹³ See, for instance, Richard Stubbs, “War and Economic Development: Export-Oriented Industrialization in East and Southeast Asia,” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 1999.

¹⁴ Tomislav Z. Ruby and Douglas Gibler, “U.S. Professional Military Education and Democratization Abroad,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2010.

¹⁵ Carol Atkinson, “Does Soft Power Matter? A Comparative Analysis of Student Exchange Programs 1980–2006,” *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2010; Thomas Gift and Daniel Krčmaric, “Who Democratizes? Western-Educated Leaders and Regime Transitions,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 61, No. 3, 2017.

¹⁶ Alexandra Gheciu, “Security Institutions as Agents of Socialization? NATO and the ‘New Europe,’” *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 4, 2005.

¹⁷ For an overview focused on Africa but more generally applicable to fragile states, see Stephen Watts, *Identifying and Mitigating Risks in Security Sector Assistance for Africa’s Fragile States*, RAND Corporation, RR-808-A, 2015.

¹⁸ Barbara Salera, “The Case Against Security Cooperation in Fragile States,” *War on the Rocks*, July 18, 2022; Patricia L. Sullivan, Leo J. Blanken, and Ian C. Rice, “Arming the Peace: Foreign Security Assistance and Human Rights Conditions in Post-Conflict Countries,” *Defence and Peace Economics*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 2020; Wayne Sandholtz, “United States Military Assistance and Human Rights,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2016; Steven Metz, “Reform, Conflict, and Security in Zaire,” Strategic Studies Institute, June 5, 1996.

assistance to the government of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia in the late 1960s and early 1970s—assistance provided to secure the right to station U.S. forces at Kagnev Station—led the government to take a harder line with secessionist movements in the north and south of the country. Ultimately, this decision led to disaster for the Addis Ababa government and the United States: The government collapsed, in substantial part because of the costs of fighting multiple secessionist movements, and the United States lost its access rights and was replaced by thousands of Soviet and Cuban military forces.¹⁹

Second, U.S. campaigning instruments can provoke popular opposition. The presence of U.S. forces has, in some cases, provoked nationalist or other political backlash.²⁰ Resentment of U.S. military presence in the Arabian Peninsula, for instance, was a central pillar of al Qaeda's ideology. Left-wing terrorist movements in West Germany and elsewhere during the Cold War saw U.S. forces as tools of imperialism and conducted terrorist attacks against U.S. military personnel and facilities. Even small numbers of U.S. personnel can stoke suspicions. Jihadi radio in the Sahel region, for instance, used the presence of small teams of U.S. special operations forces to spread rumors and provoke fear.²¹ Materiel transfers, too, can provoke backlash. By strengthening the government, such military support can seem threatening to subpopulations that have historically been ill-treated by central authorities.²²

Third, there is a risk of “diffusion” of U.S. security sector assistance—that is, U.S. military training and materiel transfers intended for government forces finding their way to nonstate actors. For instance, there are widespread reports of U.S. weapons intended for the government of Somalia finding their way to Al Shabaab militants, reports of Libyan rebels seizing U.S. materiel, and even reports of U.S. small arms and light weapons from the late Cold War era ending up in the hands of current-day gangs in Central America.²³ Similarly, if members of the armed forces defect to rebel groups (or take their skills to criminal networks), the benefits of U.S. training can come to rest with nonstate actors who are hostile to the governments

¹⁹ Jefferey A. Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn: U.S. Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia, 1953–1991*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991; Terrence Lyons, “The United States and Ethiopia: The Politics of a Patron-Client Relationship,” *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2/3, 1986; Peter Schwab, “Cold War on the Horn of Africa,” *African Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 306, 1978.

²⁰ Robert A. Pape, “The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3, 2003; David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, reprint edition, Oxford University Press, 2009.

²¹ Gutelius, 2007.

²² Robert G. Berschinski, *AFRICOM's Dilemma: The “Global War on Terrorism,” “Capacity Building,” Humanitarianism, and the Future of U.S. Security Policy in Africa*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2007, pp. 30–31.

²³ Caleb Weiss, “Shabaab Releases Photos from Captured African Union Base,” *Long War Journal*, January 21, 2016; Small Arms Survey, “Across Conflict Zones: Ammunition Profiling,” Chapter 6 in *Small Arms Survey 2014: Women and Guns*, December 2014, pp. 200–201; Eric Schmitt, “U.S. Training Elite Antiterror Troops in Four African Nations,” *New York Times*, May 26, 2014; Colby Wilkason and Mikhaila Fogel, “Cartel Weapons and Their Provenance,” in *The War on Mexican Cartels: Options for U.S. and Mexican Policy-Makers*, Harvard University Institute of Politics, September 2012, p. 29.

of U.S. allies and partners. For example, several military units that were U.S. counterterrorism partners have reportedly defected to various insurgencies, while some U.S.-trained Mexican special forces have allegedly joined drug cartels.²⁴ More generally, uncontrolled flows of arms in Africa have been associated with longer and more-intense civil conflicts.²⁵

Summary

We can summarize the foregoing discussion in three key points:

- U.S. campaigning instruments have the potential to stabilize partners or destabilize them.
- Partners with weak political institutions are more likely to suffer destabilizing effects.
- Deployments of U.S. forces pose some risk of popular backlash, but the United States remains in control of the military capabilities those forces provide. Efforts to build partner capabilities (such as through materiel transfers) might be less highly visible and thus potentially reduce the risks of popular backlash, but those capabilities are then largely outside the United States' control. It is therefore not clear—at least on theoretical grounds—which type of campaigning instrument is more likely to be stabilizing.

In the remainder of this chapter, we present the results of the analysis that we conducted to test these propositions and understand broad patterns between U.S. campaigning efforts and deterrence and escalation outcomes.

Clearly, U.S. campaigning instruments have the potential to stabilize U.S. allies and partners or to destabilize them. The question is, which effects predominate in which circumstances?

Analytic Approach

To examine the logic of destabilization and U.S. military activities empirically, we again compared the records of allies and partners in which the United States employed its campaigning tools with those of countries with which the United States either did not cooperate or cooperated at lesser levels on a yearly basis over the past several decades. We draw on this analysis to understand whether the countries with which the United States engaged in certain types of cooperation were more or less likely to experience destabilizing effects than other states.

²⁴ Russell D. Howard, "Global Terrorism and U.S. Counterterrorism Policy in West Africa," in George Klay Kieh and Kelechi Kalu, eds., *West Africa and the U.S. War on Terror*, Routledge, 2013, p. 82; John B. Alexander, *Africa: Irregular Warfare on the Dark Continent*, Joint Special Operations University Report 09-5, May 2009, pp. 36–37; George W. Grayson, "Los Zetas: The Ruthless Army Spawned by a Mexican Drug Cartel," Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Note, May 2008.

²⁵ Adesoji Adeniyi, "The Human Cost of Uncontrolled Arms in Africa: Cross-National Research on Seven African Countries," Oxfam, March 2017.

We examined three indicators of stabilization pertaining to violent activity by both non-state actors and the national government:

- **terrorism:** violence perpetrated by subnational actors for the purpose of coercing the larger population and achieving political goals
- **civil war:** sustained violent conflict between a national government and a subnational entity for territorial control
- **government disrespect for rights:** instances in which a national government takes repressive action, such as political imprisonment of dissidents.

Overview of Results

In previous chapters, we have found evidence of the favorable effects of U.S. campaigning tools on both deterrence and cooperation outcomes. Broadly speaking, we find that the relationship between U.S. campaigning tools and stabilization outcomes appears to be much less favorable.²⁶ There are two notable negative relationships between U.S. campaigning instruments and stability outcomes.

First, virtually all U.S. campaigning tools appear to result in higher numbers of terrorist attacks. This is true across the spectrum of forces, footprints and agreements, and activities. However, our analysis does not necessarily suggest that U.S. activities are resulting in large-scale terrorist violence. Many acts of terrorism are small scale (such as those of the Red Army Faction or Red Brigades in the Cold War era); they pose risks for force protection but not to U.S. strategic goals. This form of backlash is a concern, but one that must be weighed against other U.S. objectives.

As with many of our other findings, the relationship between U.S. campaigning tools and terrorism is often mediated by the implementation environment. While states that engage in exercises with the United States, for instance, are modestly more likely to experience terrorist acts, we find that these increases in terrorism were concentrated during the Cold War, in nonallies, and in low-income states. In fact, we find suggestive evidence that U.S. exercises with high-income states and U.S. allies might actually be less likely to be followed by terrorist violence. For other U.S. activities, such as a local contracting, the unfavorable effects appear to persist independent of the implementation environment.

²⁶ It is possible, of course, that the causal arrows run in the opposite direction to the one suggested in this chapter. It could be that the United States disproportionately campaigns in countries that are at high risk of domestic instability, so the negative outcomes we observe are a cause rather than effect of U.S. actions. As we discuss in greater detail in Appendix A of the technical annex, we employed statistical techniques (two-stage models with propensity score weighting) to address this challenge. Other studies using alternative causal identification strategies have also reached conclusions like ours. See, for instance, Oliver Pamp, Lukas Rudolph, Paul W. Thurner, Andreas Mehlretter, and Simon Primus, “The Build-Up of Coercive Capacities: Arms Imports and the Outbreak of Violent Intrastate Conflicts,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 55, No. 4, 2018.

Second, materiel transfers appear to pose a high risk of destabilization for lower-income recipients. U.S. materiel transfers are associated with an increase in terrorist attacks in all implementation environments that we examined. In lower-income countries, materiel transfers are associated with a higher risk of civil wars and other internal violent conflicts and higher levels of government repression. There are many cases in which observers believe that U.S. materiel transfers directly led to violent conflict or repression, such as the previously cited example of Ethiopia in the 1960s and early 1970s. It might also be the case that the United States sends considerable materiel assistance to countries that are strategically important, and because of this strategic significance, the United States tends to downplay human rights concerns for fear of losing diplomatic and military cooperation. Critics, for instance, charged that the United States prioritized basing rights (and the associated materiel transfers that the United States offered to secure those basing rights) over human rights in the 1970s and 1980s in the Philippines.²⁷ In this interpretation, it is not the materiel transfers themselves that cause repression; rather, strategic significance accounts for both the materiel transfers and the United States' lack of pressure on partner governments for improved human rights performance.

Not all our findings were negative, however. Importantly, we find that **an enduring U.S. presence appears to deter intrastate violence (i.e., civil wars, insurgencies, and other forms of internal violent conflict) much as it does interstate violence, but only in upper-middle-income and high-income allies and partners.** As we have noted, an enduring U.S. presence is a significant signal of U.S. commitment to an ally or partner, and it places U.S. capabilities directly in the heart of the potential conflict. Nonstate actors might therefore believe that the United States either has sufficient forces to prevent unrest from escalating or is likely to intervene on the side of the government. Alternatively, a U.S. presence might allow for agreements between the government and the aggrieved party to be enforced, thereby obviating the need for violence.²⁸ The fact that this relationship exists only in relatively higher-income countries, however, suggests that a certain baseline level of state capabilities might be necessary for U.S. troop presence to have reasonable odds of stabilizing the partner.

Interestingly, **we find some evidence that U.S. agreements below the threshold of an alliance commitment appear to improve the human rights record of national governments.** One potential explanation for this finding is that, for countries with less-clear security relationships with the United States, the United States might be able to exert greater leverage on human rights. Similarly, these nations might, of their own accord, increase their defense of human rights in hopes of maintaining and expanding U.S. support.

²⁷ Jennie Green, "The Philippines: United States Policy and Allegations of Human Rights Abuses Under Aquino," *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, Vol. 187, 1989.

²⁸ However, for a potential explanation of the lack of consistent evidence supporting a relationship between U.S. presence and human rights, see Sam R. Bell, K. Chad Clay, and Carla Martinez Machain, "The Effect of U.S. Troop Deployments on Human Rights," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 61, No. 10, 2017.

This aligns with the experience of NATO states in accession talks following the Cold War. There were splits in the Western policy community about criteria for inclusion of Eastern European countries—particularly for a handful of states that were considered human rights laggards. Some wanted to reward progress toward improved human rights and other governance reforms and encourage further progress by granting access to NATO. Others wanted to continue to hold out the prospect of NATO accession as leverage until a higher level of human rights and good governance had been achieved in certain countries. Our findings suggest more support for the latter position. Constructing lesser forms of security agreements might serve both as a reward for progress made on human rights and as a reminder that further progress must be made for closer cooperation.

Table 5.1 summarizes our findings on the relationship between U.S. campaigning instruments and various aspects of stabilization.²⁹

Might these results reflect underlying conditions rather than the effects of U.S. OAI? Perhaps in part. As we discussed earlier, the statistical techniques we implemented to protect against analytic challenges, such as reverse causation, are not foolproof. Nonetheless, the patterns we detected are generally ones that accord with many of the findings from the qualitative literature, while explanations such as reverse causation fit poorly with most of the observed patterns. The United States, for instance, sometimes sends forces overseas to deter civil wars (such as in Bosnia), but it rarely sends substantial forces overseas solely to deter terrorism, and the few exceptions (such as Afghanistan) occurred in the post–Cold War era. If negative outcomes were the result of the United States sending forces to the most conflict-prone environments, we might have expected to see a positive correlation between U.S. forces and intrastate conflicts (and perhaps human rights abuses), but we would have expected to see a strong relationship with terrorism only in the post–Cold War era. What we found was the opposite pattern: No relationship at all between U.S. overseas forces and substantial internal conflicts and an unfavorable relationship with terrorism only during the Cold War. These results are very difficult to explain away with such explanations as reverse causation. They are consistent, however, with well-documented cases of terrorism inspired by U.S. military presence (e.g., the Baader-Meinhof Gang in the Cold War). Moreover, our most consistently unfavorable findings—those associated with materiel transfers—have a clear, logical explanation and a rich qualitative literature that supports them. Of all the OAI we evaluated, materiel transfers are the instrument that is most likely to provide capabilities to a U.S. partner that can be used in ways that the United States does not support. And the qualitative litera-

²⁹ We excluded HA/DR operations from our summary of results because of the limitations of our models. More specifically, the United States often conducts HA/DR operations in countries experiencing civil conflict. In this case, the causal direction of the argument is reversed: The destabilizing outcome causes the HA/DR operation rather than the other way around. For other outcomes in which such risks of endogeneity are particularly high—in particular, in our deterrence models—we were able to implement various statistical models that control for such reverse causation. Because we were not able to do so for HA/DR, we have omitted these results.

TABLE 5.1
Overview of Stabilization Results

Campaigning Instrument	Terrorism	Civil War	Human Rights Violation	Comments
Overseas forces				Overseas forces: unfavorable relationship during the Cold War and with allies Civil war: overall weak relationship, favorable relationship with high-income countries Human rights violations: overall weak relationship; suggestive unfavorable relationship during the Cold War, with allies, and with low-income partners
Defense treaty				Terrorism: unfavorable relationship during the Cold War and with low-income countries Civil war: suggestive favorable relationship with allies Human rights violations: unfavorable relationship during the Cold War; suggestive unfavorable relationship with low-income partners
Military agreement				Terrorism: favorable relationship after the Cold War, and with allies; unfavorable relationship during the Cold War; suggestive unfavorable relationship with nonallies
Local contracting				Civil war: favorable relationship during the Cold War Human rights violations: unfavorable relationship after the Cold War; suggestive unfavorable relationship with nonallies Data quality concerns led to an overall decline in confidence for local contracting results.
Multilateral exercises				Terrorism: favorable relationship with allies and high-income partners; suggestive favorable relationship after the Cold War; unfavorable relationship during the Cold War and with nonallies; suggestive unfavorable relationship with low-income partners Civil war: suggestive favorable relationship with high-income partners Human rights violations: unfavorable relationship during the Cold War and with nonallies; suggestive unfavorable relationship with low-income partners; suggestive favorable relationship with allies
Materiel transfers				Civil war: unfavorable relationship with low-income partners; suggestive unfavorable relationship after the Cold War and with allies Human rights violations: unfavorable relationship with low-income partners
HA/DR				Unable to evaluate HA/DR due to challenges in causal inference

NOTE: Color and the direction of the arrows indicate favorable (green and upward arrows) or unfavorable (red and downward arrows) relationships between campaigning tools and a given outcome. Shading indicates the degree of confidence we have in a specific finding, with darker shading indicating more confidence. Half-circles indicate outcomes that appear in only certain implementation environments. Bidirectional arrows indicate relationships that are favorable in some environments and unfavorable in others. Whole gray circles represent a lack of significant findings, while gray circles with a slash represent relationships we could not test (either because they were true by definition or because we lacked appropriate data or models).

ture provides many examples of some countries using such assistance in ways that provoke more violence.³⁰

³⁰ For an overview of the ways in which materiel transfers can exacerbate intrastate conflict and violence, see, for instance, Stephen Watts, *Identifying and Mitigating Risks in Security Sector Assistance for Africa's Fragile States*, RAND Corporation, RR-808-A, 2015.

Results in Lower-Income and Cold War Environments

Of all our results, the results for stabilization and resilience show the most sensitivity to the implementation environment. U.S. campaigning instruments appear to have strikingly different outcomes in different circumstances.

As discussed above, prior research suggests that lower-income states with weaker political institutions are at particular risk of destabilizing consequences from foreign military support. In fact, our results look dramatically different depending on the income level of allies and partners. Tables 5.2 and 5.3 summarize our results for stabilization and resilience out-

TABLE 5.2
Stabilization Results in Higher-Income States

Campaigning Instrument	Terrorism	Civil War	Human Rights Violation
Overseas forces			
Defense treaty			
Military agreement			
Local contracting			
Multilateral exercises			
Materiel transfers			
HA/DR			

NOTE: Color and the direction of the arrows indicate favorable (green and upward arrows) or unfavorable (red and downward arrows) relationships between campaigning tools and a given outcome. Shading indicates the degree of confidence we have in a specific finding, with darker shading indicating high confidence, lighter shading indicating moderate confidence, and the gray circles indicating suggestive relationships. Results are high-confidence if statistically significant at the 90-percent level. Results are moderate-confidence if the level of statistical significance is between 70 and 90 percent. Whole gray circles represent a lack of significant findings, while gray circles with a slash represent relationships we could not test (either because they were true by definition or we lacked appropriate data or models).

TABLE 5.3
Stabilization Results in Lower-Income States

Campaigning Instrument	Terrorism	Civil War	Human Rights Violation
Overseas forces			
Defense treaty			
Military agreement			
Local contracting			
Multilateral exercises			
Materiel transfers			
HA/DR			

NOTE: Color and the direction of the arrows indicate favorable (green and upward arrows) or unfavorable (red and downward arrows) relationships between campaigning tools and a given outcome. Shading indicates the degree of confidence we have in a specific finding, with darker shading indicating high confidence, lighter shading indicating moderate confidence, and the gray circles indicating suggestive relationships. Results are high-confidence if statistically significant at the 90-percent level. Results are moderate-confidence if the level of statistical significance is between 70 and 90 percent. Whole gray circles represent a lack of significant findings, while gray circles with a slash represent relationships we could not test (either because they were true by definition or we lacked appropriate data or models).

comes in higher-income and lower-income states, respectively. In higher-income states, U.S. campaigning tools generally appear to reinforce what are typically already relatively high levels of stability. The only unfavorable outcomes are somewhat elevated levels of terrorism, and even this outcome occurs only with a couple of the campaigning instruments we tested. In contrast, lower-income states show almost uniformly unfavorable outcomes in terrorism and human rights violations, and materiel transfers also appear to carry a higher risk of civil conflict.

The Cold War era similarly shows markedly different outcomes from those of the post-Cold War period. During the Cold War, U.S. concerns for governance and human rights typically were subordinated to the effort to defend against and gain advantage over the Soviet

Union. Tables 5.4 and 5.5 illustrate this dynamic. In the post–Cold War era, U.S. campaigning instruments appear to have had mixed results. Materiel transfers and overseas contracting are both associated with unfavorable outcomes, but no other campaigning tools show unfavorable outcomes, and some seem to yield some benefits. In contrast, nearly every campaigning instrument in our analyses was associated with higher levels of terrorism and increased abuses of human rights by government security forces during the Cold War. Although our results do not indicate the precise reason why the Cold War was associated with such outcomes, the results suggest that privileging competition objectives over governance objectives can come at a price.

TABLE 5.4
Stabilization Results in the Cold War

Campaigning Instrument	Terrorism	Civil War	Human Rights Violation
Overseas forces			
Defense treaty			
Military agreement			
Local contracting			
Multilateral exercises			
Materiel transfers			
HA/DR			

NOTE: Color and the direction of the arrows indicate favorable (green and upward arrows) or unfavorable (red and downward arrows) relationships between campaigning tools and a given outcome. Shading indicates the degree of confidence we have in a specific finding, with darker shading indicating high confidence, lighter shading indicating moderate confidence, and the gray circles indicating suggestive relationships. Results are high-confidence if statistically significant at the 90-percent level. Results are moderate-confidence if the level of statistical significance is between 70 and 90 percent. Whole gray circles represent a lack of significant findings, while gray circles with a slash represent relationships we could not test (either because they were true by definition or we lacked appropriate data or models).

TABLE 5.5
Stabilization Results in the Post–Cold War Period

Campaigning Instrument	Terrorism	Civil War	Human Rights Violation
Overseas forces			
Defense treaty			
Military agreement			
Local contracting			
Multilateral exercises			
Materiel transfers			
HA/DR			

NOTE: Color and the direction of the arrows indicate favorable (green and upward arrows) or unfavorable (red and downward arrows) relationships between campaigning tools and a given outcome. Shading indicates the degree of confidence we have in a specific finding, with darker shading indicating more confidence. Results are high-confidence if statistically significant at the 90-percent level. Results are moderate-confidence if the level of statistical significance is between 70 and 90 percent. Whole gray circles represent a lack of significant findings, while gray circles with a slash represent relationships we could not test (either because they were true by definition or we lacked appropriate data or models).






Conclusion

Our results suggest two important warnings about the potential consequences of U.S. campaigning initiatives on the stability of allies and partners. First, nearly all U.S. campaigning tools are associated with at least modest increases in the number of terrorist attacks in the countries with which the United States cooperates. Second, materiel transfers are consistently associated with a higher risk of instability—including civil conflict and government repression, as well as terrorism—in lower-income countries.

Not all outcomes were negative, but the more promising outcomes were more limited and nuanced. The presence of U.S. forces appears to reduce the risk of internal violent conflict but only in countries of upper-middle income or higher. And military agreements short of treaty alliances might provide some inducement for improved human rights performance among partner governments.

Table 5.6 summarizes the examples provided throughout this chapter.

TABLE 5.6
Potential Stabilization Examples

Campaigning Instrument	Competition Outcome	Relationship	Potential Examples
Enduring presence	Terrorism		Al Qaeda and U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia Contemporary Iranian Threat Network attacks Baader-Meinhof Gang in Cold War–era Germany Red Brigades in Cold War–era Italy
Military agreement	Human rights		Use of NATO accession as leverage in Eastern Europe
Materiel transfers	Terrorism		Defection of Niger Rapid Intervention Company Defection of Malian Armed Forces to Tuareg militias Diffusion of U.S. arms to al Shabaab
Materiel transfers	Civil wars		Ogaden War Uncontrolled small arms in contemporary Africa
Materiel transfers	Human rights		Security assistance to Iran under the Shah Security assistance to the Philippines in 1970s–1980s

Cost Analysis

To fully understand which campaigning tools are appropriate in which circumstances, it is important not only to understand likely outcomes but also to understand likely costs. A campaigning tool that yields slightly better outcomes on average but that costs a large amount of money might ultimately be a poor option. As Chapter 1 highlighted, in competition against competitors that can collectively outspend the United States (and, in the case of China, increasingly can outspend the United States alone, at least in certain areas), the efficiency of campaigning efforts is important.

This chapter provides an analysis of costs for the campaigning tools analyzed in this report. Because of data challenges (as discussed in more detail below), it is extremely difficult to estimate costs with any precision. But a considerable amount of useful information can be gleaned from ROM cost estimates. Our goal in this analysis is to provide such ROM estimates. In particular, we seek to develop ROM estimates for the *incremental* costs of various categories of overseas campaigning instruments, which we define as those costs above what the United States would incur without overseas campaigning. So, for instance, when developing ROM cost estimates for deployments of U.S. military units overseas, we are estimating only those costs above the ones the unit would incur at home station. Future research, informed by a larger pool of appropriate U.S. government data, might yield more-precise estimates.

For our purposes, we assume that there are essentially no direct dollar costs of defense treaties and military agreements; while they might impose what prove to be expensive obligations on the United States in the future, the cost to negotiate them approaches zero (at least in comparison with our other tools). Materiel transfers come in essentially two forms: Either they are sales, in which case the cost is born by the U.S. ally or partner and the transfer is essentially free to the United States, or they are some form of assistance. In this chapter, we estimate the costs of that materiel assistance. We also estimate costs for three other campaigning tools: the persistent presence of U.S. overseas forces, multilateral military exercises, and HA/DR operations. Because we were not able to sufficiently establish which overseas DoD contracting costs could be considered campaign-related rather than serving other purposes, we have set aside those costs.

For three of the types of activities that we are analyzing, we have historical data from U.S. government sources for at least an appropriate sample of those activities: multilateral military exercises, materiel transfers, and HA/DR operations. The fourth—U.S. overseas

forces—required the use of a cost-estimating model. Much of this chapter is focused on the cost-estimating model for overseas forces, since these cost estimates are less straightforward than the others. Not only does this model help us to estimate costs for overseas forces, but also it might be used in the future by U.S. military planners to develop rough cost estimates of hypothetical force deployments. With some adjustments, the model could also be used to provide rough estimates of U.S. costs for overseas military exercises.

Overview of Cost Data and Analytic Approach

The analysis we present in this report seeks to be generalizable; i.e., we seek to reach general conclusions about the costs and benefits of various competition activities, not of individual actions or events. We therefore sought generalizable models that we could apply, including for cost. Unfortunately, developing generalizable cost models for military activities from historical records is very challenging.

First, data are usually not captured in DoD or service accounting systems in a way that enables the development of such a model. Costs may be incurred by or reimbursed by different organizations but contribute to the same activity. Financial management systems tend to capture costs by categorizations that Congress or DoD need for oversight and budgeting purposes (e.g., appropriations, elements of expense), and these cut across activities such that one has to assemble costs from multiple datasets or systems.¹ Moreover, if the activity is conducted by an overseas organization (e.g., an exercise or HA/DR operation), some costs incurred may be taken “out of hide” such that typical operations and maintenance accounts pay for them. Ideally, one could determine the full cost to the U.S. taxpayer incurred for a given activity, but fully teasing apart those costs is not always possible.

Second, DoD does not always keep consistent track of costs over time. One interviewee from an Army Service Component Command (ASCC) stated that until several years ago, their cost accounting for exercises did not reflect individual events. In recent years, personnel there began tracking costs by individual event, but such a decision was ad hoc. Because the command was adhering to DoD or Army policy for reporting costs, there was no mandate to capture costs any differently.²

Finally, different organizations and offices capture or calculate costs differently. When organizations outside DoD estimate costs, they often do not include all the same costs, nor are they always clear about what costs are included in a way that would ensure an apples-to-apples comparison or at least the ability to control for differences.

¹ One simple example is spare parts supply and transportation. Each service sets a price for a unit to obtain a spare part (called an *exchange price*). When a unit requisitions the part, it pays the given price for that part, no matter where the unit is located. The cost for the transportation of that part then varies by urgency and destination. The transportation costs are reimbursed from a separate account such that the cost of supporting a unit overseas may show up in different places.

² U.S. Army Europe personnel, discussion with the authors, August 23, 2022.

The above discussion is not necessarily a criticism of DoD or the Army, as capturing costs the way we seek to in this analysis is not a primary responsibility of these organizations. The implications of this are two. For activities where we use historical data, we apply the necessary caveats, given the data sources and their fidelity. For force presence, this led us to create our own cost model. We sought a simple and, admittedly, approximate model that would use a consistent, transparent methodology across numerous cases and that could be used by Army analysts to estimate potential future costs (including for hypothetical contingencies and/or for outyears) as part of their planning processes. We discuss the cost model for force presence next.

Force Presence

For force presence, we estimate the annual recurring costs of maintaining a given level of presence year-round, comparing both permanent and rotational (heel-to-toe) presence. We include rough estimates of both enduring costs and one-time investments (e.g., facility construction).

One important attribute of this cost analysis is that we are interested in the incremental costs of providing competition campaigning tools. *Incremental cost*, or incremental cost difference, refers to the relative difference in recurring costs (for similar units, populations, or installations) between the United States and an overseas region. This allows us, for campaigning tools that involve the use of forces, to set aside the baseline cost of having forces and focus simply on the additional cost that the United States bears to provide a particular activity. In contrast, most DoD cost accounting or cost models do not capture the incremental costs of overseas units or activities but instead typically capture the total cost.

The methods and data sources used here for enduring presence (both permanent and rotational) are based in large part on prior RAND research,³ using updates of data sources or original cost factors with inflation factors where applicable.⁴ Here we provide basic explanations of the logic and sources behind our cost analysis; the previous report on which these cost models are based provides much deeper explanations.

³ Michael J. Lostumbo, Michael J. McNerney, Eric Peltz, Derek Eaton, David R. Frelinger, Victoria A. Greenfield, John Halliday, Patrick Mills, Bruce R. Nardulli, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jerry M. Sollinger, and Stephen M. Worman, *Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits*, RAND Corporation, RR-201-OSD, 2013.

⁴ Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), "National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2022," U.S. Department of Defense, August 2021, Table 5-5: "Department of Defense Deflators-TOA by Category," p. 64. When a given cost factor mapped more or less exactly to a deflator category (e.g., military pay, military construction), we applied it directly. When the cost factor as we developed it had no direct mapping in the deflator table, we used the general operations and maintenance factor (excluding pay, fuel, and medical).

Cost Categories and Factors for Force Presence

We grouped annual costs for force presence into five categories: unit operating costs, personnel-related, installation-related, regional logistics, and rotational-only transportation costs.

Unit operating costs include the operations and maintenance costs that enable operational units' day-to-day operations, excluding the military pay for unit personnel. Under most circumstances, these would simply be considered training costs. In our analysis, we allow these costs to vary to represent higher-intensity activities, such as exercises.⁵ We used the Force and Organization Cost Estimating System (FORCES) Cost Model (FCM) to determine the unit costs for Army units in different regions.⁶

- **Personnel-related costs** are allowances and permanent-change-of-station (PCS) moving costs incurred by DoD. Allowances include housing, family separation, and hardship pay. We apply these cost factors differently between permanent and rotational presence.⁷
- **Installation-related costs** include facility operations, maintenance, restoration and modernization (R&M); family services; morale, welfare, and recreation; medical services; and dependents' education.
- **Regional logistics costs** are additional logistics costs borne by DoD to support permanent overseas forces and bases. These costs include additional transportation costs for the overseas delivery of supplies and overseas regional distribution centers, which form an additional layer of logistics.
- **Rotational-only costs.** Rotational operations alone require regular transportation of equipment and personnel back and forth between their garrison and deployed locations.

Cost Categories as Applied to Permanent and Rotational Presence

Table 6.1 captures the key cost categories that we used for enduring presence and how we applied those factors differently between permanent and rotational presence.

We included unit costs primarily to capture differences in operational tempo (OPTEMPO) that might occur while units are overseas. FCM does represent unit costs, particularly for units in U.S. European Command (EUCOM), as higher than those in the United States. More critical to our analysis, units stationed overseas might conduct higher-intensity activities,

⁵ Lostumbo et al., 2013, Table 8.2, p. 179.

⁶ FCM uses past obligations data to produce its estimates. Consistent with the analysis in Lostumbo et al., 2013, we used three of the cost elements in FCM for our computation of training costs: Direct Equipment Parts and Fuel Cost, Post Production Software Support, and Indirect Support Cost. Lostumbo et al., 2013, Appendix A, contains a complete list of the cost elements in FCM and how they are used.

⁷ PCS costs are technically the transportation of personnel (and their families and personal goods) from one station to another, but we include these in *personnel-related costs*.

TABLE 6.1
Recurring Cost Categories Applied to Enduring Presence

Category	Cost Factor	Permanent	Rotational	Driver
Unit costs	Unit direct and indirect costs	No overseas differential included OPTEMPO differences included for illustration	No overseas differential included OPTEMPO differences included for illustration	Unit
Personnel-related	Compensation and allowances	COLA BAH	COLA Family separation Hardship pay	Personnel
	PCS	Included	Not included	Personnel
Installation-related	Base operations/life support	No incremental difference	Life support contract	Personnel
	DoD Schools	Included		Personnel
Regional logistics	Transportation and regional logistics centers	Included	Included	Personnel
Rotational-only	Rotation-related transportation	Not included	Included	Unit

NOTE: BAH = basic allowance for housing; COLA = cost-of-living adjustment.

such as exercises that are particularly aimed at competition, not simply “being there.” We varied this OPTEMPO cost by some multiple to represent these higher-intensity activities. We then compared this differential to the other total costs to see how much difference such an OPTEMPO change might make to the overall estimate.

Personnel-related costs differ significantly between permanent and rotational presence. Personnel in both circumstances receive applicable COLA allowances, but only permanent forces receive the BAH, because they are responsible for finding and funding their own housing. We included housing for rotational operations under *base operations*. Rotational personnel receive both family separation and hardship pay. Finally, PCS applies only to permanent forces, as rotation-unique transportation costs are captured in a separate category.

Prior RAND research found no evidence for an incremental difference in the per-person cost for base operations, meaning the costs are comparable between the United States and overseas locations, and we retained that assumption.⁸ That said, rotational operations do

⁸ Lostumbo et al., 2013, did find fixed cost differences, i.e., per-installation rather than per-person, and we do include such costs in our investment cost estimates. In that report, annual fixed costs for U.S. Army locations were reported as \$97 million for the continental United States (CONUS), \$115 million for Europe, \$101 million for Japan, and \$79 million for Korea. We escalated those costs to 2022 dollars, as reported elsewhere in this chapter.

incur a unique set of life-support costs for units while deployed. To capture these costs, we used exemplar life-support costs from current contractor-provided life support to the Army in the Balkans, an arrangement that has persisted for many years. We derived per-person costs from publicly available data on this support contract. This means that we assumed that the full complement of base operations support is still provided for each person (and family) at their U.S.-based garrison, and deployed life support is provided on top of that. Thus, the contractor-provided life support is an entirely incremental cost.

We assigned the cost of DoD schools only for permanent forces, since rotational forces are unaccompanied.⁹ We applied regional logistics costs to both permanent and rotational forces, because most of the costs incurred here are to support unit operations rather than facilities and infrastructure for base operations.

Finally, we applied rotation-driven transportation costs only to rotational operations. We assumed all rotations last nine months, are heel-to-toe, and require the complete rotation of all personnel and equipment (i.e., no prepositioned equipment sets are leveraged).

As the rightmost column of Table 6.1 shows, most of these cost factors are per-person costs. Unit costs and rotational transportation costs are unit-specific, because the costs differ significantly based on the unit type.

The next two sections show the resulting cost factors when we applied these person-driven and unit-driven assumptions.

Resulting Cost Factors for Person-Driven Cost Categories

Given the inputs we just described, we now review the annual per-person costs for permanent and rotational presence. Table 6.2 shows those results.

The application of these cost factors and assumptions results in a net per-person annual cost for permanent forces of \$26,025 per year, while rotational forces incur only \$16,299 per year.¹⁰ The additional allowances, PCS costs, and schools significantly increase the baseline cost for permanent forces. Rotational forces, on a per-person basis, under these cases, live more austere, and without the expenses incurred by families, their costs appear much lower. It is only when incorporating the transportation costs that rotational presence compares differently with permanent presence. We discuss this next.

Resulting Cost Factors for Military Unit-Driven Cost Categories

Table 6.3 captures the unit-driven costs for the set of military unit types that we included and tallies total costs for those military unit types. We show results for a few illustrative unit

⁹ We understand that some overseas stationing includes unaccompanied tours. For this analysis, we draw a sharp distinction between a permanent stationing, which we assume to be roughly three years and accompanied, and a rotational deployment, which is nine months and unaccompanied.

¹⁰ Overseas locations differ in cost factors for most categories. In this analysis, we averaged overseas locations because not all cases that we examined had a good analog.

TABLE 6.2
Per-Person Recurring Costs for Enduring Presence

Category	Cost Factor	Permanent	Rotational
Unit costs	Unit direct and indirect costs	Unit-specific	Unit-specific
Personnel-related	Compensation and allowances	\$9,457	\$7,846
	PCS	\$8,293	Not included
Installation-related	Base operations/life support	Not included	\$6,125
	DoD schools	\$5,949	Not included
Regional logistics	Transportation and regional logistics centers	\$2,327	Included
Rotational-only	Rotation-related transportation	Not included	Included
Total		\$26,025	\$16,299

SOURCES: Features information from Lostumbo et al., 2013; Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), 2021; Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command Transportation Engineering Agency, "Deployment Transportation Guide: Transportation Assets Required for Deployment," PAM 700-5, 2020; Kellogg Brown Root, "Logistics Civil Augmentation Program IV-EUCOM," 2019.

TABLE 6.3
Unit-Driven Annual Costs for Enduring Presence

Unit Type	Cost Components (\$M)		Total Presence Cost (\$M)	Unit Operating Cost (\$M)	
	Person-Driven	Transportation		+25%	+50%
ABCT permanent	97.1		97.1	11.6	23.2
ABCT rotational	60.8	69.9	130.7		
SBCT permanent	110.5		110.5	16.6	33.1
SBCT rotational	69.2	56.2	125.4		
IBCT permanent	91.1		91.1	12.5	25.0
IBCT rotational	57.1	38.4	95.5		
CAB permanent	72.0		72.0	26.3	52.5
CAB rotational	45.1	39.5	84.6		

SOURCES: Features data from Lostumbo et al., 2013.

NOTES: Annual transportation costs are applied only to rotational forces. They include sealift and overland transport and assume nine-month rotations for all units. \$M = million dollars; ABCT = armored brigade combat team; CAB = combat aviation brigade; IBCT = infantry brigade combat team; SBCT = Stryker brigade combat team.

types. In our broader analysis, if a military unit included in an activity is not captured from these categories, we include the closest proxy unit type.

The rows in Table 6.3 show each unit type, with either permanent or rotational presence assumptions. The first data column shows the total person-driven costs from Table 6.2 applied to these unit types. The next shows the annual transportation costs for that unit type. Annual transportation costs shown here includes both equipment transportation (including sealift and overland transportation) and personnel transportation (via air transport). The next column then shows the total annual cost for presence.

The next two columns show annual military unit operating costs for a useful comparison. For each unit type, we started with the baseline average overseas cost (these are higher than their CONUS counterparts), and then calculated what a 25-percent or 50-percent increase would look like. The final two columns display these 25-percent or 50-percent increases, respectively, to show how increased OPTEMPO might compare with the baseline annual cost of presence.

On average, the annual presence costs are around \$100 million, ranging from \$72 million for a permanent CAB to \$131 million for a rotational ABCT. We now refer to the unit operating costs, which illustrate how an increased OPTEMPO might compare. Looking across the unit types, comparing those OPTEMPO increases, a 25-percent increase in OPTEMPO brings around a 10-to-15-percent increase in total annual presence costs, while a 50-percent increase brings about twice that.

We see from this that were overseas units to increase OPTEMPO for competition activities, that activity could produce a nontrivial but not overwhelming difference in costs. We do not apply these notional OPTEMPO increases in later calculations but include them here to give the reader a sense of the possibilities, depending on what these overseas units might be doing.

One-Time Investment Costs of Overseas Presence

We now present cost factors for one-time investments, for cases in which permanent presence requires the construction of new installations and/or new facilities to accommodate forces (Table 6.4). We apply this only to permanent forces, because this analysis assumes

TABLE 6.4
One-Time Investment Costs

Unit Type	Cost per Brigade (\$M)	Cost per Installation, One Brigade (\$M)	Cost per Installation, Three Brigades (\$M)	Cost per Brigade, Three Brigades per Installation (\$M)
ABCT	725	3,660	5,110	1,703
SBCT	826	3,760	5,411	1,804
IBCT	681	3,615	4,977	1,659
CAB	538	3,472	4,548	1,516

SOURCE: Lostumbo et al., 2013.

NOTE: \$M = million dollars.

that rotational forces are supported by contract support and do not rely on any permanent infrastructure.

Prior RAND research included rough per-person cost factors for infrastructure at permanent installations by using the plant replacement value (PRV) of infrastructure at DoD installations.¹¹

The fixed cost of infrastructure at an overseas installation was estimated at \$2.9 billion, while the per-person cost was estimated at about \$194,000 per person (both values inflated to 2022 dollars).

We applied these costs to our illustrative brigades to produce illustrative costs. We see that, in cases in which an installation already exists but infrastructure must be expanded, the one-time investment cost could be in the range of \$538 million to \$826 million. We then see that the per-brigade cost could be two to four times this if an entirely new installation must be constructed. The range occurs because not all overseas locations have the same size or composition. The norm is in the one or two brigades per installation range.¹² This means that if the proportions stay in a similar range, the per-installation costs might be amortized across fairly few units.

For illustration, we contemplate new installations that have either one or three brigades per installation. We see that, in the former case, the per-installation costs are around \$3.6 billion while, in the latter case, they are about \$5 billion per location, but around \$1.5 billion to 1.8 billion per brigade. When costs are spread across more units, the per-unit costs are, of course, lower. In summary, per-brigade costs could be around \$0.5 billion to 0.8 billion at existing locations, about two to two-and-a-half times that much at new installations with three brigades, and about five or six times that much if only one brigade is at each new location.

For argument's sake, we assume that this infrastructure lasts on the order of 50 years and use our average cost of around \$93 million in annual per-brigade costs for permanent presence. If we compare the amortized costs of new infrastructure with these annual costs, per-brigade costs could add around 15 percent more at existing locations, about 36 percent more at new installations with three brigades, and about 78 percent more if only one brigade is at each new location. On the low end, these cost increases to accommodate new infrastructure are roughly comparable to the difference between rotational and permanent presence (in our brigade examples in Table 6.3, rotational presence is about 17 percent higher on average than permanent presence). At the high end, though, these investment costs start to dwarf other cost differences. And when considering the issue of budget tradespace in the program objec-

¹¹ Using only PRV provides an underestimate of potential costs. Such an estimate does not include many necessary costs that would be part of the normal design and construction processes. It also does not include any area cost factors that might be applied, and many overseas locations have higher cost factors than do U.S. locations. But using PRV gives us a method that is comparable across a wide range of locations and a clear definition of what is included or excluded from the costs. See Lostumbo et al., 2013.

¹² Lostumbo et al., 2013.

tives memorandum (POM) process, we find that infrastructure investment costs are an order of magnitude more than recurring costs.

Summary of Results for Enduring Presence Cases

Table 6.5. shows the results when we apply the cost factors discussed in this section to historical cases of overseas deployments and their constituent units.¹³

To estimate these cases, we used two main drivers. The first was the list of heavy units that apply to each of these cases. That provided a starting point population and the equipment transportation demand for rotational cases. We then used the top-line number of troops to drive the total per-person costs.¹⁴ Although the cases are historical, all costs are expressed in 2022 dollars.

In Table 6.5, we see that, as the size of these presence cases varies, so do their costs. Given the cost factors that we have explicated in the previous tables, these costs should not be sur-

TABLE 6.5
Recurring Annual Cost Results for Enduring Presence Cases

Case	Personnel	Cost of Permanent Presence (\$M)	Cost of Rotational Presence (\$M)
Army units in Germany in 1983	214,912	5,593	6,373
U.S. deterrence posture in South Korea in 1969	52,453	1,365	1,587
U.S. deterrence posture in South Korea in 2016	8,546	222	273
Combined Joint Task Force against the Islamic State, 2014–present, in 2015	4,000	104	115
MFO Sinai in 2002	846	22	27
Multinational deterrence force in Macedonia in 1999	350	9	11

¹³ Data on personnel and major military unit types involved in each of these cases are derived from Matthew Lane, Bryan Frederick, Jennifer Kavanagh, Stephen Watts, Nathan Chandler, and Meagan L. Smith, *Forecasting Demand for U.S. Ground Forces: Assessing Future Trends in Armed Conflict and U.S. Military Interventions*, RAND Corporation, RR-2995-A, 2022.

¹⁴ It is possible to estimate *tooth-to-tail ratios* (the number of military personnel required to supply and support each combat soldier) and apply them. However, estimating the “tail” makes many assumptions about the nature of support, such as what operating conditions the force is subject to, the geography of the theater, and so on. Across cases as diverse as our sample—with differences in orders of magnitude, mission, decade of presence, and more—there was no tractable way to determine a reasonable “tail” that could defensibly be applied. Thus, we adhered to the top-line troop numbers to be consistent across cases.

prising. The permanent and rotational costs are comparable, given the scope and variation in the cases that we consider.

Summary and Discussion

In the analysis that we just presented, given the fidelity for which we are aiming and the constraints that we assume, recurring cost differences between rotational and permanent presence appear to be minimal. Compared with other cost drivers of the diverse deployments in Table 6.5—including the size of the U.S. force presence, types of units deployed, location of the deployment, and so on—differences in cost between permanent and rotational forms of presence are minimal.

We also found that OPTEMPO changes that are reasonable for competition activities would probably be of a similar proportion, around a 10-percent to 20-percent increase in total recurring costs.

Finally, the investment costs for new construction could be low when amortized across the infrastructure life cycle (increasing permanent presence costs no more on average than would rotational presence) but much higher if new locations must be built from scratch—not to mention the apparent scale when presented as one-time costs in the POM process.

Exercises

To estimate exercise costs, we obtained recent cost data from U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) and U.S. Army Europe and Africa (USAREUR-AF). For both commands, the documents and data provided mostly covered fiscal year (FY) 2022. One of the USARPAC sources contained trend data, including some additional past and future planned events.¹⁵ The results we present here should be considered limited. In all, we have event-level data for only about 45 total events, mostly occurring within FY 2022. These ASCC staffs simply did not have more-complete historical records of exercise cost data to provide.

Table 6.6 contains the investment in people, exercise days (i.e., duration), and dollars—either spent, in the case of past exercises, or planned, in the case of future exercises—for USARPAC. The source document had four years of data for three different exercises.

Keris Strike (KS) is a bilateral army-to-army exercise between the Malaysian Army and USARPAC that focuses on enhancing partner land-force capacity and capabilities, addresses internal security challenges, and increases interoperability that reaffirms shared security commitments to the Indo-Pacific region.¹⁶

Yama Sakura (YS) is a U.S.-Japan bilateral and joint command post exercise. YS 81 was the largest exercise to date, including the forward deployment of over 1,500 soldiers and thou-

¹⁵ USARPAC, FY22 Quarter 1 Exercise data, 2022a.

¹⁶ Wyatt Moore, “Exercise Keris Strike 22 Begins,” U.S. Army, June 13, 2022.

TABLE 6.6
USARPAC Exercise Cost Data Trends

Exercise	People	Days	Dollars
KS 21 planned	150	17	2,100,000
KS 21 actual	27	11	220,000
KS 22	200	12	3,800,000
KS 23	850	12	10,701,852
KS 24	975	11	11,252,682
YS 21	5,250	20	4,200,000
YS 22	1,350	12	6,800,000
YS 23	1,250	14	4,022,840
YS 24	400	14	1,287,309
YA 21	700	13	6,700,000
YA 22	425	14	6,800,000
YA 23	514	13	3,500,000
YA 24	514	13	5,352,095

SOURCE: Authors' analysis of data from USARPAC, 2022a.

sands of pieces of equipment from Hawaii and Washington state to multiple locations across Japan from November 15 to December 20, 2021.¹⁷

Yudh Abhyas (YA) is a bilateral exercise between the United States and India. U.S. Army paratroopers with the 4th IBCT (Airborne), the 25th Infantry Division, and Indian Army soldiers participated in exercise YA 21, in which soldiers trained in Alaska, working on evacuating casualties via UH-60 Black Hawks, practicing sling loading artillery underneath CH-47 Chinooks, and also taking turns familiarizing themselves with each other's weapon systems, such as the American-issued M4 carbine and M240B machine gun and the Indian Small Arms System.

In Table 6.6, each row shows the investment (planned or actual) for that exercise. The acronyms are the exercise names, and the numbers are the year. For KS 21, the event was planned before the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, but in response to COVID-19, U.S. participation was dramatically scaled back. We include both the planned and actual numbers here for reference. The Quarter 1 exercise data provided the investment in people,

¹⁷ Elias Chelala, "Yama Sakura 81 Reinforces Strength of U.S.-Japan Alliance Through World's Largest Command Post Exercise," U.S. Army, December 15, 2021.

days, and dollars. We calculated and show here the dollars per person per day to provide a rough scale of what these exercises cost in terms of a “burn rate.” We see that most of these events range in the upper hundreds of dollars per person per day.

We see in Table 6.6 that the top-line dollar investment in each event, except for the actual KS 21, is in the millions of dollars. Future KS events will top \$10 million. For future planned events, we applied the dollar cost of the past events, dollars per person per day for each event, to the planned people and exercise days to arrive at an estimated dollar cost for future events (estimated costs are indicated in the last column).

Across past events, the average per-event cost is just under \$5 million. If we include planned events (given our estimated cost), the average cost is just above \$5 million per event.

The Quarter 2 exercise data had FY 2022 data for eight different exercises.¹⁸ Table 6.7 presents these results.

When comparing the events in Table 6.6 and Table 6.7, the exercise days are roughly comparable, but the investment in people and dollars per event in Table 6.7 are higher. On average, fewer people participated in Quarter 2 events (856 versus 1,227), but more funding was invested. The average cost per event in Quarter 2 data was about \$7.5 million versus about \$5 million in Quarter 1 data. We also see several cases of larger events in the second-quarter data. Across both datasets, the average costs are still quite comparable and provide a good basis for thinking more broadly about the costs of exercises.

TABLE 6.7
USARPAC Second Quarter FY 2022 Exercise Cost Data

Exercise	People	Days	Dollars
Keen Edge	289	7	133,000
Salaknib	1,150	19	16,746,000
Balikatan	1,475	11	20,246,000
Tamiok	79	11	805,000
CCPT	750	16	290,000
Cobra Gold	1,731	29	14,950,000
Hanuman	1,338	25	6,450,000
Tiger Lightning	37	11	1,085,000

SOURCE: Authors' analysis of data from USARPAC, 2022b.

NOTES: CCPT = combined command post training.

¹⁸ USARPAC, FY22 Quarter 2 Exercise data, 2022b.

TABLE 6.8
USAREUR-AF Exercise Cost Data for 2022

Exercise Name	Cost (\$)	Exercise Name	Cost (\$)
AFRICAN LION	52,553	KFOR 31	4,235
ALLIED SPIRIT	7,786,319	LOYAL LEDA	65,645
ASTRAL KNIGHT	26,079	NEPTUNE EAGLE	60,006
AURORA 23	1,796	NOBLE PARTNER	279,856
AUSTERE CHALLENGE	50,329	NORTHERN CHALLENGE	66,237
COMBINED RESOLVE XVI	21,373,109	ORION 23	58,808
COMBINED RESOLVE XVII	1,651,530	RAPID TRIDENT	5,367
COOPERATIVE RESOLVE	21,872	RESOLUTE CASTLE	4,359,472
DEF22 CPX	646,148	SABER JUNCTION	76,888
DEF22 LIVEX	12,166,885	SABER STRIKE	15,814,929
DEFENDER 22	422,327	STEADFAST JUPITER	21,431
DEFENDER 23	406,493	STEADFAST LEDA	161,336
DYNAMIC FRONT	142,199	SWIFT RESPONSE	5,169,700
JOINT VIKING 23	14,304	VIKING	35,108
KFOR 30	474,719	WFX 22-1	1,283,434

SOURCE: Features information from Headquarters USAREUR correspondence with the study team.

NOTE: CPX = Command Post Exercise; DEF22 = DEFENDER 22; KFOR = Kosovo Force; LIVEX = Live Exercise; WFX = Warfighter Exercise.

Table 6.8 presents FY 2022 exercise data for USAREUR-AF. In this dataset—monthly exercise reports—only dollar amounts were provided.¹⁹ Here, we report the actual amount recorded to have been disbursed (30 events were reported with cost data and five without).

Here, the cost per event ranges widely, from only a few thousand dollars to more than \$20 million, and the event costs are pretty evenly spread across that range. That results in an average cost per event of \$4.7 million (highly influenced by a few high-cost events) and a median cost of only \$142,199. Overall, USAREUR-AF reported many more less-costly exercises than did USARPAC.

Security Assistance

To estimate U.S. security assistance costs, we used a dataset of annual U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants (Greenbook) data for security cooperation–related programs compiled in prior

¹⁹ USAREUR correspondence with the study team.

RAND research.²⁰ The dataset spans from 1946 to 2018. Security assistance, of course, is not the same as materiel transfers. As noted above, we treat materiel sales as essentially costless for the United States. For security assistance, most costs are for materiel; training, education, and other nonmateriel costs are typically a small proportion of the total. Thus, while security assistance is not the same as materiel transfers, it provides a reasonable approximation (sufficient for a ROM analysis) of the actual costs.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

We found U.S. government figures—primarily relying on U.S. Agency for International Development data—for assistance provided or funds obligated for the DoD portion of HA/DR missions by FY. Prior RAND research identified past HA/DR operations up until 2017. We used publicly available data to provide estimated costs for most HA/DR missions in the period of 1997–2017 that did not also include a security component (such as peace operations). The cases used in this analysis include the DoD response to the Japan Tohoku earthquake in March 2011, Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda in the Philippines in November 2013, the Gorkha earthquake in Nepal in April 2015, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in May 2008, the West Africa Ebola outbreak of 2014–2016, the Pakistan floods in summer 2010, the Haiti earthquake in January 2010, and the Izmit earthquake in Turkey in August 1999. We relied on assistance amounts for the FY in which the disaster occurred, as this is often when DoD’s portion of the HA/DR operation occurred.²¹ The one exception is the 2014–2016 Ebola outbreak, for which we used funds obligated for FY 2015, since that is when the bulk of DoD’s

²⁰ RAND researchers employed expert consultation to determine which funding accounts should be included in the dataset of security cooperation–related assistance. The dataset excludes defense funding accounts related to peacekeeping operations; overseas humanitarian, disaster, and civic aid; and the Cooperative Threat Reduction Account. It includes such accounts as the Army Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund, IMET, the Foreign Military Financing Program, and Excess Defense Articles.

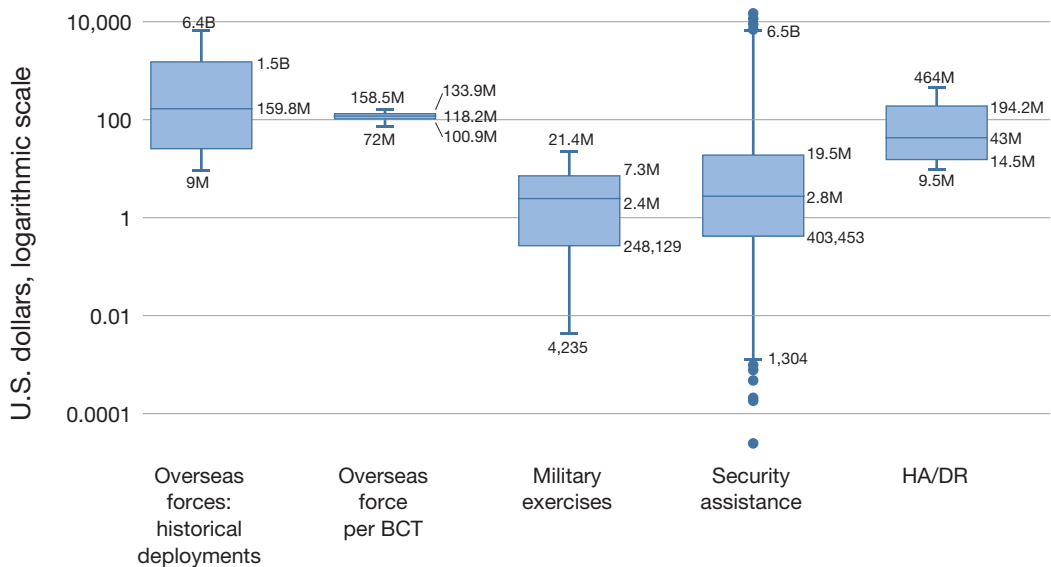
²¹ For instance, the duration of Operation Unified Response, the DoD response to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, spanned from January to late May 2010. The DoD response to Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar lasted from May to June 2008. Operation Damayan, DoD’s response to Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda in the Philippines, began in November and ended in December 2013. Operation Tomodachi, DoD’s response to the Japan Tohoku earthquake, began in March and finished in May 2011. Operation Sahayogi Haat, DoD’s response to the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, lasted for more than a month after the disaster (Gary Cecchine, Forrest E. Morgan, Michael A Wermuth, Timothy Jackson, Agnes Gereben Schaefer, and Matthew Stafford, *The U.S. Military Response to the 2010 Haiti Earthquake: Considerations for Army Leaders*, RAND Corporation, RR-304-A, 2013, pp. 32–42; Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Stephanie Pezard, Laurel E. Miller, Jeffrey Engstrom, and Abby Doll, *Lessons from Department of Defense Disaster Relief Efforts in the Asia-Pacific Region*, RAND Corporation, RR-146-OSD, 2013, p. 19 and p. 90; Thomas Parker, Sean P. Carroll, Gregg Sanders, Jason E. King, and Imes Chiu, “The U.S. Pacific Command Response to Super Typhoon Haiyan,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 82, July 2016; Carlo Muñoz, “Operation Damayan,” *Air Force Magazine*, April 1, 2014; Caleb Eames, “Operation Sahayogi Haat Seven-Year Anniversary Honored in Nepal,” U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, June 9, 2022).

efforts occurred.²² The primary limitation affecting this analysis is difficulty identifying complete assistance information by FY for HA/DR operations. For seven of the eight cases for which we have cost data, the reporting on DoD assistance aligns relatively closely with the end of the FY or the end of the military response if later reporting was unavailable. Thus, we are relatively confident that these figures, though they may be estimates, approximate DoD assistance for that FY. For the eighth case, the 2010 floods in Pakistan, DoD operations spanned FYs, and we were not able to obtain data on a year-by-year basis. In this case, we divided our cost estimate in half to generate our cost estimates for each FY.

Cost Summary

We summarize the costs from our analysis in Figure 6.9. Figure 6.9 shows a boxplot of the range of costs from each type of competition tool we analyzed. The high and low extremes of each boxplot show the minimum and maximum values; the middle value shows the median; the top and bottom values of the boxes show one standard deviation above and below the median. From left to right, the first two entries show annual costs for force presence. The first

FIGURE 6.9
Rough-Order-of-Magnitude Historical Cost Estimate Boxplots



SOURCE: RAND Arroyo Center researchers' analysis based on U.S. government data cited in this chapter.
NOTE: B = billion; BCT = brigade combat team; M = million.

²² See, for instance, Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA), "Operation United Assistance: The DOD Response to Ebola in West Africa," Joint Staff J-7, January 6, 2016.

shows the entire dataset of historical deployments, as shown in Table 6.5; the second shows the data only for the brigade-sized examples from Table 6.3.

The middle entry shows the data for military exercises, drawing information from Tables 6.6, 6.7, and 6.8 but excluding command post exercises and foreign exercises that simply had U.S. participation. These were normally quite small in terms of presence and negligible in cost, and they also were not found in the dataset that we used in our evaluation of the impact of multilateral military exercises. The last two entries show the data for security assistance and HA/DR.

Most of these categories have a very wide range in costs. This variation is unsurprising; campaigning tools are many and varied and can be tailored and calibrated in many ways. Enduring presence is the most reliably expensive, closely followed by HA/DR operations. These two campaigning tools have several similarities, with costs being driven primarily by forces, often with thousands of personnel and related equipment. HA/DR operations are often shorter in duration, which may be one reason why they appear, on balance, less expensive than enduring presence (which we assumed was year-round).

Both overseas presence and HA/DR missions typically cost tens of millions of dollars. The bulk of exercises and security assistance are then in the hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars. On balance, given the way we scoped events, the United States could fund tens to hundreds of exercises or security assistance events for the cost of a single presence or HA/DR activity. For instance, according to our cost estimates, deploying one U.S. brigade overseas for one year costs nearly as much as security assistance in 2018 for the 100 states receiving the lowest levels of such assistance *combined*. Certainly, there are individual cases where the former category can exceed the costs of the latter.²³ In general, however, exercises and security assistance cost one or two orders of magnitude less than persistent overseas force presence and HA/DR.

²³ For instance, the approximately 350 personnel that constituted the multinational deterrence force in Macedonia in 1999 cost around \$10 million per year, while the most recent Balikatan exercise in USARPAC cost around \$20 million.

Using Evaluations and Costs to Support Decisionmaking

Our goal in this report has been to create the foundations of a decision-support tool to inform campaign planning. Again, it is important to underline that *our findings cannot tell decisionmakers or planners what to do in any given situation; specific decisions will depend on circumstances and the weighting that decisionmakers place on achieving one strategic objective relative to others*. Our findings can, however, provide a baseline set of expectations about what is relatively more or less likely to occur in most circumstances, and these baseline expectations can inform a very wide range of decisions and plans. This chapter provides examples of how the findings in this report can be applied to several policy questions and planning requirements.

Table 7.1 summarizes the results of our evaluations of campaigning outcomes. For decisionmakers and planners, outcomes can be understood in terms of either columns or rows. That is, a decisionmaker or planner could start with the desired outcome (column) to see which tools might contribute to that objective. Or they could start with a tool (row) and try to understand what the likely outcomes of that tool are. The following two sections examine applications focused on columns and rows, respectively. A third section incorporates cost considerations. The chapter then concludes with recommendations on how the Army might build on the concepts in this report in future evaluations and planning efforts.

Working from Strategic Outcomes Backward

Strategic planning typically begins with establishing an objective (end) to be reached, then working backward to understand what resources (means) are needed and how they should be implemented (ways) to achieve that objective. This section examines two of our three major categories of objectives—deterrence and access and cooperation—to understand how our findings might inform planning toward those objectives. The third set of outcomes—stabilization and resilience—is considered as a set of risk factors complicating the other two.

TABLE 7.1
Overview of Campaigning Outcomes

Campaigning Tool	Armed Conflict	Military Intimidation	Proxy Wars	Economic Coercion	Military Agreements	Materiel Transfers	Military Trainees	Public Opinion	UNGA Security Votes	Terrorism	Civil War	Human Rights Violation
Overseas forces												
Defense treaty												
Military agreement												
Local contracting												
Multilateral exercises												
Materiel transfers												
HA/DR												

NOTE: The color and direction of the arrows indicate favorable (green and upward arrows) or unfavorable (red and downward arrows) relationships between campaigning tools and a given objective. Shading indicates the degree of confidence that we have in a specific finding, with darker shading indicating more confidence. Half-circles, two-way arrows, and bi-color circles indicate outcomes, relationships, and degrees of confidence that appear in only certain implementation environments. Whole gray circles represent a lack of significant findings, while gray circles with a slash represent relationships that we could not test (either because they were true by definition or we lacked appropriate data or models).

Deterrence

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has pulled back most of the forces it had previously based overseas to U.S. soil. The major exception, the Middle East, was closely tied to the Global War on Terror, and the force there has since been drawn down to a fraction of its former size, with more reductions anticipated. The heavy concentration of U.S. force posture in the United States has led decisionmakers to seek alternative concepts for deterring aggression, such as Dynamic Force Employment. The results of this analysis unfortunately suggest the limitations of such approaches. The primary two military *levers* through which the United States can maintain deterrence appear to be the persistent presence of forces overseas and treaty alliances. Lesser agreements and multilateral military exercises showed some indications of having deterrent value, but the results tended to be less robust across implementation environments and involved higher degrees of uncertainty, at least in the short term. Other potential campaigning tools—including materiel transfers and local contracting—appeared to have even worse (i.e., escalatory) outcomes.

These findings do not mean that tools short of force deployments and treaty alliances are worthless. Our findings for military exercises, for instance, suggest that their primary value might be longer term, developed through building ally or partner capabilities and the ability to interoperate with U.S. forces. At a minimum, however, our results suggest that the deterrent value of most lesser forms of U.S. commitment is subtle or longer term.

Similarly, small increases in persistent military presence also appear to make, at most, subtle contributions to deterrence. While our findings for small-scale force deployments were suggestive, the results were not statistically significant until higher thresholds of forces were reached. In our models, the threshold was 5,000 forces, or approximately one brigade with sustainment and some enablers. The exact number of forces required to deter and their location will of course depend on circumstances. Our results, however, suggest that symbolic deployments of tripwire forces by themselves probably contribute little unless they are supported by substantial nearby capabilities.

Planners should not leap from these conclusions to assume that forces should be deployed even in high-priority countries that the United States seeks to protect. If a forward deployment is militarily indefensible (e.g., it would be highly vulnerable to adversary targeting or impossible to sustain in wartime), then its sole deterrent value would be as a symbol of U.S. commitment, which may be insufficient to deter. Decisions would also need to be made about the exact size, capabilities, and location of these forces. Although our research suggests that larger forces tend to be more effective deterrents, the vulnerability of forces to modern-day reconnaissance-strike complexes suggests that forward deployments will need to be able to disperse rapidly. A decision-support tool such as the one suggested in this report is precisely that—a support to decisionmaking, not a substitute for it.

Access and Cooperation

In contrast to the pullback in U.S. overseas forces seen since the end of the Cold War, U.S. and allied senior leaders have emphasized the importance of improved cooperation and have more systematically planned for it. Overall, our findings provide support for the United States' continued focus on improving partner access and cooperation through the use of campaigning instruments. Our findings suggest that longer-term investments in campaigning instruments short of force deployments and treaty alliances, such as multilateral exercises and local contracting, can help improve access and cooperation. Overseas forces and mutual defense treaties can help set the conditions for these ongoing activities.

We caution, however, that the United States faces constraints in how much it will be able to accomplish with campaigning instruments. This is notable along three dimensions. First, we find that in implementation environments in which the goals of the United States are less likely to fully align with those of its partners, the correlation between U.S. activities and its preferred outcomes is lower. This can be seen in the apparent lower level of U.S. success in using campaigning instruments to secure new military agreements with nonallies (and post-Cold War), compared with its success rate during the Cold War or with allies. Second, and in keeping with our results for deterrence and partner stability and resilience, materiel transfers may have counterproductive effects on partner support for the United States in lower-income and nonallied partners. Third, our analysis was not able to test the extent to which U.S. OAI contribute to access in wartime, which might systematically differ from access under steady-state conditions.

Working from Campaigning Tools Forward

Although strategic planning generally works backward from objectives to resources and modes of implementation, military planners at the working level are typically given a particular set of military tools and asked to use them in the best way possible to achieve U.S. strategic objectives. A planner in a geographic combatant command, for instance, might be asked to develop plans for a multilateral military exercise. In this section, we look at how the findings in this report might be applied to three U.S. military campaigning tools: overseas force deployments, bi- or multi-lateral military exercises, and materiel transfers.

Overseas Forces and Multilateral Military Exercises

As discussed above, overseas forces appear to be one of the best deterrents available to decisionmakers. Multilateral military exercises also seem to have some deterrent value. But in planning for overseas deployments and exercises, planners should incorporate ways of mitigating two risks associated with such campaigning tools.

First, our findings suggest an immediate spike in militarized disputes immediately following a new U.S. deployment. Such increased hostile activity might be a form of competitor or adversary signal-sending—just as the United States is attempting to signal its intentions

through such deployments, hostile actors will often want to signal their own resolve. Alternatively, these spikes in militarized disputes might be a form of cost-imposition. Adversaries might attempt to militarily intimidate host nations, hoping that threatening military measures will undermine U.S. allies' or partners' willingness to host U.S. forces. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Euromissile Crisis of the early 1980s involved precisely such dynamics. Finally, this spike in militarized disputes might be the result of simple friction as both sides attempt to adapt to a new strategic equilibrium. Regardless of the reasons, U.S. military planners should anticipate such a short-term increase in hostile activity, including increased non-military gray-zone measures. If host nations are likely to be vulnerable to such measures, the United States should undertake efforts to shield the host nation or increase its resilience to hostile measures (e.g., through increased military and nonmilitary aid). Alternatively, if the government of the potential host nation is highly vulnerable to such measures (e.g., because of a fragile governing coalition), the United States should consider basing options in nearby countries that might not be as militarily advantageous but would be less vulnerable.

Second, our findings suggest both the persistent presence of U.S. forces and multilateral military exercises have been associated with some increased risk of terrorism in the host country and increased abuses of human rights by government security forces, particularly during the Cold War and in low-income countries. Our results suggest that military planners should incorporate these risks into their planning and propose mitigation measures. Retired admiral Dennis Blair, for instance, has suggested several measures that the U.S. military might incorporate into its engagements with partner militaries in nondemocratic countries or countries with records of human rights abuses. These measures include advance preparations to help U.S. military leaders understand the political context and U.S. political objectives in the country, the preparation of talking points for use with partner military personnel and public affairs strategies for the broader public that highlight U.S. commitment to human rights, and (where relevant) the incorporation of these concerns into activities that the U.S. military undertakes with partners.¹ Mitigation measures for terrorism might include not only force protection measures but also measures designed to minimize popular backlash and increase public understanding of U.S. objectives.

Materiel Transfers

Materiel transfers appear to be useful tools for improving cooperation and access, and they might build partner capabilities in the longer term (although we were unable to test the conditions under which such improvements were probable or the likely extent and impact of such capability improvements). In the short term, however, they are associated with a variety of unfavorable outcomes. At the international level, they are associated with a short-term increase in hostile measures ranging from direct armed conflict through military intimidat-

¹ Dennis C. Blair, *Military Engagement: Influencing Armed Forces Worldwide to Support Democratic Transitions*, Brookings Institution Press, 2013.

tion and other gray-zone acts of aggression. At the domestic level, in low-income countries, they are similarly associated with a range of unfavorable outcomes, including increased risk of civil conflict and human rights abuses by government security forces. These risks should be incorporated into plans for such transfers.

In terms of deterrence, risks of provocation might be mitigated by the types of materiel transfers the U.S. provides, other signals that the United States sends to potential adversaries, and efforts to build allies' or partners' resilience to hostile measures. First, competitors typically do not react to all materiel transfers the same way. Some capabilities (such as long-range precision fires) are particularly threatening to many competitors, while others are not. In the Indo-Pacific region, for instance, the United States is helping several allies and partners to build capabilities for domain awareness (e.g., coastal radar systems or tethered aerostat radar systems) and law enforcement that provide considerable benefit to U.S. allies and partners while not directly threatening competitors. If the United States' primary goal is access and cooperation, the latter types of materiel transfers might achieve U.S. goals while reducing risks of provocation. Second, the United States might coordinate materiel transfers with a wider range of activities intended to either reduce risks of provocation or enhance deterrence. If the United States fears materiel transfers might trigger military intimidation by a competitor, it might step up exercises or otherwise signal its commitment. Alternatively, if planners fear unnecessarily provoking a competitor, they might combine materiel transfers with a set of measures intended to reduce tensions (such as confidence- and security-building measures). Finally, if the United States' primary concern is a competitor's use of political subversion or similar hostile measures below the threshold of armed conflict, it might undertake activities to build the resilience of allies or partners.

Similarly, measures to mitigate risks of domestic destabilization might be incorporated into U.S. planning for materiel transfers to lower-income states. Again, mitigation measures could take the form of adjustments to the types of materiel being transferred, the messaging that accompanies those transfers, and the use of other programs to reduce the risks of unfavorable outcomes. Just as some platforms, systems, and weapons are more likely to antagonize international competitors than others, some are more likely to either be misused domestically or to generate fear among domestic populations that have historically had reason to fear their governments. The transfer of attack helicopters, for instance, has more potential for misuse than the transfer of coastal radar systems or coast guard cutters. The messaging that accompanies materiel transfers is also important. In the past, some partners have taken U.S. assistance as an indication of unconditional support, despite requirements in U.S. law (such as Leahy requirements or the so-called coup provision) and policy guidance that clearly indicate otherwise. Finally, programming that emphasizes the building of a professional military ethos, respect for human rights and the principle of civilian supremacy, and operations and tactics that minimize risk of harm to noncombatants can be core elements of a broader security sector assistance strategy rather than peripheral or add-on measures.

Incorporating Costs into Decisionmaking

There is no one-to-one relationship for evaluating how much a strategic objective is worth in terms of the financial cost of a campaigning instrument. That said, keeping in mind the ROM costs of each campaigning lever can help planners evaluate effective strategies. While overseas presence appears to be one of the more-effective instruments for deterring armed conflict, it is both financially costly (our analyses find that it costs more than \$100 million to support a brigade-sized enduring presence) and only partially effective as a deterrent. In implementation environments of particular importance to the United States, enduring presence may prove to be a cost-effective strategy—especially when coupled with other deterrent-focused activities, such as multilateral exercises to build interoperability with allies and partners.

In contrast, large-scale exercises and security assistance cases have a median cost of around \$2.5 million. Deploying one U.S. brigade overseas for one year costs nearly as much as security assistance in 2018 for the 100 states receiving the lowest levels of such assistance *combined*. Targeting such campaigning activities as exercises, assistance, local contracting, and materiel transfers toward solidifying access and cooperation provides opportunities for ongoing engagement with partners at a cost one to two orders of magnitude lower than enduring presence.

Finally, investing in the diplomatic infrastructure of defense and other agreements appears to contribute to stronger ties with allies and partners at minimal financial cost.

Recommendations

As discussed above, our primary intention for this research was to provide the beginnings of a decision-support tool for U.S. decisionmakers and planners. Our results constitute an analytic baseline about the likely outcomes and ROM costs for various campaigning instruments, but decisionmakers and planners will want to revise these baseline estimates upward or downward for a specific decision according to what they know about the circumstances affecting that decision.² Consequently, we do not make specific recommendations about which policies the United States should pursue in any given case. Instead, we offer two broad sets of recommendations, one on campaigning instruments in general terms and a second on the process of decisionmaking and evaluation for campaigning.

² For decisions about the long-term future, such as whether to invest in military bases or a given force structure, very little is known about the circumstances that will ultimately influence outcomes ten years or more later, making these analytic baselines a particularly useful tool.

Recommendations: Campaigning Instruments

Although context is important for each decision, we observed several patterns between campaigning instruments and their typical outcomes. These patterns can be used as rules of thumb when facing uncertainty and are detailed individually below.

Employ U.S. Forces Selectively for the Highest-Priority Targets

Short of treaty alliances, there appear to be relatively few military tools that the United States possesses that reliably deter other than the persistent presence of U.S. forces. Moreover, our analysis provided no reliable indications that forces at very low levels (like the current Marine Rotational Force–Darwin in Australia) by themselves provide an effective deterrent. These results stand in stark contrast to recent concepts, such as Dynamic Force Employment, that stress unpredictability and the ability to deploy from the United States quickly over enduring overseas presence. Unfortunately, positioning U.S. forces overseas is expensive—more expensive by nearly two orders of magnitude than a typical security assistance package for a U.S. ally or partner. These costs suggest that the United States must use such deployments sparingly. Planners would also need to ensure the survivability of such forces if they are located relatively close to potential adversaries. On the other hand, for the highest-priority cases, there are few indications that most other tools will suffice.

Commit to Multilateral Military Exercises as a Long-Term Investment

Our analysis suggests that multilateral military exercises have some deterrent potential. These apparent effects, however, became greater in magnitude over time. This finding suggests that exercises' primary value does not lie in their immediate utility as a signal but rather as a means of slowly building capabilities, both in U.S. allies or partners and in the United States itself.

Use Campaigning to Promote Cooperation While Being Aware of Its Limits

The findings in Chapter 4 suggest that most U.S. campaigning tools are effective in promoting military-to-military cooperation under steady-state conditions. However, we were not able to test their ability to contribute to contingency access, and prior RAND research suggests that there may be little correlation between military access in peacetime conditions and access during conflict.³ Moreover, our research suggests that some forms of campaigning might have negative repercussions in low-income countries for public perceptions of the United States. While campaigning offers an important tool for achieving U.S. goals for cooperation and access, it is important not to exaggerate these benefits.

Use Risk Assessments and Plan Risk Mitigations for Low-Income Countries

Chapter 5 painted a stark contrast between high- and low-income states. Among lower-income states, most campaigning instruments appear to have unfavorable consequences for

³ Pettyjohn and Kavanagh, 2016.

these countries' stability and resilience. Decisionmakers might decide that the use of these tools is still warranted by other U.S. strategic objectives. For these cases, DoD offices and military commands should use risk assessments to anticipate potential second-order consequences of U.S. actions and should plan appropriate mitigations.

Recommendations: Process of Decisionmaking and Evaluation for Campaigning

As indicated in Chapter 2, the analysis in this report was not comprehensive—nor is it likely possible to provide a comprehensive analysis of campaigning in any single report. Hopefully, however, the analysis we have presented can be used as the groundwork for an expanded and refined decision-support tool for DoD offices and military commands. There are several steps DoD might take to build on this and similar work, as detailed below:

Improve Data Collection, Knowledge Management, and Analytic Capabilities

Elements of DoD typically collect data to support their own decisionmaking or to comply with regulatory requirements (or both). Consequently, data are often not collected, stored, or disseminated in ways that benefit analysis in service of the broader DoD enterprise. Interviews and declassified archival records from previous U.S. presidential administrations suggest that decisionmakers and planners at all levels struggle to understand the implications of their campaigning decisions in the competition space.⁴ They would clearly benefit from data that were systematically collected and available to inform such decisions and from additional analytic capabilities that could help to make sense of these data.

The analysis in this report covered a range of campaigning instruments and outcomes across multiple U.S. strategic objectives. But there were many other areas that we were not able to analyze because of data constraints. On the inputs side of the ledger, high-quality, time-series data on security cooperation (including training, military-to-military engagements, and so on) are often either not available or are collected and organized in a way that supports accounting rather than analytic objectives. On the outcomes side of the ledger, we lack good data on capability building, in particular. The cost analysis was even more limited by the lack of historical data. The analysis in this report could be broadened in scope (to include more tools and outcomes) and depth (for instance, extending down to the level of specific programs), but improved data will be a prerequisite for many of these types of analyses.

Adapt Planning Processes to Incorporate Evaluations

Because circumstances are never precisely the same, every decision is in some sense unique. Evaluations such as the ones that we provide in this report therefore cannot tell decisionmakers or planners what to do in a given instance. But where outcomes of U.S. campaigning tools have, on average, been poor, this pattern should provide a warning. In these cases, armed

⁴ See Watts et al., 2022.

with all the information that the U.S. government can offer and using their professional judgment, historically other U.S. decisionmakers and planners have made choices that, on balance, turned out poorly for the United States.

Evaluations such as the ones in this report might be incorporated into the decisionmaking processes of DoD offices and military commands. Where outcomes have historically been poor, a decision to move forward with a given campaign instrument might be subject to additional scrutiny. For example, a decision might be contingent on additional staff work from either military commands or the intelligence community that investigate the relevant risks and provide an in-depth analysis of the extent of those risks and potential mitigation strategies.

Conclusion

The analysis in this report suggests that many broad patterns of campaigning outcomes are detectable through rigorous analysis. These patterns suggest a complex set of trade-offs between different U.S. objectives, as well as trade-offs between efficacy and cost. Analyses such as this one can help decisionmakers and planners navigate the complexities of campaigning beneath the threshold of armed conflict.

Abbreviations

ABCT	armored brigade combat team
ASCC	Army Service Component Command
BAH	basic allowance for housing
CAB	combat aviation brigade
COLA	cost-of-living adjustment
CONUS	continental United States
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DoDD	Department of Defense Directive
eFP	Enhanced Forward Presence
EUCOM	U.S. European Command
FCM	FORCES Cost Model
FORCES	Force and Organization Cost Estimating System
FY	fiscal year
HA/DR	humanitarian assistance and disaster relief
IBCT	infantry brigade combat team
IMET	International Military Education and Training (program)
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
KS	Keris Strike
MFO	Multilateral Force and Observer
MID	militarized interstate dispute
NDS	National Defense Strategy
OAI	operations, activities, and investments
OPTEMPO	operational tempo
OVW	Operation Vigilant Warrior
PCS	permanent-change-of-station
POM	program objectives memorandum
PPBE	planning, programming, budgeting, and execution
PRV	plant replacement value
R&M	restoration and modernization
ROM	rough-order-of-magnitude
RSOI	reception, staging, and onward integration
SBCT	Stryker brigade combat team
SCM	synthetic control method
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

SSCI	Significant Security Cooperation Initiative
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
USAREUR-AF	U.S. Army Europe and Africa
USARPAC	U.S. Army Pacific
YA	Yudh Abhyas
YS	Yama Sakura

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In strategic competition against competitors that can outspend the United States (either individually or collectively), it is important to understand not only the efficacy but also the efficiency of campaigning measures. Unfortunately, neither the efficacy nor efficiency of overseas military campaigning measures beneath the threshold of armed conflict is well understood. In this report, the authors seek to address this gap and provide the foundations of a strategic evaluation and decision-support tool to inform U.S. Department of Defense campaign planning—more specifically, to assist in choosing overseas operations, activities, and investments in a logically linked and sequenced plan in support of specific strategy-aligned objectives.

The authors break down campaigns into three sets of factors: overseas campaigning instruments (or inputs), campaigning outcomes, and contextual factors that are likely to influence the effectiveness of campaigning instruments. To uncover broad patterns among interactions between the United States and its competitors and allies and partners, the authors conducted statistical analyses on whether U.S. strategic objectives have been more or less likely to be achieved when the United States employs a given overseas campaigning tool. The authors then provide rough-order-of-magnitude cost estimates for each overseas campaigning tool.

The results suggest stark trade-offs between different U.S. strategic objectives and between the likelihood of realizing U.S. objectives and the need to operate within budget constraints. These trade-offs have important policy implications.

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