



# Anticipating Adversary Military Interventions

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



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Where, how, and how often have U.S. adversaries intervened militarily since 1946?
- What factors drive U.S. adversaries to use military forces abroad?



## KEY FINDINGS

Concern over adversary interventions should be tempered—for now

- Overall, adversary military interventions, in number and in scale, remain far below the levels that the United States had to contend with during the Cold War.
- Several factors could contribute to a shift toward substantially more-aggressive and larger-scale interventions, including intensification of U.S. rivalries with key adversaries (e.g., Russia or China), adversary perceptions of the threats posed by U.S. actions, or dramatic domestic changes in China or Iran that alter how these adversaries think about and use their military forces.

Intervention signposts should be prioritized

- Adversaries are most likely to intervene in response to threats to interests in their home regions, including through military interventions involving combat.
- Analysts may benefit most from watching for evidence of a shift in the regional balance of power or

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change to the status quo that threatens the adversary's influence or national status.

Of the three adversaries considered, China represents the greatest potential risk to U.S. interests if geopolitical dynamics or shifting national interests were to change its military intervention policy

- China has greater resources and, in some areas, capabilities than Russia or any other U.S. adversary. It also has an expanding set of strategic interests and ambitions outside its home region.
- There are many scenarios that could lead to an increased frequency of Chinese military interventions. Such a shift in Chinese decisionmaking could occur following a sharp deterioration in U.S.-Chinese relations, which would place the two states on opposite sides of an intense militarized rivalry.

