



U.S. Presence and the Incidence of Conflict

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Preface

This report documents the findings of the project “Impact of U.S. Military Posture and Operations on the Incidence of Conflict.” For this study, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence (G-2), United States Army, asked RAND to empirically assess how U.S. forward presence affects state and nonstate actor decisions to engage in conflict. The question is critical to informing ongoing debates about the effects of forward U.S. presence on conflict around the globe, as well as debates about the size of forward U.S. presence needed in Europe and in East Asia.

We defined the key terms, developed hypotheses on the relationship between U.S. forward presence and incidence of conflict, and then, having constructed the necessary databases, tested our hypotheses using statistical analysis. We also drew out the implications of our findings for contemporary debates about U.S. forward presence. The findings of this report should be of interest to those in the U.S. defense community with an interest in long-term planning and strategy for deployment of U.S. forces.

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Summary

There is an ongoing debate about the effect of U.S. presence on conflict around the globe. In one view, U.S. forward presence is stabilizing. It helps to deter adversaries, restrain U.S. partners from adopting provocative policies, and make it easier for the United States to achieve its aims without the use of force. Proponents of this view advocate maintaining and expanding U.S. presence abroad. Another view holds that U.S. forward presence makes conflict more likely. It tends to provoke adversaries and encourage allies to adopt more reckless policies, and it makes the use of force by the United States more likely. Proponents of this view advocate a strategy of restraint or offshore balancing, arguing that forward troop presence and the number of bases should be reduced and that the United States should shift toward naval forces, long-range strike capabilities, and ground forces based in the homeland to defend U.S. interests. Questions about how forward U.S. presence affects the likelihood of conflict also underlie strategy debates about the U.S. pivot to Asia, changes to NATO posture in Europe, and a larger U.S. presence in the Middle East as part of the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Debates about strategy and the unintended effects that a larger U.S. presence may have on interstate and intrastate conflict often go hand in hand with debates about the costs of overseas installations to enable U.S. troop presence, and the extent to which host nations support U.S. presence.

In spite of the centrality of the effect of U.S. forward presence to debates about grand strategy and military posture, there is little empirical analysis to help adjudicate between the conflicting claims. For planning purposes, the Army, along with other services, has a critical interest in understanding the role that U.S. presence has on conflict. Consequently, the Army asked RAND Arroyo Center for analytical assistance in assessing the effect that U.S. forward presence has on state and nonstate actor decisions to engage in conflict. We proceeded by first defining the key terms, developing hypotheses on the relationship between U.S. forward presence and incidence of conflict, and then, having constructed the necessary databases, testing the hypotheses using statistical analysis.

U.S. Presence over Time

Policymakers and practitioners frequently refer to “U.S. presence” but rarely define the concept. Narrowly defined, U.S. presence is limited to forward-deployed U.S. military personnel. However, such a conceptualization misses the multitude of other instruments that the United States uses to project presence abroad. Although U.S. military personnel represent one of the most powerful and flexible components of presence, U.S. presence is also felt through U.S. basing, activities, and engagement with partners. In this report, we define *U.S. presence* as “the forces, footprint, activities, and agreements that the United States uses to project power and influence abroad.”

To examine U.S. presence over time, we collected information on

- Forces: the size, characteristics, and location of U.S. military personnel
- Footprint: the location of facilities and infrastructure that the United States either controls (e.g., major operating bases) or has access to (e.g., cooperative security locations)
- Activities: U.S. activities, such as security cooperation activities (e.g., training conducted for partner nation military personnel or joint exercises with allies) and U.S. military assistance spending
- Agreements: alliances, other formal treaties and agreements, access agreements (that provide U.S. forces access to another country’s territory), and other informal agreements and memoranda of understanding that the United States has with partner nations.

Overall, trends in U.S. presence follow U.S. strategic priorities. U.S. presence has been concentrated in Europe, East and Southeast Asia, and, more recently, in the Middle East. Historically, there has been a fairly high correlation across the different components of presence. As such, although we examine the relationship between conflict and U.S. activities and agreements, we focus our attention most intensively on the effect of the size and location of U.S. troop presence on the incidence of conflict. Our analysis of the effect of U.S. presence on intrastate conflict also pays particular attention to the effects of military assistance, which is hypothesized to have significant effects on domestic political dynamics in states at risk of intrastate conflict.

Over time, the United States has been most likely to have large concentrations of troops in the territory of close partners and allies, including those facing an internal or external threat. The United States has tended to deploy smaller forces for shorter duration to non-allied partners facing internal or external threats. The United States has been most likely to have large forces in countries at lower risk for interstate and intrastate conflict. These trends may reflect two possible explanations that are important to keep in mind when assessing the effects of U.S. presence on the incidence of conflict. First, the United States may choose to deploy troops to countries where conflict is less prevalent, as this is easier, safer, and less-resource intensive than deploying troops to

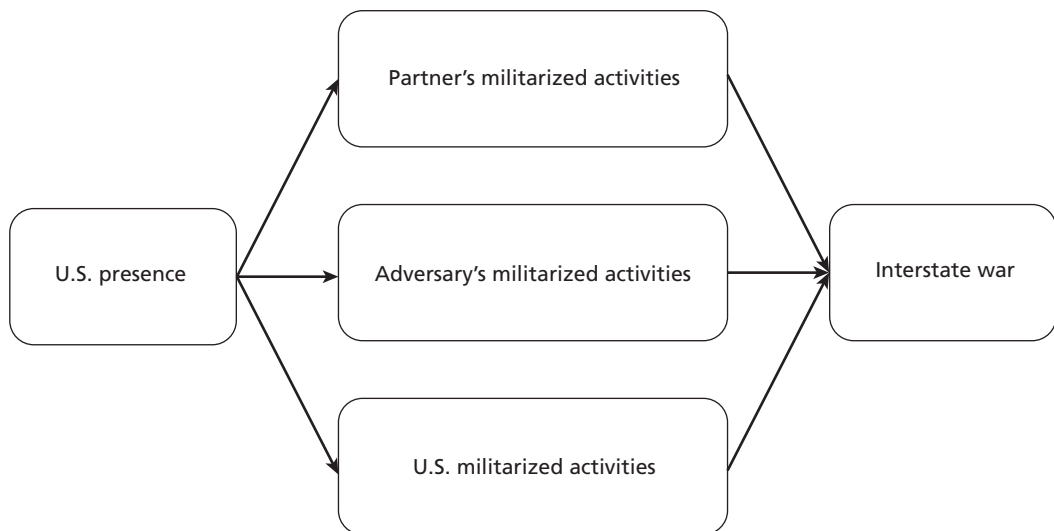
countries where conflict is more prevalent. Second, these less conflict-prone areas to which U.S. troops are deployed may be safer because of the presence of U.S. forces.

U.S. Presence Is Associated with Less Interstate War but More Militarized Activity

The United States deploys forces overseas both to respond to crises and as a more permanent forward presence, in part, to reduce the risk of interstate conflict. Policy-makers generally contend that the overall strength of the U.S. military, formal treaty commitments with key allies, and local U.S. presence in key regions all serve to deter attacks against U.S. allies and partners, and that the United States can influence other states' foreign policy choices through a range of political and economic incentives and participation in multinational coalitions. However, while these assumptions are widely accepted within the policy community, there are few careful analyses that empirically investigate whether or not there is systematic evidence for these claims.

U.S. presence can affect the likelihood of interstate conflict through multiple paths. U.S. presence can affect partners' and adversaries' incentives to pursue militarized activities, such as military threats, troop mobilizations, or unilateral attacks. The interaction of these actions and reactions, in turn, affect the likelihood that these activities lead interstate war (Figure S.1).

Figure S.1
Pathways Linking U.S. Presence, Militarized Activities, and Interstate War



To assess the relationship between U.S. presence and the likelihood of interstate conflict, we

- conducted a literature review to identify pathways by which U.S. troop presence in particular may affect the likelihood of interstate conflict
- created a dataset with which to assess the multiple and often competing effects ascribed to U.S. presence
- empirically assessed the relationship between U.S. troop presence and the incidence of interstate conflict through a statistical analysis of U.S. forward presence between 1951 and 2007.

Table S.1 summarizes the hypotheses we identified linking U.S. presence, especially troop presence, to potential adversaries', partners', and the United States' decisions to engage in militarized activities. Previous studies have theorized or found evidence that U.S. presence can both increase and decrease actors' likelihood of engaging in conflict.

We found that, on average, U.S. troop presence was associated with a *higher* likelihood of low-intensity interstate conflict (e.g., displays of military force and threats to use military force) but a *lower* likelihood of interstate war. These average relationships varied somewhat depending on where U.S. troops were located and countries' strategic relationships with the United States. Nearby U.S. troop presence was associated with allies initiating fewer interstate disputes of all kinds. Conversely, a large nearby U.S. troop presence was associated with potential U.S. adversaries initiating more low- and high-intensity conflicts.

Our statistical models show that U.S. troop presence was also associated with a higher likelihood that the United States would initiate low- and high-intensity conflict. Theoretically, this increased risk could follow from several mechanisms. Increased U.S. troop presence could lead to an expansion of U.S. interests in the region or a lower cost of using force. Alternatively, this increased risk of conflict could reflect the strategic

Table S.1
Hypotheses on the Effect of U.S. Presence on Actors' Incentives to Initiate Interstate Conflict

Actor	Decreases Likelihood of Conflict	Increases Likelihood of Conflict
Potential adversary	• Deterred	• Threatened • Emboldened by U.S. partner underinvestment
U.S. partner	• Reassured • United States gains leverage to restrain	• Emboldened • United States loses leverage to restrain
United States	• Enhanced ability to achieve aims without conflict • Partners gain influence to restrain	• Security concerns expand • Lower cost to using force

deployment of U.S. forces near states with which the United States expects to engage in conflict. In 1998, for example, the United States moved forces to Europe in preparation for the NATO bombing campaigns against Yugoslavia.

While these findings are statistically significant and robust, application of these findings to specific cases, and to U.S. policy, should be made cautiously. Our statistical results represent average associations between U.S. troop presence and conflict behavior, and the net effect of U.S. forward presence. However, in specific cases, some effects may prove stronger or weaker, resulting in diverging effects that are idiosyncratic to specific contexts or state pairs. Moreover, this analysis considers conflict behavior only from 1951 to 2007, a period in which the United States consistently maintained an active role in the international community and a large troop presence in areas that are strategically vital to U.S. interests. This context therefore bounds the scope of our analysis.

In spite of these limitations, our analysis suggests several implications that can inform ongoing policy debates. First, the statistical results suggest that, on average, U.S. forward troop presence advances a primary U.S. national security goal: deterring higher-intensity conflict and wars. Second, this benefit may come with a trade-off, potentially making lower-intensity disputes more likely. The prevalence of such disputes could, in the longer term, have other consequences for U.S. security, such as higher defense spending by adversaries, with potential follow-on effects for higher U.S. defense spending as well. Third, our models suggest that the deterrent effects noted above are associated with large numbers of U.S. troops. While outside the scope of the present study, the possible deterrent effect of smaller tripwire deployments or threshold effects should be explored in further analysis. Finally, while nearby U.S. troops do appear to make interstate wars less likely, so too may a number of other factors. Our analysis has focused on isolating the effects of U.S. forward troop presence specifically. Any decision to invest greater resources in forward troop presence as a means of war prevention would need to consider the effectiveness and costs relative to alternative policy tools.

The Association Between U.S. Presence and Intrastate Conflict Is Mixed

Historically, U.S. troop presence decisions were driven primarily by concerns about deterring interstate war. However, since the end of the Cold War, and especially in the post-9/11 era, U.S. forward presence has also increasingly focused on supporting partner states against internal challengers. U.S. basing decisions, forward troop deployments, and military assistance are particularly focused on addressing state fragility and instability in areas central to the Global War on Terror. Even during the period when U.S. policy was driven mostly by concerns about interstate wars, U.S. forward

presence may have had unintentional or secondary effects on the risk of intrastate conflict. Just as U.S. forward presence can affect states' interstate conflict behavior, U.S. presence can alter the strategic calculations of key domestic political actors, including incumbent regimes and opposition groups. Their behavior and interactions, in turn, can affect the likelihood of intrastate conflict. Cycles of dissent and government violence can escalate to full-scale civil war, just as low-level interstate disputes can escalate to war between states. Figure S.2 depicts this graphically.

To assess the relationship between U.S. presence and the likelihood of intrastate conflict, we

- conducted a literature review to identify pathways by which U.S. troop presence in particular may affect the likelihood of intrastate conflict
- created a dataset with which to assess the multiple and often competing causal pathways ascribed to U.S. presence
- empirically assessed the relationship between U.S. troop presence, U.S. military assistance, and the incidence of intrastate conflict between 1951 and 2007 through a statistical analysis.

Table S.2 summarizes the hypotheses we identified linking U.S. presence to intrastate conflict. U.S. presence may increase U.S. leverage on partner regimes to improve human rights practices or enable U.S. assistance with security sector reform. Potential opposition groups may be deterred from challenging incumbent regimes if the government's security apparatus is bolstered by U.S. assistance. Alternatively, U.S. presence may enhance security against external threats, which could allow the government to divert resources toward internal repression.

We found no consistent or robust association between U.S. forward troop presence and intrastate conflict. In contrast, overall U.S. military assistance is positively associated with an increased risk of multiple types of intrastate conflict, such as anti-

Figure S.2
Theoretical Pathways Linking U.S. Presence, Intrastate Violence, and Civil War

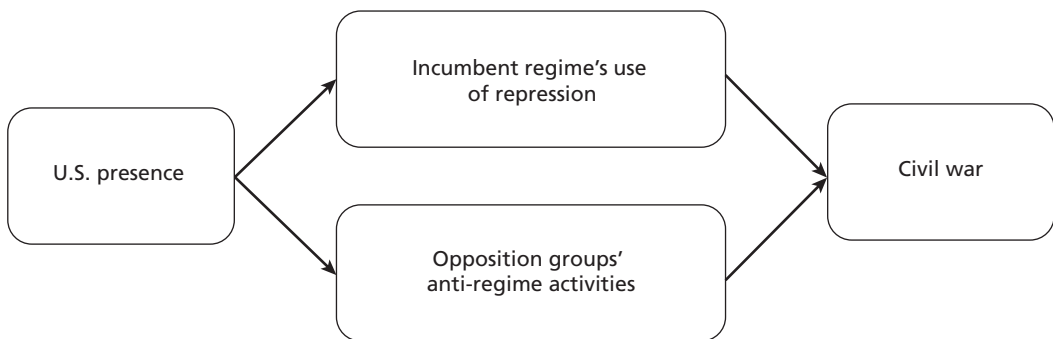


Table S.2
Hypothesized Effects of U.S. Forward Military Presence on Intrastate Conflict

Actor	Decreases Conflict	Increases Conflict
Incumbent regime	Restrained from violence by United States	Emboldened to act violently
Opposition group	Deterred from challenging U.S.-backed regime	Greater motivation to challenge U.S.-backed regime

regime activities and greater levels of state repression by incumbent governments. Importantly, the association between U.S. military assistance and intrastate conflict varies over time. In particular, although U.S. military assistance is associated with greater levels of state repression in both the Cold War and post–Cold War periods, U.S. military assistance is associated with increased levels of anti-regime activity and armed conflict only during the Cold War period.

It is important to point out that while our models detail statistically significant relationships between U.S. presence and intrastate conflict, application of these findings to specific cases, especially regarding U.S. military assistance, should be made cautiously. Like the strategic relationship between U.S. troop deployments and the risk of interstate conflict, U.S. military assistance is often funneled to states at an increased risk of conflict in an effort to stabilize partner regimes. As such, the positive association between U.S. military assistance and intrastate conflict may simply reflect that the United States provides aid to states with a preexisting risk of conflict. Alternatively, this positive association could imply that U.S. military assistance can increase the likelihood of conflict. Previous studies have suggested that the relationship is primarily associated with arms transfers, while the evidence is mixed or even positive (e.g., stabilizing) about the effects of education, training, and advising. Additional research about the types of regimes most susceptible to destabilization and the types of aid most likely to have counterproductive effects is warranted.

In spite of these limitations, the results of our statistical models offer insights and implications for U.S. policy. Importantly, although U.S. forward troop presence may prove destabilizing in some cases, on average, U.S. forward troop deployments do not appear to influence partner states' risk of intrastate conflict or their use of repression. In most cases, therefore, U.S. forces deployed to deter interstate conflict are unlikely to have unintended effects on the risk of intrastate war.

In contrast, in aggregate, U.S. military assistance to partner states is significantly associated with both state repression and an increased risk of intrastate conflict. While this relationship is not necessarily surprising, especially considering that U.S. military assistance is often funneled toward high-risk states, it does suggest that policymakers should be aware of potential adverse effects, especially relating to governments' willingness to turn U.S. military assistance on their populace, when deciding to continue aid to partner regimes.

Implications

Our findings offer some broad guidelines for U.S. planners and policymakers considering future forward presence decisions. The most basic guideline to inform such decisions is that a large U.S. regional troop presence can be an effective tool in deterring interstate war but is not likely to affect the likelihood of intrastate conflict. Moreover, U.S. forward-deployed forces intended to deter may also provoke more militarized activities short of war.

We applied our findings to near-term decisionmaking on U.S. forward presence in Europe and Asia. Russian assertiveness in Europe has led to a debate in the United States and within NATO states on the role of forward troop deployments in deterring Russia. The geographically exposed NATO states, most of all Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, are at the center of such debates. Our research indicates that basing forces in the Baltic states may increase the deterrent effect but also may lead to the initiation of more disputes and provocations by Russia against the Baltic states. On the other hand, additional U.S. forward-based capabilities in other parts of the European theater may achieve a deterrent effect in a manner that is less confrontational. In this sense, basing additional U.S. forces such that they are relatively far from Russian forces but close enough to respond rapidly to any evolving contingency in the Baltic states may balance the trade-offs involved with forward U.S. troop presence. The locations for such forward basing might be in western Poland, eastern Germany, or eastern Czech Republic.

Chinese claims to islands in the East and South China seas have increased concern among U.S. partners in Southeast and East Asia. The same principles as outlined regarding the European theater may apply to larger U.S. troop presence in the western Pacific—namely, a substantial increase in U.S. combat capabilities in the vicinity of the contested islands may help deter China from initiating war against the states that have claims on the contested islands. However, that same increase in U.S. presence closer to China may lead to the intensification of Chinese militarized activities and provocations toward the partner states that host U.S. forces. Increasing U.S. military assistance to Southeast Asian states in lieu of increased U.S. troop presence may exacerbate the underlying domestic tensions in these countries. As in the European context, deploying more U.S. forces to the region, but relatively far from China's shores, may decrease the potential for more militarized activities short of war.

Our findings are also applicable to U.S. policies in the Middle East. The United States has increased military assistance to partners, in part, to assure them of U.S. commitment to their security after the recent Iran nuclear deal. Increasing U.S. military assistance may strengthen and assure U.S. partners in the region, but it may do so at the cost of increased risk of repression and greater domestic instability among the recipient states.

Finally, we stress that the guidelines we draw above are general principles. Any planning for increasing U.S. troop presence to deter a specific potential adversary and

reassure a partner would need to explore the particular actor-specific strategic and domestic factors and the correlation of forces and capabilities.

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Introduction

Background and Objectives

There is an ongoing debate about the effect of forward U.S. presence on conflict around the globe. In one view, U.S. forward presence—which includes U.S. troops, bases, assistance, and activities such as military exercises with foreign nations—is stabilizing. It helps to deter adversaries, restrain U.S. partners from adopting provocative policies, and make it easier for the United States to achieve its aims without the use of force.¹ Proponents of this view advocate maintaining and expanding U.S. presence abroad. Another view holds that U.S. forward presence makes conflict more likely. It tends to provoke adversaries, encourage allies to adopt more reckless policies, and makes the use of force by the United States more likely. Proponents of this view advocate a strategy of restraint or offshore balancing, arguing that forward troop presence and the number of bases should be reduced and that the United States should shift toward naval forces, long-range strike capabilities, and ground forces based in the homeland to defend U.S. interests.² Some have argued, for example, that a smaller footprint in the Middle East would still show U.S. commitment and enable a buildup in the event of a new crisis, but would reduce negative consequences associated with a larger presence, such as transnational terrorism.³

Questions about how forward U.S. presence affects the likelihood of conflict also underlie strategy debates about the U.S. pivot to Asia, changes to NATO posture in Europe, and a larger U.S. presence in the Middle East as part of the fight against the

¹ Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, “Don’t Come Home, America: The Case Against Retrenchment,” *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 3, Winter 2012/2013.

² Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014, pp. 135–163; John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior U.S. Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 4, July/August 2016, pp. 73–74; John J. Mearsheimer, “Imperial by Design,” *The National Interest*, No. 111, 2011.

³ Joshua Rovner and Caitlin Talmadge, “Hegemony, Force Posture, and the Provision of Public Goods: The Once and Future Role of Outside Powers in Securing Persian Gulf Oil,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2014. On the association between foreign troop presence and terrorism, see Alex Braithwaite, “Transnational Terrorism as an Unintended Consequence of a Military Footprint,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2015, pp. 349–375.

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).⁴ For planning purposes, the Army, along with other services, has a critical interest in understanding the effect of U.S. presence on conflict. The emerging Army doctrine of strategic land power emphasizes proactively using land power to prevent conflict. However, questions remain: How do potential adversaries factor U.S. military presence into their strategies and operations? How much U.S. presence is sufficient to assure allies? More specifically, Russia's use of military force since 2014 has restarted the debate about the importance of increased Army troop presence in Europe to deter a Russian attack on NATO members and to reassure U.S. allies on NATO's eastern flank. North Korea's nuclear ambitions and China's claims in the South China Sea have led to debates about the importance of U.S. presence in Asia as well.

The share of Army forces that are forward-based has fluctuated greatly since the end of World War II. Since the end of the Cold War, the trend has been to base more forces in the continental United States. Few U.S. troops remain in Europe, and the post-Cold War drawdown in the western Pacific, while not as precipitous, also has diminished U.S. forward presence in Asia. In view of the changes in the international security environment, to what extent does the Army need to plan for a higher share of its forces to be forward-deployed?

In spite of the importance of these questions to debates about grand strategy and military posture, there has been little empirical analysis to help adjudicate between the conflicting claims.

Therefore, the Army asked RAND Arroyo Center for analytical assistance in assessing the effect that U.S. forward presence has on state and nonstate actor decisions to engage in conflict. As we note above, an active U.S. presence in a region may serve as a deterrent to conflict, as the United States demonstrates its willingness to act, or it may in some cases incite local groups and regional powers to act. Specifically, the project had the following objectives:

- Identify regional variation in U.S. military presence since the end of World War II.
- Assess the impact of U.S. military presence on the likelihood of regional conflict.
- Frame the results in terms of the Army's future operating environment.

This report presents the results of our research. It should help the community of defense practitioners—and especially Army planners thinking about long-term force

⁴ Decisions about U.S. overseas presence also depend on other considerations including the financial costs of overseas troops and installations and the extent to which host nations support U.S. presence; Michael J. Los-tumbo, 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*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-201-OSD, 2013.

structure and forward presence—better understand the future operational environment and the implications of potential shifts in the Army’s forward presence.

Research Approach and Structure of the Report

This project proceeded in the following fashion.

First, we defined key terms and then identified the patterns in U.S. military presence worldwide since the early 1950s. We assessed the full range of activities that may have a deterrent or reassurance value, from the stationing of combat forces to provision of military assistance. Chapter Two describes our findings on this task.

Second, relying on scholarly literature, we developed hypotheses for how U.S. military presence may influence regional conflict. We distinguished between impact on interstate and intrastate conflict. We took into account the fact that there are contradictory assertions regarding the impact of forward presence on conflict. Chapter Three presents our hypotheses regarding the effects of U.S. presence on interstate conflict, and Chapter Five presents our hypotheses on the effects of U.S. presence on intrastate conflict.⁵

Third, we put together empirical datasets that would allow us to assess the historical relationship between U.S. forward troop presence and the incidence of conflict. We relied on some existing datasets and we constructed other datasets as needed. Then, using statistical analytical tools, we tested the hypotheses, using the datasets we developed to assess the relationship between U.S. military posture and the incidence of conflict. Chapter Four describes our findings on interstate conflict, and Chapter Six presents our findings on intrastate conflict.

Fourth, we drew out the broad implications from our work for future decision-making and planning of forward stationing of U.S. forces. Our findings differed for interstate and intrastate conflict. We then extended our general principles on forward presence to the major areas of U.S. concern in the world and illustrated how our findings could be applied to decisions regarding increased U.S. presence in those regions. Chapter Seven discusses our findings and their implications for U.S. decisionmaking on forward presence.

Two appendixes provide the actual results of our statistical analyses. Appendix A presents the results of our interstate models, and Appendix B presents the results of our intrastate models.

The project started in October 2015 and finished in September 2016. Members of the project team provided periodic updates to Army leadership on the course of our research, with the final briefing presented in August 2016.

⁵ We also considered conducting research on how U.S. troop presence may affect the incidence of terrorism but determined that sufficiently reliable and comprehensive publicly available data on terrorism did not exist to support such an analysis.

Trends in U.S. Presence

In this chapter, we discuss the four components of presence: forces, footprint, activities, and agreements. We then explain the data we collected on each component of presence and the limitations of the existing data for our analysis. Using these data, we show trends in U.S. presence since the end of World War II. Finally, we present six distinct types of U.S. deployments that vary in size and location of U.S. deployment and in the risk of conflict.

What Is U.S. Presence?

Policymakers and practitioners frequently refer to “U.S. presence” but rarely define the concept. A review of literature on U.S. presence, its costs, and its benefits reveals that the concept, in fact, has many different definitions. The narrowest conceptualization limits U.S. presence to forward-deployed U.S. military personnel.¹ In particular, Joint Publication 1-02 defines “forward presence” as “maintaining forward-deployed or stationed forces overseas to demonstrate national resolve, strengthen alliances, dissuade potential adversaries, and enhance the ability to respond quickly to contingencies.”² This definition, however, excludes many other ways that the United States projects its influence abroad.

Stephen Watts and colleagues have proposed a broader definition of presence that includes forces, footprint (installations, bases, and military assistance), and activities (e.g., security cooperation, freedom of navigation).³ This more encompassing concep-

¹ David Ochmanek, *NATO's Future: Implications for U.S. Military Capabilities and Posture*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1162-AF, 2000; David Yost, “The Future of U.S. Overseas Presence,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, Summer 1995.

² Joint Publication 1-02, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, JP 1-02, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 2010 (amended through 15 February 2016).

³ Stephen Watts, Olga Oliker, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Caroline Baxter, Michael J. McNerney, Derek Eaton, Patrick Mills, Stephen M. Worman, and Richard R. Brennan, Jr., “Increasing the Effectiveness of Army Presence,” Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, unpublished manuscript.

tualization of U.S. presence captures the fact that U.S. presence abroad is felt not only through decisions about where to deploy U.S. personnel but also through U.S. basing, activities, and engagement with partners. In this report, we expand on this definition by also including agreements, which capture U.S. power projection through alliances and access agreements that enable U.S. activities on foreign soil. We define *U.S. presence* as “the forces, footprint, activities, and agreements that the United States uses to project power and influence abroad.” Below, we define and discuss each component and how they relate to each other.

Forces

We define *forces* as including U.S. military personnel, particularly those that are deployed overseas, but also those located within the United States. Forces are one of the more flexible tools for projecting presence that the United States has in its arsenal. Moving forces and equipment is much easier than building infrastructure at a new military installation or crafting a new formal agreement or treaty. Forces are also one of the most visible signs of presence, as U.S. personnel overseas can be more easily observed than can agreements or military assistance spending (which only the government may directly observe).⁴

Forces vary not just in their size but in a number of characteristics that may ultimately affect the incidence of conflict, including their location, capabilities, skills, and the purpose and length of their deployment.⁵ Military personnel may be located within specific countries, such as Army or Air Force personnel stationed at U.S. bases in Germany or Japan, or they may be located off-shore, such as Marines on an amphibious assault ship in the Gulf of Guinea, or Navy personnel on an aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf. U.S. forces are also deployed for a range of different tasks: Some are deployed for combat missions in ongoing conflicts, to conduct security cooperation activities, or as part of long-term forward presence in territory of key allies. Furthermore, each type of deployment may also involve different numbers and types of personnel, with different capabilities and skills. Finally, U.S. forces may deploy for various periods of time. Some deployments are temporary and short, others are temporary but are staffed by a rotating U.S. presence (e.g., forces that deploy for periods of 6 or 12 months and then return to their home base, replaced by new forces who remain for a 6- or 12-month period before being replaced, and so on), and others are permanent, occurring at U.S. bases located abroad in countries such as Germany, Italy, South Korea, and Japan.

⁴ Robert J. Art, “A Defensible Defense: America’s Grand Strategy After the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Spring 1991, pp. 5–53.

⁵ For example, Robert Art (1991, p. 35) argues that whether a presence is temporary or permanent directly influences the signal of commitment it sends to allies and adversaries, and ultimately, their conflict behavior.

Footprint

U.S. *footprint* includes U.S. facilities and infrastructure (particularly those located abroad), such as U.S. military installations, airfields, naval stations, observatories, and other physical assets, and forward-deployed or prepositioned equipment. U.S. footprint can act as a signal of U.S. commitment to a country or region and also enables the United States to project power and influence overseas. Military installations, including major operating bases and smaller cooperative security locations (CSLs), house and support U.S. troops and equipment that are forward-deployed. CSLs are installations at which U.S. forces are able to operate, but these installations are not owned by the United States. Instead, they exist as a sort of joint venture between U.S. forces and the host nation. CSLs can be valuable in providing access to areas where it might be politically difficult to set up U.S.-owned bases, such as in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. These bases also enable activities such as intelligence gathering and serve as the launching point for other operations. Assets such as airfields or naval stations provide support to ongoing operations and serve as “touch-down” points for mobile infrastructure, including air and naval craft.⁶ Similarly, forward-deployed equipment provides the United States the flexibility to deploy quickly in crisis situations.⁷

Activities

Cooperative U.S. military *activities* with other countries, such as security cooperation activities (e.g., training conducted for partner nation military personnel or joint exercises with allies) and U.S. military assistance, can extend U.S. presence and influence. Security cooperation allows the United States to directly influence the development of partner militaries and build up their capabilities to conduct independent operations.⁸ These activities can also strengthen U.S. influence indirectly by increasing the number of partner countries with whom the United States can operate militarily and the number of partners it can rely on for support in the case of a conflict.⁹

⁶ Patrick Mills, Adam R. Grissom, Jennifer Kavanagh, Leila Mahnad, and Stephen M. Worman, *A Cost Analysis of the U.S. Air Force Overseas Posture: Informing Strategic Choices*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-150-AF, 2013; Stacie L. Pettyjohn and Alan J. Vick, *The Posture Triangle: A New Framework for U.S. Air Force Global Presence*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-402-AF, 2013.

⁷ Barry R. Posen, “Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony,” *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2013, pp. 5–46; Ryan Henry, “Transforming the US Global Defense Posture,” *Naval War College Review*, Spring 2006.

⁸ See, for instance, Jefferson P. Marquis, Richard E. Darilek, Jasen Castillo, Cathryn Quantic Thurston, Anny Wong, Cynthia Huger, Andrea Mejia, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Brian Nichiporuk, and Brett D. Steele, *Assessing the Value of U.S. Army International Activities*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-329-A, 2006; Michael J. McNerney, Angela O’Mahony, Thomas S. Szayna, Derek Eaton, Caroline Baxter, Colin P. Clarke, Emma Cutrufello, Michael McGee, Heather Peterson, Leslie Adrienne Payne, and Calin Trenkov-Wermuth, *Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventive Tool*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-350-A, 2014.

⁹ Bradford Dismukes, *National Security Strategy and Forward Presence: Implications for Acquisition and Use of Forces*, Alexandria, Va.: Center for Naval Analysis, March 1994, p. 15; Richard L. Kugler, *Changes Ahead: Future*

Military assistance spending can help partners develop their independent military capabilities. This aid can free up resources for other purposes, including domestic repression, as discussed below. However, the United States can also attach conditions to this aid to shape the development of partner militaries and security sectors. If partners are dependent on U.S. aid, the United States can also use it as a bargaining chip to achieve its objectives, such as access for U.S. forces or to support the target state on a key issue.¹⁰

Agreements

Agreements, the final component of our definition of presence, include alliances, other formal treaties and agreements, access agreements (that provide U.S. forces access to another country's territory), and informal agreements and memoranda of understanding that the United States has with partner nations. Agreements create a network of relationships that is an additional source of influence the United States can employ to reduce the likelihood of conflict between states. Like prepositioned equipment, forward-deployed troops, and military infrastructure, standing access agreements provide the United States with the ability to quickly gain new or larger military access to partner nations in the event of a crisis.¹¹

Measuring U.S. Presence

To operationalize our definition of U.S. presence, we collected proxy variables and data sources for each component. The selection of proxy variables is important because it determines the extent to which we are able to accurately assess the association between U.S. presence and outcomes such as conflict. Table 2.1 lists the elements of presence discussed above and the data sources that we identified to measure each one.

Directions for the U.S. Overseas Military Presence, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-956-AF, 1998, p. 13.

¹⁰ Steven C. Poe, "Human Rights and the Allocation of US Military Assistance," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1991 pp. 205–216; Steven C. Poe and James Meernik, "US Military Aid in the 1980s: A Global Analysis," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1995, pp. 399–411. Our analysis focuses on military aspects of U.S. presence. However, given the possibility that economic assistance might also be diverted toward repression or affect a recipient's relationship with the United States in other ways, we also ran all of the models outlined in the following chapters with a separate economic assistance variable. The inclusion of this variable did not materially affect any of our findings, and the economic assistance variable itself was never statistically significant. For the sake of brevity, we do not present these additional results in this report. These results are available upon request to the authors.

¹¹ See, for example, Jennifer Kavanagh, *U.S. Security-Related Agreements in Force Since 1955: Introducing a New Database*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-736-AF, 2014; Stacie L. Pettyjohn and Jennifer Kavanagh, *Access Granted: Political Challenges to the U.S. Overseas Military Presence, 1945–2014*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1339-AF, 2016.

Table 2.1
Data Sources to Measure U.S. Presence

Component of Presence	Data Sources
Forces	• DMDC data on U.S. troops by country, 1950–present^a • RAND database of military interventions, 1898–2014^b
Footprint	• Location of U.S. bases, 2010–2014^c
Activities	• USAID Greenbook total military assistance data, 1946–2014^d
Agreements	• COW, Formal Alliances dataset, 1816–2012^e • RAND U.S. Security Treaties and Agreements Database, 1955–2012^f

^a Defense Manpower Data Center, *Historical Report—Military Only* (aggregated data 1950–current), Alexandria, Va., 2016.

^b Jennifer Kavanagh, Bryan Frederick, et al., “RAND U.S. Ground Intervention Database, v.1, 1898–2014,” unpublished RAND Corporation research.

^c 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 US Military Forces: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-201-OSD, 2013; David Vine, *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2015.

^d U.S. Agency for International Development, *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants, Obligations and Loan Authorizations, July 1, 1945–September 30, 2014*, Washington, D.C., 2015.

^e Correlates of War Project, 2017; Douglas M. Gibler, Formal Alliances (dataset, v4.1), Correlates of War Project and University of Alabama, 2014.

^f Jennifer Kavanagh, *A Database of U.S. Security Treaties and Agreements*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, TL-133-AF, 2014.

We use two sources to measure forces. First, Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) personnel data include the number of U.S. military personnel deployed in each country from 1950 to the present.¹² Second, the RAND U.S. Ground Intervention Database (RUGID) identifies the number and primary activity type of U.S. ground forces deployed abroad since 1898.¹³ These activity types include deterrence, combat, stability, security, counterinsurgency, advisory, and humanitarian assistance operations.

Both data sources have limitations. The most significant limitation of the DMDC data is how they assess the location of personnel. Specifically, the data are collected once per year, on September 30, and personnel are generally counted as being located at whatever their “home” installation is at the time. Ground personnel who are on

¹² Defense Manpower Data Center, *Historical Reports—Military Only* (aggregated data, 1950–current), Alexandria, Va., 2016.

¹³ Jennifer Kavanagh, Bryan Frederick, et al., “RAND U.S. Ground Intervention Database, v.1, 1898–2014,” unpublished RAND Corporation research.

rotational deployments are usually identified as located in their deployed location, but this is not always accurate. For example, during Operation Iraqi Freedom, many personnel were listed as in Dubai or Kuwait when they were actually deployed to Iraq. The treatment of Navy personnel is more problematic. These personnel are identified as located at their home port, even if they are actually at sea and located thousands of miles away. The result of these anomalies is that the actual number of personnel near specific countries may be higher or lower than indicated by the data. Unfortunately, this is a limitation of the currently available data.

The RUGID dataset designates the main activities of U.S. ground forces annually at the country level. It does not, however, identify the exact number of forces involved in each activity. In the analyses in Chapters Four and Six, therefore, we assign all troops in a given country as engaging in the primary activity type of U.S. ground forces identified in the RUGID dataset. This means, for example, that if most U.S. in-country troops are engaged in or supporting combat operations, all troops in that country will be coded as being engaged in this activity. Although this is a potential limitation of our approach, the RUGID data offer the most fine-grained way available to separate forces by activity type, which, as we discuss below, is an important part of our analysis.

For footprint, we used a snapshot of U.S. base locations in 2014. We were not able to obtain data sources for the location of prepositioned equipment, or historical information on in-country U.S. base locations.

For activities, we used data on total U.S. military assistance spending from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Greenbook over the years 1946 to 2014.¹⁴ This includes funds for training and education and counternarcotics programs and grants for weapon acquisition.

Finally, we used two sources for data on agreements. First, we identified U.S. treaty allies using the Correlates of War (COW) dataset.¹⁵ Second, the RAND U.S. Security Treaties and Agreements dataset, which covers the period 1955–2012, includes

¹⁴ U.S. Agency for International Development, “The Greenbook,” web page, 2013.

¹⁵ Correlates of War Project, website, 2017. We did not use an alternative, commonly used source for alliance data, the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) project, which considers many types of alliances. We chose to use the COW data because we were interested in operationalizing a particular type of alliance agreement, mutual defense pacts, by which a state provides a clear commitment to defend its ally in the event of an attack (Douglas M. Gibler, *International Military Alliances, 1648–2008*, Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2009); we did make some updates to the COW data. Our review of the data revealed a number of instances in which the data appeared to be incorrect. For example, the data do not include a U.S. alliance with Thailand, when one has been in place since 1954. The COW data also coded an ongoing alliance between Pakistan and the United States since 1959. While the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) arguably conferred such a relationship until the mid-1970s, certainly the United States does not consider itself to have such a commitment to Pakistan in the present. The COW data also missed the withdrawal of certain Latin American states from the Rio treaty (such as Mexico in 2004) and the more recent accession of states such as Croatia and Albania to the NATO alliance in 2009.

all security-related treaties and agreements registered in the U.S. State Department *Treaties in Force* publication, including agreements related to nuclear arms, military assistance, arms/weapon sales, basing, and access.¹⁶ Both datasets rely only on publicly available sources, which excludes some number of agreements and bases. While this is a drawback, the magnitude of such excluded data is not substantial enough to affect in a major fashion our statistical analysis of the relationship between U.S. presence and conflict. Part of the reason that U.S. security treaties and agreements and installations serve as elements of U.S. forward presence that project U.S. influence is that other states are aware of them, interpret them as a signal of U.S. commitment to a given country or status quo, and respond accordingly. If these signals are obscured because they are not made public, then they may be less valuable as tools of deterrence, even if they may enable targeted forms of U.S. power projection.

The remainder of this chapter considers trends in each of these components of U.S. presence over time. However, in subsequent chapters, we focus on isolating the effect of U.S. troop presence. We also control for the levels of U.S. military assistance and the presence of alliance agreements. We do not focus on modeling the effects of other aspects of presence, such as activities and basing. This is due in part to the limitations in data availability outlined above. Though this does place some limitations on our analysis, as we discuss in the next section, U.S. troop presence is likely to be highly correlated with these other aspects of presence. As a result, it would be difficult to separate out the effects of U.S. basing, in particular, from the presence of U.S. troops, even if historical data were available.

U.S. Presence over Time

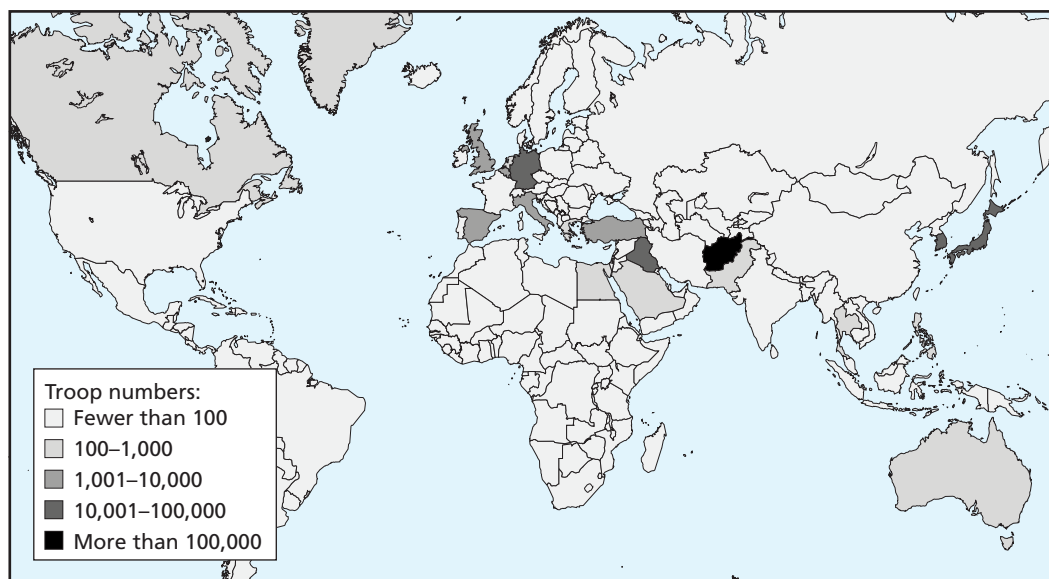
In this section, we discuss trends in U.S. forward presence over time, looking at forces, footprint, activities, and agreements. Figure 2.1 shows a 2011 snapshot of the location of forward-deployed U.S. troops. The map makes clear that the highest concentrations of forward-deployed U.S. forces are in Europe, the Middle East, and East and South-east Asia.

As Figure 2.2 illustrates, U.S. forces abroad have remained fairly constant over time, with some adjustments to reflect changes in U.S. priorities.¹⁷ Most notably, since the end of the Cold War, there has been an increase in the number of forces deployed in the Middle East and a decrease in the number of forces deployed in Europe, with the drawdown in Europe particularly noticeable because of the previous high level of deployments.

¹⁶ Jennifer Kavanagh, *A Database of U.S. Security Treaties and Agreements*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, TL-133-AF, 2014.

¹⁷ Because of data limitations, we cannot look at basing over time.

Figure 2.1
Snapshot of Forward-Deployed U.S. Forces (2011)



SOURCE: DMDC personnel data.

RAND RR1906-2.1

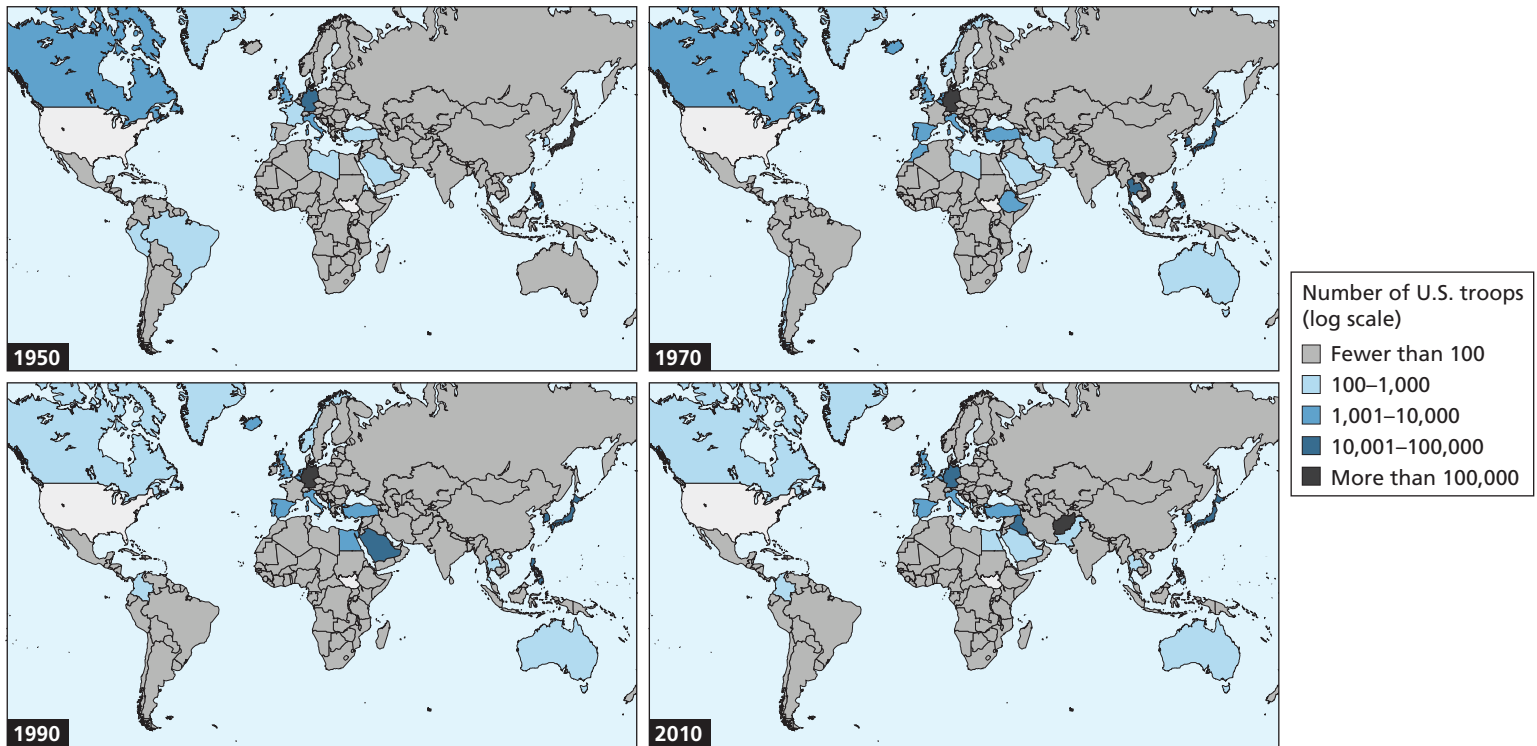
Figure 2.3 shows the number of U.S. ground forces deployed in support of U.S. military interventions by region over time. Mirroring the broader trends in the U.S. forces stationed abroad seen in Figure 2.2, U.S. troops deployed as part of U.S. ground interventions since 1946 have also been concentrated in Europe and East and Southeast Asia, with an uptick in intervention-related forward presence in the Middle East since 2000.

Figure 2.4 provides a snapshot of current U.S. bases by service, as well as publicly available CSL locations that U.S. forces can access.¹⁸ While all services have multiple locations in East and Southeast Asia, installations in Europe tend to be primarily for the Army and Air Force.

Figure 2.5 illustrates trends in the provision of U.S. military assistance. While the majority of U.S. military assistance in the late 1940s and 1950s went to Europe, in the 1960s through the mid-1970s most of the assistance went to East and Southeast Asia. Starting in the 1980s and continuing through the early 2000s, the majority of military assistance spending went to the Middle East. Finally, beginning in 2006, about half of U.S. military assistance spending went to South Asia, in tandem with the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan. Thus, trends in military assistance spending are similar but not identical to trends in forces and bases. Changes in the concentration of U.S.

¹⁸ CSLs are owned by the host nation.

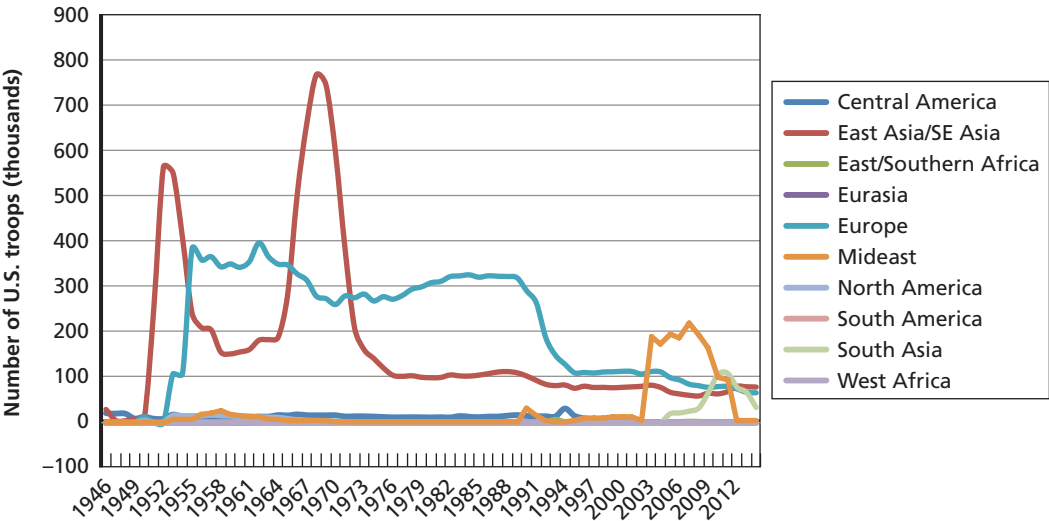
Figure 2.2
Change in U.S. Force Presence over Time



SOURCE: DMDC personnel data.

RAND RR1906-2.2

Figure 2.3
Regional Trends in Forces Deployed in Ground Interventions, 1946–2014



SOURCE: RUGID data (Kavanagh, Frederick, et al., unpublished RAND Corporation research).
NOTES: This figure excludes troops stationed abroad without a direct motivating threat—for example, forces in Europe after the end of the Cold War. However, it does include those deployed for a specific deterrent purpose, such as forces in Europe during the Cold War, where they faced a clear, direct threat from the Soviet Union.

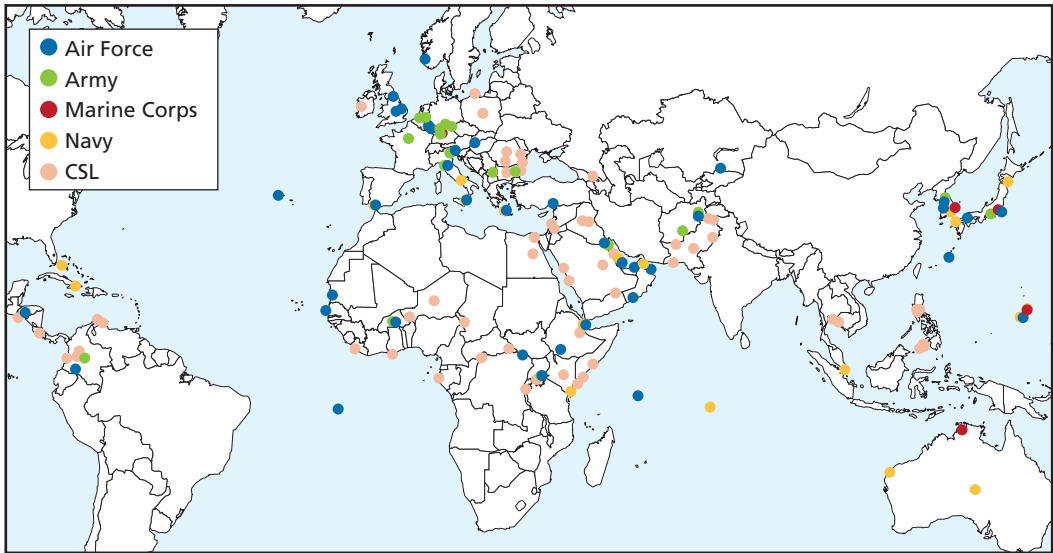
RAND RR1906-2.3

military assistance by region appear to shift sooner than the distribution of troops. This is important, since it suggests that increases in the amount of military assistance spending allocated to a region may signal a future increase in footprint and forces deployed to this region.

Data on U.S. agreements also reveal a number of clear geographic trends. Partner countries in Europe, East and Southeast Asia, and Central America are likely to have both alliances and access agreements with the United States. Countries in South America have alliances but not access agreements. Finally, there are a few countries in the Middle East and Central and South Asia that have access agreements (often negotiated as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom) but no alliances. This pattern is not surprising. The United States has both alliances and access agreements with its closest partners (in Europe and East Asia) and more limited types of agreements with other states. It is worth noting that we do not include non-ally partners with which the United States has ongoing and operationally centered security relationships (for example, Afghanistan). These more informal relationships may also be important aspects of U.S. forward presence not captured here.

In summary, trends in U.S. presence follow U.S. strategic priorities. U.S. troop presence has been concentrated in Europe, East and Southeast Asia, and, more recently, the Middle East. Historically, there has been a fairly high correlation across the differ-

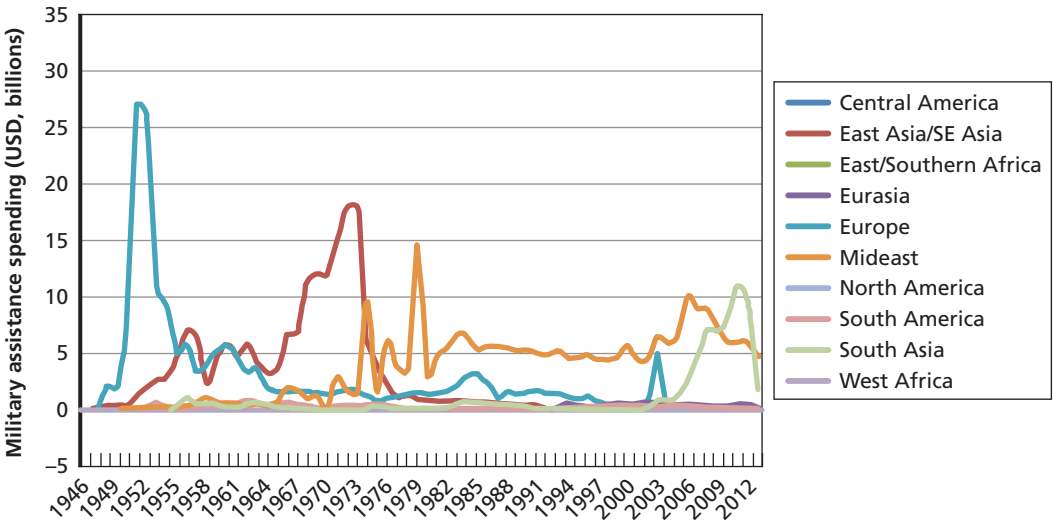
Figure 2.4
U.S. Base Posture, 2014



SOURCE: Lostumbo et al., 2013; Vine, 2015.

RAND RR1906-2.4

Figure 2.5
Regional Trends in Military Assistance, 1946–2014



SOURCE: USAID Greenbook data on U.S. military assistance (USAID, 2015).

RAND RR1906-2.5

ent components of presence. In particular, there are few countries in which the United States has bases but does not station troops, and the United States has bases in most countries in which it stations troops. Countries with more than 100 troops but no U.S. base (as of 2014) include Iraq, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Egypt, and South Africa. In 2014, there is only one country with more than one U.S. base but no U.S. troops.¹⁹ The correlation between the different components of presence is important because it informs our statistical analysis, as described below.

Profiles of Countries with U.S. Troop Presence

To better understand where and why the United States has deployed its forces abroad, we identified six archetypical deployment patterns, juxtaposing countries' risk of intrastate conflict with historical patterns in U.S. troop presence.²⁰ The six country types differ greatly with regard to their quality of democratic governance, level of economic development, and relationship with the United States. Table 2.2 identifies these six country types placing them on two dimensions: risk of intrastate conflict and number of troops.

Wealthy partners and nonhosts are countries with few troops and low risk of intrastate conflict. These tend to be states with relatively high gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and strong democracies. They tend to be countries that are friendly to the United States but not traditional military allies. Examples include Finland, Switzerland, and Ireland.

Wealthy partners and hosts are countries with any level of presence above 100 troops and a low risk of intrastate conflict. While there are certainly differences between these states, they also share a number of characteristics, which contribute to their low likeli-

¹⁹ In 2014, our data list Kuwait as having bases but no U.S. troops. In fact, there were U.S. troops present in Kuwait in 2014. This mismatch is due to a rare anomaly in the data. The DMDC data count the number of personnel based on where their unit is permanently assigned. This means that personnel deployed on rotational missions away from their home station will be counted as being located at their assigned location, not necessarily their actual location. For most cases where this occurs, our addition of the RUGID data, which capture personnel on many types of temporary deployments, fills in gaps created by DMDC coding rules. For example, personnel involved in deployments in Kuwait in the 1990s would have been included in our combined dataset. From 2010 to 2015, however, U.S. military personnel on temporary duty in Kuwait are not captured in the RUGID data because their mission does not fall into one of the RUGID intervention categories. While there may be some instances of forward-deployed troops being missed by both DMDC and RUGID, we expect that such occurrences are rare in our data.

²⁰ We identified countries' risk of intrastate conflict based on key indicators identified in the literature reviews on the drivers of intrastate conflict in Chapter Six. A state is at greater risk for intrastate conflict if it is not democratic, has negative economic growth, has undergone a recent regime transition, has low state capacity, or more than 45 percent of its population is 18–29 years old. In our risk index, a state is considered at “high risk” of intrastate conflict if it has three or more of these characteristics, “medium risk” if it has one or two, and “low risk” if it has none.

Table 2.2
Profiles of Countries with In-Country U.S. Troop Presence

		Number of U.S. Troops			
		0–99	100–999	1,000–9,999	>10,000
Risk of Intrastate Conflict	Low	Wealthy democratic partners and nonhosts	Wealthy democratic partners and hosts		
	Medium	Adversaries and states of low strategic interest	Limited strategic partners	Strategic partners “under duress”	Close allies “under duress”
	High				

hood of intrastate conflict and the significant U.S. troop presence in them. These states tend to have high GDP per capita and notable military capabilities, and they are strong democracies. They are also typically allies. U.S. troops in these states typically serve a general deterrence purpose or are part of U.S. forward presence at bases outside the continental United States. Most of the largest U.S. deployments fall into this category. Examples include the United Kingdom, Japan, and Italy.

Adversaries and states of low strategic interests are a somewhat diverse set of countries, characterized by similar risk of intrastate conflict and level of U.S. troop presence. These states tend to have few U.S. troops but a medium to high risk of intrastate conflict. They have weak or adversarial relationships with the United States, do not receive much military assistance, have low GDP per capita, and are weak democracies or nondemocracies. Examples of this country type include Iran (since 1980), Syria, and many countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Limited strategic partners are countries with medium to high risk of intrastate conflict and 100–999 troops. These states tend to have low levels of democracy and state capacity, but they are strategic partners in the sense that they are states where the United States has higher interest and levels of presence for specific reasons, such as deterrence or to provide training/advisory support. Examples include Honduras, Djibouti, and Bahrain.

Strategic partners “under duress” are more likely to be U.S. allies and receive more military assistance than *limited strategic partners* but have a medium to high risk of conflict and a troop presence from 1,000 to 9,999 troops. They are poorer or less democratic than most strategic partners and low-capacity non-allies, but more likely to be involved in conflict. These states are similar to limited strategic partners in that U.S. forces tend to be in these countries for a specific and temporary period of time, sometimes to serve as a deterrent against an external threat. Examples include Spain (prior to joining NATO), Ethiopia (during the Cold War), and Egypt.

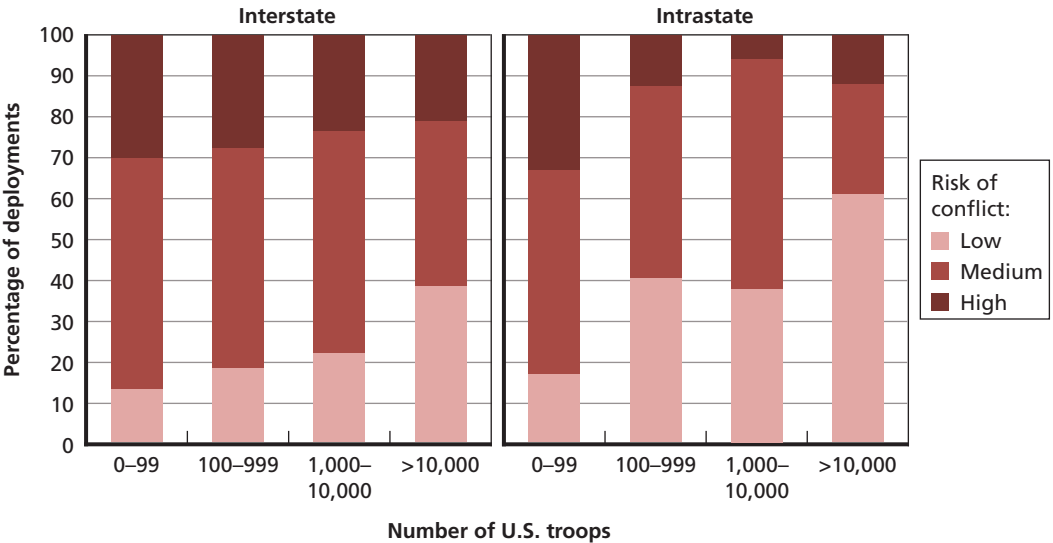
Close allies “under duress” have a medium to high risk of conflict and over 10,000 troops. These are close allies who are facing some kind of threat (external threat attack

or internal turmoil). These states tend to have moderate levels of democracy and GDP per capita. Examples include Turkey, Philippines, and South Korea (during the Cold War).

Figure 2.6 provides another way of thinking about how the number of troops in a country varies with the degree of risk of conflict. The chart on the right side of the figure illustrates the pattern of U.S. troop deployments in countries with varying degrees of risk of intrastate conflict. Larger U.S. deployments tend to occur in countries at low risk of intrastate conflict, while smaller U.S. deployments tend to be concentrated in countries with a medium or high risk of intrastate conflict. By comparison, as can be seen in the left side of the figure, U.S. deployments occur more frequently in states that are at higher risk of interstate conflict. This suggests that U.S. troop deployments may more frequently occur in response to interstate threats to partners, rather than intrastate threats.²¹

Taken as a whole, these country types highlight key characteristics of U.S. forward presence. First, there is a frequent pattern of the United States having large con-

Figure 2.6
Deployment Size and Risk of Conflict



SOURCE: RUGID data (Kavanagh, Frederick, et al., unpublished RAND Corporation research).

RAND RR1906-2.6

²¹ We identified countries' risk of interstate conflict based on key indicators identified in the literature reviews on the drivers of interstate conflict in Chapter Four. Pairs of states are at a higher risk of interstate conflict if they have a territorial dispute, have low levels of economic interdependence, and lack dyadic democracy (i.e., one or both states are nondemocracies). In our risk index, a pair of states is considered at a "high risk" of conflict in a given year if they have two or three of these characteristics, "medium risk" if they have any one, and "low risk" if they have none of these characteristics.

centrations of troops in close partners and allies, particularly those facing an external threat. Another pattern is that the United States deploys smaller forces to weaker partners and non-allies facing internal or external threats, but these deployments are typically limited to cases where there is a strategic U.S. interest and the deployments are often shorter in duration than those in close partners and allies. Finally, large U.S. forces tend to be deployed in countries that are at a lower risk for interstate and intra-state conflict. There are two possible explanations for that last pattern. One is that the United States chooses to deploy troops to countries where conflict is less prevalent, as this is easier, safer, and less resource-intensive. The other is that these areas are safer now because of the presence of U.S. forces. In reality, both explanations likely have some relevance. In subsequent chapters, we explore this relationship between presence and conflict more rigorously.

How U.S. Troop Presence May Influence Interstate Conflict Behavior

The United States deploys forces overseas, both to respond to crises and as a more permanent forward presence, in part, to deter interstate conflict. U.S. strategy documents often assert that the overall strength of the U.S. armed forces, formal treaty commitments with key allies, and local U.S. troop presence in key regions all serve to deter attacks against U.S. allies and partners, and that the United States can influence other states' foreign policy choices through a range of political and economic incentives and participation in multinational coalitions.¹ While these assertions are widely accepted and there is good theoretical justification to believe they are true, there are few analyses that empirically investigate whether or not there is systematic evidence for these claims.

As discussed in Chapter Two, our analysis focuses on isolating the effect of U.S. troop presence on conflict. This chapter lays the groundwork for that analysis by first identifying the pathways by which U.S. troop presence may affect the likelihood of interstate conflict. We rely on literature on deterrence and alliances to sketch out explicitly the impact that U.S. troop presence is expected to have on the decisionmaking calculus of partners, adversaries, and of the United States itself. We then assess these pathways empirically in Chapter Four.

Linkage Between U.S. Troop Presence and Incentives for Interstate Conflict Initiation

Interstate war is a complex process that is the result of the interaction of at least two states. In the logic of extended deterrence, the United States puts its military forces in a partner country to deter a U.S. adversary from attacking that partner. However, the effect of U.S. troop presence is unlikely to be so narrow. In reality, all states are both *potential initiators* and *potential targets* of conflict. For example, a U.S. partner may be also the potential initiator of a conflict, and the partner's incentives to initiate conflict

¹ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy*, Washington, D.C., 2015, p. 7.

may also be affected by U.S. troop presence. U.S. troop presence may indicate a strong U.S. commitment, which could embolden partner states to adopt more reckless policies. Alternatively, the security provided by U.S. troop presence may give the United States leverage to restrain partners from such actions.

Furthermore, U.S. troop presence abroad may directly affect U.S. decisions about use of force. The United States may be more likely to initiate conflict abroad because of the lower cost of employing forward-deployed troops. Alternatively, forward presence may make U.S. threats more credible, thus helping the United States achieve more of its goals without having to use force.

As these hypotheses indicate, U.S. troop presence can affect the likelihood of interstate conflict through multiple paths. U.S. troop presence can affect partners' and adversaries' incentives to pursue militarized activities, such as military threats, troop mobilizations, and unilateral attacks. The interaction of these actions and reactions, in turn, affect the likelihood that these activities lead to interstate war (Figure 3.1).

In the following sections, we examine how U.S. troop presence may influence the decisions of potential adversaries, partners, and the United States to engage in militarized activities. Previous studies have found that U.S. troop presence can both increase and decrease actors' likelihood of engaging in conflict. These competing hypotheses are summarized in Table 3.1 and discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

It is important to note that, although "adversaries" and "partners" are often treated as straightforward concepts, assigning specific states to these categories can be complicated in reality. U.S. treaty allies are obviously U.S. partners, but the United

Figure 3.1
Pathways Linking U.S. Troop Presence, Militarized Activities, and Interstate War

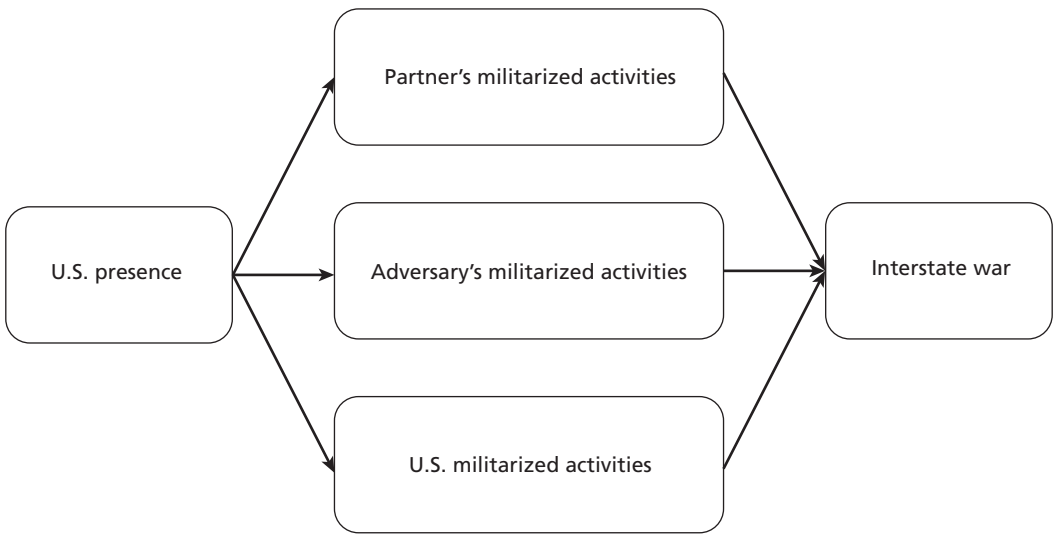


Table 3.1
Hypotheses on the Effect of U.S. Troop Presence on Actors' Incentives to Initiate Interstate Conflict

Actor	Decreases Likelihood of Conflict	Increases Likelihood of Conflict
Potential adversary	• Deterred	• Threatened • Emboldened by U.S. partner underinvestment
U.S. partner	• Reassured • United States gains leverage to restrain	• Emboldened • United States loses leverage to restrain
United States	• Enhanced ability to achieve aims without conflict • Partners gain influence to restrain	• Security concerns expand • Lower cost to using force

States also has made explicit and implicit security commitments to a wide range of other states, such as Israel, Taiwan, and Saudi Arabia. Moreover, all states in the international system have some mix of common and divergent interests with the United States that often vary by issue and over time. Even U.S. treaty allies often have disagreements with the United States over foreign and defense policies, such as when France objected to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Moreover, states such as Russia and China, often considered potential U.S. adversaries, also cooperate with the United States on a range of international issues, such as nonproliferation and counterterrorism. In spite of these ambiguities, the stylized categorization of “partners” and “adversaries” remains an important lens through which we can view the potential effects of U.S. forward presence.

Potential Adversaries

Deterring U.S. adversaries from initiating conflict is perhaps the most widely discussed goal of U.S. forward presence.² However, the literature also suggests that U.S. forward presence could actually lead to higher rates of conflict by threatening potential adversaries or, in certain contexts, undermining deterrence.

U.S. Troop Presence Can Deter Potential Adversaries

The United States relies on multiple strategic approaches and tools to deter adversaries. Formal alliance commitments, military aid, and political and economic relationships are indications of U.S. interests that form the baseline level of U.S. deterrence of adversary attacks on U.S. partners. Moreover, U.S. economic and diplomatic influence offers additional tools, such as threats of economic sanctions, to deter adversaries. U.S.

² U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015, p. 7.

military superiority, combined with a network of bases and agreements that allow the United States to project power globally, means that the United States has substantial capability to punish states that attack U.S. partners or to quickly launch a counterattack to retake territory.³

There are four main arguments for why U.S. troop presence may deter potential adversaries. First, U.S. forward troop presence can make the United States more militarily capable of denying the enemy its objectives or, at least, making an attack more costly.⁴ Second, U.S. troop presence can be a signal of resolve to defend a partner. Bearing the financial costs of forward deployment and military coordination with partners in peacetime demonstrates U.S. interests in the security of its partner. Putting U.S. lives in harm's way makes this signal even stronger. An attack on even a small number of U.S. forces could act as a tripwire, provoking a larger response to defend the United States' reputation. Moreover, such an attack could engage the U.S. public, which could add additional pressure on policymakers to respond with a larger U.S. force.⁵ Third, U.S. troop presence can contribute to alliance cohesion by strengthening the partner's resolve to stand up against a potential adversary.⁶ Fourth, forward U.S. troop presence may allow opportunities for security cooperation activities, such as joint training and partner capacity building, that could make combined operations more militarily effective. Greater military effectiveness and strength, in turn, may deter the adversary from initiating conflict.⁷ In sum, U.S. forward presence may enhance deterrence by improving U.S. and partner capacity to fight and by demonstrating U.S. resolve and alliance cohesion.

For all of these pathways, larger in-country troop presence should do the most to deter adversaries from initiating attacks against particular U.S. partners. However, nearby U.S. troops—which could respond quickly to deny an adversary a quick victory, participate in regional exercises and security cooperation, and demonstrate U.S. commitment to broader regional stability—could also contribute to deterring adversaries from initiating conflict. For example, North Korean calculations about U.S. capability and resolve to respond to an attack on South Korea may consider all U.S. troop presence in the region, such as in Japan, not just U.S. troops in South Korea.

³ Posen, 2003. For the general logic of power and interests as a basis of credibility, see Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005.

⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983.

⁵ James D. Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sinking Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 1, February 1, 1997; James D. Morrow, "Alliances: Why Write Them Down?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2000, pp. 69–70.

⁶ Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 1984, pp. 466–467.

⁷ Morrow, 2000, p. 71.

Although many scholars accept that U.S. forward presence can affect deterrence through the pathways outlined above, there is a debate about how substantively important these pathways are. Some contend that having a large number of U.S. forces locally to deny an adversary a quick victory, known as deterrence by denial, is the most effective form of deterrence.⁸ However, other analysts contend that such a posture is too costly and, ultimately, unnecessary, since the United States has other ways to deter. In this view, a relatively light U.S. forward presence at select strategic locations and ability to project overwhelming U.S. military capabilities in the event of conflict mean that the United States can credibly threaten a counterattack or impose large costs for an attack on a U.S. partner. In this view, therefore, the United States does not need large forward presence to deter potential U.S. adversaries.⁹ Ultimately, this debate turns on competing views about how U.S. adversaries assess U.S. credibility.

U.S. Troop Presence Can Embolden Potential Adversaries

Although increases in U.S. troop presence are typically associated with deterring U.S. adversaries, U.S. troop presence can potentially degrade deterrence by diminishing a partner's willingness to spend on its own defense. When the United States provides commitments, it makes its partner more secure, which could lead a partner to underinvest in its own security.¹⁰ Recent evidence that U.S. troop presence is associated with a decline in the size of a partner's military forces and level of defense spending is consistent with this expectation.¹¹ In this way, U.S. troop presence could actually diminish the overall military resources available to deter potential adversaries and make an adversary more likely to initiate conflict.

U.S. Troop Presence Can Threaten Potential Adversaries

U.S. global military superiority is an important component of U.S. deterrence. However, it can also threaten other states.¹² When U.S. forces are nearby, an adversary may feel particularly insecure for a number of reasons. First, the adversary may worry that the larger presence indicates that the United States has plans to use force in the region or that it may be more likely to do so in the future. Second, U.S. troop presence close

⁸ Policy arguments along these lines often draw on academic work showing the effectiveness of deterrence by denial; for example, Mearsheimer, 1983; Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996.

⁹ Posen, 2014.

¹⁰ Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances," *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 1966, pp. 266–279.

¹¹ Carla Martinez Machain and T. Clifton Morgan, "The Effect of US Troop Deployment on Host States' Foreign Policy," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 39, No. 1, January 1, 2013; Michael A. Allen, Julie VanDusky-Allen, and Michael E. Flynn, "The Localized and Spatial Effects of US Troop Deployments on Host-State Defense Spending," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 2014.

¹² Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979.

to an adversary increases the risk that the two militaries, operating in close proximity to one another, may have accidents or misperceive each other's intentions, resulting in an increased risk of escalation and conflict.¹³ Finally, incentives to protect U.S. forces near a highly capable potential adversary can lead the United States to adopt military concepts and pursue technologies that could potentially increase both sides' incentives to strike first. Such pressures for preemption could make an adversary feel that full-scale war against its homeland is more likely.¹⁴

An adversary's security concerns can in turn affect the likelihood of conflict. An insecure adversary may, for example, take long-term steps, such as increasing its defense spending, to regain security. The United States and its partners may respond with defense spending of their own, leading to arms races and a heightened security competition that could make any of the parties involved—the potential adversary, the United States, or U.S. partners—more likely to initiate conflict. Insecure adversaries may also take immediate militarized steps either to strengthen their defenses or to signal their own resolve to defend their homeland or sphere of influence. These steps could include making threats, putting military forces on a higher level of alert, initiating a limited use of force, or pursuing aggressive territorial expansion to preemptively secure militarily important areas.¹⁵

U.S. Partners

U.S. troop presence can affect the likelihood that U.S. partners initiate conflict. Some scholars suggest that a larger U.S. troop presence reassures and helps the United States restrain its partners, making them less likely to initiate conflict. Others argue that U.S. troop presence actually emboldens partners to adopt more militarized policies that can lead to more conflict.

U.S. Troop Presence Can Reassure Partners

U.S. military commitments may be a central aspect of many partners' defense against external threats. Even with the existence of formal alliance guarantees, however, these partners may be uncertain about whether the United States will defend them in the event of conflict.¹⁶ Just as with adversaries, a partner that feels insecure may adopt bel-

¹³ Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001, pp. 35–43.

¹⁴ Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999, pp. 39–44.

¹⁵ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976; Charles L. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics*, 1997; Todd S. Sechser, "Goliath's Curse: Coercive Threats and Asymmetric Power," *International Organization*, Vol. 64, No. 4, 2010.

¹⁶ Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996.

ligerent policies that increase the risk of conflict, such as putting forces on higher levels of alert, adopting hardline policies to show resolve, or, in the extreme, preemptively initiating conflict.¹⁷ Therefore, the United States often takes additional steps, such as diplomatic statements of support, arms transfers, and military assistance, to reassure U.S. partners about the level of U.S. commitment to their defense. For example, U.S. partners Saudi Arabia and Israel expressed concerns about U.S. commitment to their security following the announcement of the Iran nuclear deal in 2016. The Obama administration sought to signal U.S. commitment and reassure nervous partners by providing additional military training and arms.

In much the same way, increased U.S. military presence abroad can be a way to reassure partner states. A large U.S. military presence in or near a partner state could more credibly signal U.S. ability and willingness to defend that state from external attack. And, as discussed above, even a smaller U.S. troop presence can be a costly signal of the U.S. commitment to a partner's defense and willingness to bring even more U.S. capabilities to bear in the event of an external attack.¹⁸ The logic of using a larger U.S. troop presence to reassure partners can be seen in recent U.S. policy: One argument in favor of increasing U.S. forces in Asia, as part of the so-called pivot or strategic rebalance, is to reassure Japan in order to reduce the risk that it will pursue arms racing or confrontational policies with China.¹⁹

U.S. troops in country, rather than simply nearby, may be the most reassuring signal of U.S. commitment. For example, some have argued that U.S. reliance on an offshore posture and the threat of a distant blockade to deter a Chinese attack is less reassuring to allies than a forward posture of defending their territory directly.²⁰ Similarly, NATO has increased its forward presence in member countries along Russia's border, rather than simply within Europe, to show NATO's commitment at a time of Russian assertiveness. But even presence in nearby states may be enough to reassure partners if the United States can credibly commit to quickly and effectively respond to hostile actions against partners.

¹⁷ Jervis, 1976; Glaser, 1997.

¹⁸ Snyder, 1984; Glenn H. Snyder, "Alliance Theory: A Neorealist First Cut," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 1990. For a discussion of using reassurance to prevent nuclear proliferation, see Nuno P. Monteiro and Alexandre Debs, "The Strategic Logic of Nuclear Proliferation," *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2014, p. 19.

¹⁹ Michael Swaine, Nicholas Eberstadt, M. Taylor Fravel, Mikkal Herberg, Albert Keidel, Evans J. R. Revere, Alan D. Romberg, Eleanor Freund, Rachel Esplin Odell, and Audrye Wong, *Conflict and Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2, 2015, pp. 130, 150. This value in U.S. security commitments in reducing conflict by reassuring Japan has been a driving force of U.S. policy even before the recent rebalance to Asia (Thomas J. Christensen, "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 1999, pp. 50–51).

²⁰ Aaron L. Friedberg, *Beyond Air-Sea Battle: The Debate over US Military Strategy in Asia*, Vol. 54, Adelphi Series, 2014, p. 115.

U.S. Troop Presence Can Restrain Partners

Although states often make formal and informal commitments to partners, they do not wish to be dragged into costly conflicts unnecessarily. To limit these risks, states sometimes intentionally leave commitments vague, write agreements to limit their commitment, or choose alliance structures that offer the most influence over their allies' decisions.²¹ As discussed above, U.S. partners are generally more dependent on the United States for security than vice versa. Power asymmetries can therefore be a source of leverage over states that rely on the United States for security; in the extreme, the United States can threaten to abandon partners that pursue confrontational foreign or defense policies.²² For example, during the Cold War, the United States used this type of leverage to coerce West Germany into abandoning a nuclear weapon program, which the United States feared would provoke the Soviet Union.²³ Other research has shown that, in general, powerful states can convince allies to moderate demands and accept reasonable compromises in disputes with the adversary. This can make agreements more likely, limiting the risk that disputes escalate to war.²⁴

A large U.S. troop presence in a country could be associated with higher levels of restraint. U.S. troop presence could indicate that a partner is already quite reliant on the United States for security and therefore more likely to respond to U.S. efforts to restrain. Over time, a large U.S. troop presence in partner states could also increase U.S. ability to restrain the partner. First, in the long term, a larger U.S. troop presence may lead the partner to spend less on defense and, as a result, become increasingly dependent on the United States for security. Second, a larger U.S. troop presence could also help the United States build more relationships and a greater understanding of the partner's decisionmaking processes, helping the United States to more effectively influence a partner's conflict behavior.²⁵

²¹ Brett V. Benson, *Constructing International Security: Alliances, Deterrence, and Moral Hazard*: Cambridge University Press, 2012; Tongfi Kim, "Why Alliances Entangle but Seldom Entrap States," *Security Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2011; Victor D. Cha, "Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 3, Winter 2009/2010; Daina Chiba, Jesse C. Johnson, and Brett Ashley Leeds, "Careful Commitments: Democratic States and Alliance Design," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 77, No. 4, 2015, pp. 968–982.

²² James D. Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1991, p. 914.

²³ Gene Gerzhoy, "Alliance Coercion and Nuclear Restraint: How the United States Thwarted West Germany's Nuclear Ambitions," *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 4, Spring 2015.

²⁴ Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends: Alliance Restraint in International Politics*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008; Songying Fang, Jesse C. Johnson, and Brett Ashley Leeds, "To Concede or to Resist? The Restraining Effect of Military Alliances," *International Organization*, Vol. 68, No. 4, 2014; Christopher Gelpi, "Alliances as Instruments of Intra-Allied Control," in Helga Haftendorn, Robert O. Keohane, and Celeste A. Wallender, eds., *Imperfect Unions: Security Institutions over Time and Space*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.

²⁵ Pressman, 2008.

U.S. Troop Presence Can Embolden Partners

Others contend that U.S. commitments and troop presence are unlikely to have a restraining effect and, instead, make partners more likely to initiate conflict. In this view, partners may see U.S. commitments as evidence that the United States will always come to its aid, either out of direct concern for the partner or to defend the United States' own reputation. If partners expect to share the risk and consequences of their actions with a powerful United States, they may become more reckless in their foreign policy decisions. U.S. partners may make more demands on adversaries, refuse to compromise in disputes, or even initiate conflicts.²⁶ Some have argued, for example, that faith in U.S. security guarantees have led U.S. partners in Asia to be more intransigent and more provocative in their off-shore island disputes with China.²⁷ Analysts have also argued that U.S. support for Georgia's accession to NATO emboldened its leaders to adopt a more provocative policy toward Russia that contributed to the 2008 war between the two countries.²⁸

The level of U.S. troop presence could affect the risk that partners become emboldened or more belligerent. Increased U.S. troop presence could signal an increased commitment to partner security, increasing partners' perceptions of U.S. willingness to defend them. Believing in a strong and resilient U.S. safety net, partners may pursue more aggressive actions. While U.S. troops in partner states, under this framework, are most likely to signal willingness and embolden partner actions, U.S. troop presence in nearby states could also indicate U.S. commitment to partners in the region and result in similar aggressive foreign policies.

United States

Just as with other states, U.S. troop presence abroad may affect the chances that the United States initiates the use of force. Some expect that a larger U.S. troop presence will increase U.S. influence over countries in a region, allowing the United States to achieve its strategic aims without resorting to force. A larger U.S. troop presence may also reduce the likelihood that the United States initiates conflict by giving partners mechanisms to restrain the United States from using force. In contrast, others have argued that increased presence abroad may cause U.S. security concerns to grow and

²⁶ Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances in a Unipolar World," *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 1, 2009; Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 4, Spring 1997, p. 16; Snyder, 1984, p. 467; Posen, 2014, pp. 44–50; Martinez Machain, and Morgan, 2013.

²⁷ Swaine et al., 2015, p. 154.

²⁸ Barry R. Posen, "Pull Back: The Case for a Less Activist Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 1, 2013, p. 122; John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 5, September/October 2014.

lower logistical costs of using force. In this view, a greater presence may make the United States more likely to respond to these threats with military force.

U.S. Troop Presence Can Increase U.S. Influence Regionally

The United States is the single most powerful country in the world, and therefore, in most cases, there is little doubt that it has the capability to follow through on threats of military force. In spite of these advantages, relatively weaker states often resist U.S. demands.²⁹ In some cases, this may be because U.S. demands, such as those involving regime change, are so great that a leader sees resistance as the only option.³⁰ However, others have argued that U.S. threats sometimes fail when there are doubts about U.S. willingness to use military force or to pay high costs for doing so.³¹ In this view, a larger U.S. forward presence is a credible signal that the United States is resolute to use force if its demands are not met. This increased credibility allows the United States to more effectively bargain with other states and achieve its goals without resorting to the use of force.³²

Allies Can Gain Leverage to Restrain U.S. Use of Force

Just as the United States may worry about its partners pulling it into conflict, U.S. partners sometimes worry about U.S. conflict behavior. For example, in the 1950s, Japan became concerned that U.S. bases in Japan increased the risk that Japan would be pulled into a conflict with the Soviets. As a result, under the terms of the 1960 U.S.-Japan alliance treaty, Japan placed greater conditions on its commitments to the United States.³³ Similarly, there is evidence that NATO allies have sought to restrain U.S. use of force both outside and within Europe.³⁴

A larger U.S. regional presence may make it easier for U.S. partners to restrain the U.S. use of force in two ways. First, analogous to the mechanism outlined above, U.S. forward presence can create more frequent interactions and can help partners develop knowledge and relationships to more effectively influence U.S. policy. Second, when the United States bases forces overseas, it negotiates agreements with partners that may

²⁹ Dianne Pfundstein Chamberlain, *Cheap Threats: Why the United States Struggles to Coerce Weak States*, Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2016, pp. 57–74; Phil Haun, *Coercion, Survival, and War: Why Weak States Resist the United States*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2015, p. 6.

³⁰ Haun, 2015.

³¹ Chamberlain, 2016.

³² On variations in success of the United States achieving its demands through threats of force, see Snyder, 1984, pp. 467–470; Posen, 2014, pp. 44–50.

³³ Kim, 2011, pp. 366–368.

³⁴ Michael Beckley, “The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of U.S. Defense Pacts,” *International Security*, Vol. 39, No. 4, Spring 2015, pp. 29, 39. On allies restraining U.S. escalation once conflict has begun, see Dominic Tierney, “Multilateralism: America’s Insurance Policy Against Loss,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 17, No. 4, December 1, 2011.

include restrictions on how those forces are used or requirements for consultation. In the extreme, partners can even suspend U.S. access or add new restrictions on U.S. operations during a crisis.³⁵ These rules and procedures offer additional pathways for U.S. partners to exercise restraint on U.S. use of force.

U.S. Troop Presence Can Broaden U.S. Security Concerns in the Region

Some analysts contend that U.S. involvement abroad actually leads to an expansion of U.S. security concerns and issues over which it is willing to use force. Frequent diplomatic interactions can lead to socialization, where the U.S. leaders adopt partners' local security concerns. Moreover, once the United States makes a commitment to a partner, U.S. policymakers may also begin to see U.S. credibility at stake in any of the partner's disputes.³⁶ The United States may, in turn, be more likely to initiate or become involved in militarized conflicts to protect these interests.

U.S. forward troop presence may contribute to the expansion of these concerns. U.S. military presence in partner states creates more opportunities for socialization, described above, and further ties U.S. reputation to its partners' security. Moreover, forward presence may make the United States more sensitive to the capabilities and intentions of nearby states that could pose a physical threat to local U.S. personnel or infrastructure.³⁷ The need to defend forward deployments and support regional partners may expand the domain of issues in which the United States is willing to use force, thereby increasing the risk that the United States initiates conflict abroad.

U.S. Troop Presence May Lower the Costs of Using Force

If most U.S. forces were kept in the homeland, using force in any given situation might be substantially more costly than it is today. For example, launching an air strike on a given target would require gaining permission to access runways and paying the costs of deploying planes and logistical support to the region. The vast system of U.S. bases, agreements, logistics networks, and troops abroad substantially lowers the marginal cost of using force for the United States.³⁸ The costs of using force may be lowest in areas where U.S. troop presence is largest. As a result, the United States may be more likely to resort to force than it might have been if it had to bring forces from farther away.

³⁵ For general discussions of how institutions, including alliances, create rules, mechanisms, and norms of consultation that restrain even powerful states like the United States, see G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001; Pressman, 2008. For an application to U.S. military access agreements, see Lostumbo et al., 2013, p. xxiii.

³⁶ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997, pp. 9–10.

³⁷ Ikenberry, 2001.

³⁸ On the importance of this system to U.S. power and command of the commons, see Posen, 2003.

Indirect Effects of U.S. Troop Presence on Interstate Conflict

As we note at the outset of this chapter, the relationship between U.S. troop presence and interstate conflict is complex and multifaceted. Our analysis takes several steps to disaggregate the effects of U.S. troop presence. First, by examining the competing causal pathways outlined above, we attempt to disentangle the multiple influences U.S. troop presence can have on the likelihood of interstate conflict. In the next chapter, we consider the potential variations in the effect of in-country and nearby U.S. troop presence. We also explore the effects of U.S. troop presence on conflict behavior ranging from low-level militarized activity to full-scale interstate war.

That said, our analyses focus primarily on the direct effect of U.S. troop presence on the incidence of interstate conflict. In addition to the pathways above, analysts have postulated long-term and indirect effects of U.S. forward presence. For example, U.S. forward troop presence could facilitate democratization in partner states by assisting in security sector reforms. In the long term, a region with more democracies may experience less conflict.³⁹ Furthermore, U.S. military presence abroad could facilitate regional collective action to counter potentially destabilizing forces, such as piracy or terrorism, which can, in some cases, lead to conflict between states.⁴⁰ These indirect effects are important and worth a closer look, but they fall outside of the more narrow realm of our analysis that looks at the specific relationship between conflict and forward presence.

³⁹ Michael W. Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1983.

⁴⁰ For a statement of this view in U.S. policy, see U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015, pp. 8, 11. There is a long-standing strand of scholarship that contends that the world is more peaceful when there is a powerful state that actively takes steps to limit conflict by facilitating cooperation and enforcing rules and norms. Much of this scholarship focused on economic hegemony facilitating free trade and stabilizing financial relationships. For views about the effects of military hegemony, see William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Summer 1999; Nuno P. Monteiro, "Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful," *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 3, Winter 2011/2012.

Empirical Assessment of U.S. Troop Presence and Interstate Conflict Behavior

We use a series of statistical models to evaluate the multiple potential relationships between U.S. forward troop presence and interstate conflict, as discussed in the previous chapter. These statistical models allow us to rigorously assess the overall association between U.S. troop presence and conflict initiation while controlling for a number of other factors that could otherwise obscure these effects. Our models assess the association between U.S. troop presence and the likelihood that a state will initiate aggressive, militarized behavior against another state in 1,222 state pairs, or dyads, between 1951 and 2007. We focus, in particular, on how U.S. troop presence may affect the conflict initiation behavior of potential U.S. adversaries, U.S. partners, and the United States.

Our Approach to Statistically Modeling Interstate Conflict

This section discusses our empirical modeling approach—how we operationalize U.S. troop presence, how we construct our universe of cases (strategically relevant state pairs), how we model the risk of interstate conflict, and control variables that help isolate the effect of U.S. troop presence on conflict.

U.S. Troop Presence

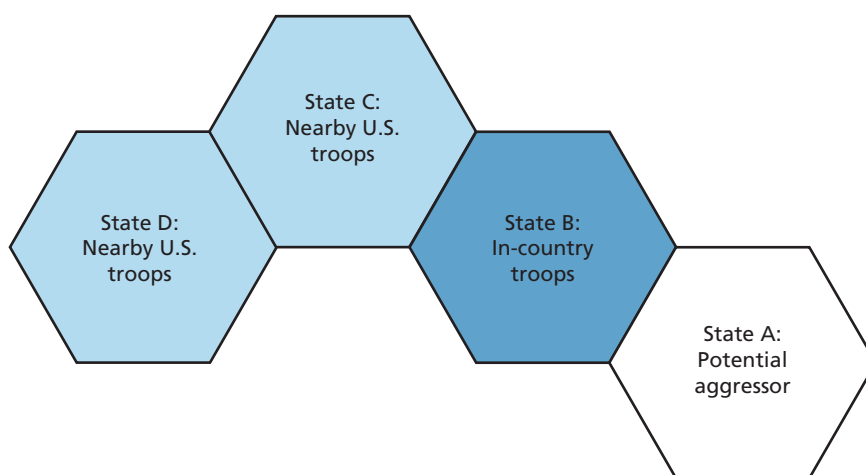
While we have collected data on and reviewed trends in different aspects of U.S. troop presence over time and by region, we focus primarily on U.S. troop presence in our statistical analyses, looking secondarily at the effects of military assistance and alliances. We do so for conceptual and data availability reasons. Conceptually, U.S. troop presence is the most flexible and important aspect of U.S. troop presence. The United States can move forces more quickly than it can establish new agreements or construct new infrastructure, and putting U.S. lives on the line is one of the clearest ways to demonstrate U.S. commitment to a country or a region. With regard to data availability, we cannot reliably estimate U.S. basing over time. Moreover, due to the high correlation between U.S. troop presence and U.S. bases, it is difficult to disentangle their individual effects.

To address key distinctions highlighted in our review of potential relationships between U.S. troop presence and the incidence of conflict, we assess the effects of U.S. troop presence while taking into account two key characteristics: where troops are located and whether they are actively involved in combat.

Where Are U.S. Troops Deployed?

We define two types of troop locations for our models of U.S. troop presence. “In-country” troops are U.S. forces that are deployed inside a given state, while “nearby” troops are U.S. forces that are deployed in neighboring or proximate states. In Figure 4.1, we illustrate how U.S. troops could affect the calculations of a hypothetical State A that is considering aggression against State B. Those troops located in State B are defined as the “in-country” troops. Those troops located in States C and D are “nearby” troops, as they are located proximate to State B but not inside it. We calculate an aggregate measure of U.S. troop presence near State B by weighting the number of U.S. troops in all other states by their distance from State B. The weighting scheme also accounts for variations in the speed that such troops can be moved within a given region.¹

Figure 4.1
Example of Nearby and In-Country Troop Presence



NOTE: In this example, troops in States C and D are “nearby” State B.

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¹ Formally, for each year t and state i , this measure takes the form

$$W_{it} = \sum_{j=1}^n \left(\frac{\text{EffectiveTravelStrength}}{\text{DifferenceBetweenStates}_{ij} + 200} \times \text{NumberofNoncombatTroops}_{jt} \right),$$

which is a modified weighted sum spatial lag, based on inverse weighting of the distance between state i and all other states j , the number of U.S. forces in states j in a given year t , and the relative distance military forces can travel in a day. To ensure that effective U.S. troops in proximate states never have a larger effect than troops in

Are U.S. Troops Engaged in Combat?

To focus our analysis on the effects of U.S. troop presence on the incidence of conflict, we exclude troops that are already engaged in combat, counterinsurgency, or stability operations from our calculations of the total number of U.S. military personnel in or near a given country. We do so for two reasons. First, troops that are already engaged in combat cannot be redeployed easily, and thus are less likely to act as a deterrent elsewhere. Second, including troops already engaged in conflict in statistical models examining the relationship between U.S. troop presence and conflict would bias the results—suggesting a stronger relationship between troop presence and conflict than may exist. For example, while U.S. troops may affect the likelihood of conflict, they also deploy in response to conflict. By excluding troops that have deployed to participate in conflict, we can better isolate the effect of the deployment of U.S. troops on conflict rather than vice versa. When troops participating in counterinsurgency, combat, and stability operations shift to a different activity, such as a deterrent or advisory capacity, they are then counted in our nearby and in-country troops presence metrics.

State Pairs with a Potential for Conflict

Our analysis focuses on the set of states that could realistically engage in interstate conflict in a given year. Due to data availability, our analysis focuses on the period 1951–2007. Within this time period, the set of cases includes all state pairs, known as dyads, for which we assessed that a potential aggressor state likely had the military capability to initiate conflict against a potential target state. We used what is known as a directed dyad, treating each of the two states in the pairing separately as a potential initiator of conflict and as a potential target of conflict. For example, in a dyad of South Korea and North Korea, there are two directed dyads. In the first, South Korea is the potential initiator and North Korea is the potential target. In the second, North Korea is the initiator and South Korea is the potential target.

The broadest set of directed dyads would involve every possible pair of states. However, because we are interested in the possibility of armed conflict, we focus our analyses only on those dyads in which that outcome could reasonably take place.² Limiting our analyses only to relevant dyads removes pairs of states, such as a dyad

a given country itself, we add a value of 200 miles, or the largest assumed distance that can be traveled by U.S. forces in a day, to the denominator. Substantively, the value of the spatial lag increases as the distance of U.S. forward forces to a state decreases and the number of U.S. forces around a state increases. This captures the increasing effect of larger numbers of U.S. troops in nearby states. Douglas Lemke, *Regions of War and Peace*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

² The general approach of limiting analyses to relevant dyads is standard practice. See, for instance, Zeev Maoz and Bruce M. Russett, “Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946–1986,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 87, No. 3, 1993, pp. 624–638; and Douglas Lemke, “The Tyranny of Distance: Redefining Relevant Dyads,” *International Interactions*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1995, pp. 23–38.

involving Finland and Djibouti, for which armed conflict between the parties is not feasible given the states' military capabilities and the distance between them. Our relevant dyads therefore aim to include only cases in which State A has the capability to project power against State B. We include two categories of dyads that meet these criteria. First, we assume that all states have the potential to initiate armed conflict against their immediate neighbors. We therefore include two directed dyads for each pair of contiguous states.³ Second, since more powerful states can project military power well beyond their borders, we include unidirectional dyads between these more powerful states and all other states in relevant regions. That is, we include a dyad that reflects the potential for the United States to initiate an interstate conflict against Afghanistan, but not vice versa. Our list of powerful states in each region draws on prior RAND research that estimated the capabilities of states across geographic regions and identified those states that possessed at least 10 percent of the military capabilities in each region.⁴ Table 4.1 provides the list of regional powers identified in this manner.⁵

In total, our models assessed interstate conflict behavior among 61,861 state pair-years covering the period between 1951 and 2007.⁶

Steps Toward Interstate Conflict

Our hypotheses focus on the potential link between U.S. forward troop presence and the occurrence of interstate conflict in the international system. In our statistical analysis, we consider not just higher-intensity interstate conflicts or wars, but also lower-intensity disputes or militarized behavior. We take this approach for three main reasons. First, more-violent interstate conflicts are often the result of escalation from

³ For measurement purposes, we include contiguous dyads that either shared a land border or were separated by no more than 150 miles of open water. The contiguity data used were produced by Correlates of War Project, "Direct Contiguity Data, 1816–2006," Version 3.1, 2016; Douglas M. Stinnett, Jaroslav Tir, Philip Schafer, Paul F. Diehl, and Charles Gochman, "The Correlates of War Project Direct Contiguity Data, Version 3," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2002, pp. 58–66.

⁴ Stephen Watts, Bryan Frederick, Jennifer Kavanagh, Angela O'Mahony, Thomas S. Szayna, Matthew Lane, Alexander Stephenson, and Colin P. Clarke, "A More Peaceful World? Regional Conflict Trends and U.S. Defense Planning," Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, unpublished manuscript.

⁵ In Table 1, no dates are provided for states that were great powers in the region for the entire period of analysis. Given the overwhelming strength of the United States in North America, we did not consider it as a separate region. Although Mexico is geographically part of North America, we include it as a power that can project power into Central American/Caribbean region.

⁶ As noted above, the 2007 end date reflects the availability of cross-national data for some of the control variables used in the analyses. The specifics of these variables are discussed in greater detail below, but the key limiting variables in our analyses are the balance of military capabilities between states in a state pair and the total size of U.S. military personnel, for which the last year of data is 2007. Beyond these variables of interest, data concerning the dependent variable of interest, the occurrence of a militarized interstate dispute (MID) in a state pair, end in 2010.

Table 4.1
Regional Powers, 1951–2007

Region	Regional Powers
Central America/Caribbean	United States Mexico (1975–)
South America	United States Argentina (1946–1990) Brazil
Western Europe	United States France Italy Russia/Soviet Union United Kingdom West Germany/Germany
Eurasia	United States China (2005–) Russia/Soviet Union
West Africa	United States France Nigeria
East and Southern Africa	United States South Africa (1965–) Russia/Soviet Union (1960–1991)
Middle East	United States Egypt (1991–) France (1946–1980) Iran (1965–) Iraq (1975–1991) Russia/Soviet Union (1946–1991) Saudi Arabia (1975–) Turkey United Kingdom (1946–1975)
South Asia	United States China India
East and Southeast Asia	United States China Japan Russia/Soviet Union (1946–1991)

low-level disputes between states.⁷ For example, the 1999 Kargil War followed a series of lower-level hostile exchanges between India and Pakistan. Given their potential for escalation, studying these lower-level disputes can offer information about the risk of

⁷ Alex Braithwaite and Douglas Lemke, “Unpacking Escalation,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2011, pp. 111–123; Robert Hart and William Reed, “Selection Effects and Dispute Escalation: Democracy and Status Quo Evaluations,” *International Interactions*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 1999, pp. 243–264; Paul Senese, “Geographical Proximity and Issue Salience: Their Effects on the Escalation of Militarized Interstate Conflict,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1996, pp. 133–162; Paul Senese, “Between Dispute and War: The Effect of Joint Democracy on Interstate Conflict Escalation,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 1, 1997, pp. 1–27.

war in the international system.⁸ Second, these lower-level disputes happen far more frequently, making them more amenable to statistical analysis than higher-intensity interstate wars, which have become rare in the post-1946 period.⁹ Finally, even if they do not escalate to war, these lower-level disputes can have important consequences of their own, such as arms races and regional tensions that limit international cooperation.¹⁰

Operationally, our models focus on how U.S. forward troop presence affects the likelihood that a state initiates a militarized interstate dispute (MID).¹¹ MIDs include wars and armed conflicts between states, as well as a wide range of militarized activities short of war, such as verbal threats, nonviolent displays of force, and other more limited uses of force.¹²

We examine the incidence of MIDs among state pairs at varying levels of intensity. Figure 4.2 provides a visual representation of this taxonomy. We analyze the incidence of all MIDs as a means of measuring the overall presence of potential hostility in a state pair, and we also analyze two subsets of MIDs, based on the hostility level of the dispute. These include the incidence of low-intensity MIDs (including threats and nonviolent displays of force in state pairs)¹³ and high-intensity MIDs (including uses of force, such as attacks and seizures, and higher-level interstate conflicts). Finally, we also examine the incidence of interstate wars (violent engagements that involve significant fatalities, which are a subset of high-intensity MIDs) as a separate subset of high-intensity MIDs.¹⁴

⁸ Paul D. Senese and John A. Vasquez, *The Steps to War: An Empirical Study*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008.

⁹ Faten Ghosn, Glenn Palmer, and Stuart A. Bremer, "The MID3 Data Set, 1993–2001: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2004, pp. 133–154; Glenn Palmer, Vito D'Orazio, Michael Kenwick, and Matthew Lane, "The MID4 Data Set: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2015, pp. 222–242.

¹⁰ Douglas M. Gibling, Toby J. Rider, and Marc L. Hutchison, "Taking Arms Against a Sea of Troubles: Conventional Arms Races During Periods of Rivalry," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 2005, pp. 131–147; Toby J. Rider, "Understanding Arms Race Onset: Rivalry, Threat, and Territorial Competition," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 71, No. 2, 2009, pp. 693–703; William Nordhaus, John R. Oneal, and Bruce Russett, "The Effects of the International Security Environment on National Military Expenditures: A Multicountry Study," *International Organization*, Vol. 66, No. 3, 2012, pp. 491–513.

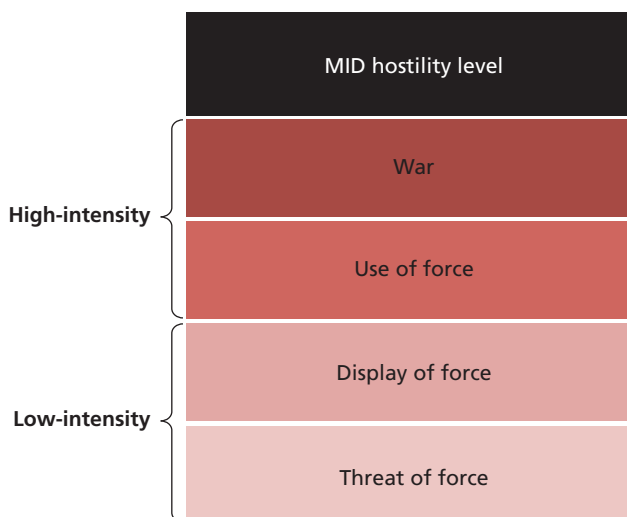
¹¹ Palmer et al., 2015.

¹² Daniel M. Jones, Stuart A. Bremer, and J. David Singer, "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816–1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1996, pp. 163–213.

¹³ Threats of force include verbal statements of militarized intent against another state, and displays of force include nonviolent actions, such as border fortifications, blockades, or territorial incursions, meant to intimidate another state.

¹⁴ Jones, Bremer, and Singer, 1996; Meredith Reid Sarkees and Frank Wayman, *Resort to War: 1816–2007*, Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2010.

Figure 4.2
Hostility Levels of Militarized Interstate Disputes



SOURCE: RAND Analysis of MID4 data (Daniel M. Jones, Stuart A. Bremer, and J. David Singer, "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816–1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1996, pp. 163–213).

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Controls to Isolate the Effect of U.S. Troop Presence on Interstate Conflict

U.S. forward troop presence decisions may themselves be affected by the likelihood of conflict in state pairs, complicating attribution of cause and effect in the relationship between U.S. troop presence and interstate conflict behavior.¹⁵ For example, the United States is more likely to have a larger forward presence where it has significant interests or where these interests face significant threats. For example, the United States has traditionally worried about a single hostile power dominating industrial Eurasia. During the Cold War, therefore, the United States maintained a large presence in Europe and Japan, areas with substantial economic capability that could be threatened by the powerful Soviet military. In another example, although Europe remained a major U.S. national security interest after the Cold War, the fall of the Soviet Union led to a lower level of threat, and therefore, the United States reduced its troop numbers in Europe.

Because the United States may put forces where it thinks they are needed most—in areas where competition and war are most likely or where the stakes are high—it can be difficult to isolate the effect of U.S. troop presence on conflict. From an analyti-

¹⁵ This section outlines several steps we take to address endogeneity between U.S. troop presence and the risk of conflict. Ideally, we would take additional steps, such as using an instrumental variable—a variable that affects the level of U.S. troop presence but is not independently correlated with the risk of interstate conflict. Unfortunately, we were unable to identify such a variable.

cal perspective, if U.S. forward presence is correlated with increased conflict, it may be because the United States deploys more forces to conflict-prone areas, or that the U.S. forward presence itself shapes the risk of conflict. Moreover, other tools of U.S. influence, including alliance commitments and overall U.S. military power, may also affect the conflict behavior of U.S. friends and allies.¹⁶ To better isolate the independent effect of U.S. troop presence, we include additional variables to try to control for these other aspects of U.S. involvement. Our statistical models control for the following conditions:

1. the overall size of the U.S. military force
2. the extent of U.S. interests in a given state or region
3. the risk of interstate conflict in the state pair in question.

First, our models control for the overall size of the U.S. military force in an effort to distinguish between the effects of the localized size of U.S. forces and the global size of U.S. forces.¹⁷ We also include a control for years that took place after the Cold War, when U.S. military hegemony has been the greatest.

Second, to account for the extent of U.S. interests in a state, we include the presence of a U.S. alliance and the level of U.S. military assistance in each state.¹⁸ Both defensive alliances and military assistance indicate a U.S. willingness and interest in defending a given state, providing a similar effect as the forward positioning of U.S. military forces. As discussed previously, alliances and military assistance are both aspects of U.S. presence. Including them in our statistical models allows us to better understand the independent effect that forward troop presence may have, although, as we will see in the intrastate conflict models discussed in Chapter Six, these other aspects of presence may have independent effects on conflict as well.

Third, our models control for a number of factors that could affect the likelihood of militarized disputes or conflict in a given state pair. Drawing on previous RAND research and an extensive review of the academic literature, we include five indicators most likely to affect the conflict behavior of state pairs:¹⁹

¹⁶ Brett Ashley Leeds, "Do Alliances Deter Aggression? The Influence of Military Alliances on the Initiation of Militarized Interstate Disputes," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 2003; Morrow, 2000; Michael R. Kenwick, John A. Vasquez, and Matthew A. Powers, "Do Alliances Really Deter?" *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 77, No. 4, 2015.

¹⁷ Lostumbo et al., 2013; Watts, Frederick, et al., forthcoming.

¹⁸ Data on U.S. alliances from Douglas M. Gibler, *International Military Alliances, 1648–2008*, Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2009. Data on military assistance were compiled by RAND from U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants, Obligations and Loan Authorizations, July 1, 1945–September 30, 2014, Washington, D.C., 2015.

¹⁹ An additional feature of importance in assessing the risk of conflict among states is their level of geographic proximity and interaction, since states that are close are more likely to engage in conflict, as well as cooperation,

- presence of a territorial dispute
- presence of a mutual defensive alliance
- lack of dyadic democracy (i.e., one or both states are nondemocracies)
- minimum level of state wealth
- balance of military capabilities in a state pair.

Territorial claims are often a flashpoint of militarized conflict, especially when contested territory is highly prized by states.²⁰ To operationalize the increased risk of conflict in the presence of a territorial contest, we include a variable indicating the presence of a contested higher-salience territorial claim within a state pair.²¹

States that share a mutual defensive alliance are much less likely to take up arms and engage in militarized conflict against each other.²² As such, we include an indicator for the presence of a mutual defensive alliance agreement in a state pair.²³ Similarly, given that consolidated democracies are much less likely to fight one another, we include an indicator of whether both states in a state pair are governed by democratic regimes.²⁴ In addition, pairs of wealthy states have historically shown a diminished risk of conflict.²⁵ As such, we include the minimum GDP per capita value between the two states in the pair.²⁶

simply by virtue of increased interaction. Since our data, by construction, take state contiguity into account, however, including an additional control variable for state proximity is not necessary.

²⁰ Paul R. Hensel, "Charting a Course to Conflict: Territorial Issues and Interstate Conflict, 1816–1992," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1996, pp. 43–73; and John A. Vásquez and Marie T. Henehan, *Territory, War, and Peace*, New York: Routledge, 2011. Douglas M. Gibler, *The Territorial Peace: Borders, State Development, and International Conflict*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

²¹ Specifically, we include territorial claims whose salience was 7 or higher on the Issue Correlates of War (ICOW) 12-point scale. This scale incorporates a number of metrics of both tangible and intangible salience, including the presence of a permanent population, natural resource deposits, and ethnic or religious importance. Bryan A. Frederick, Paul R. Hensel, and Christopher Macaulay, "The Issue Correlates of War Territorial Claims Data: Procedures and Description," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 54, No. 1, 2017, pp. 99–108.

²² Stuart A. Bremer, "Dangerous Dyads: Conditions Affecting the Likelihood of Interstate War, 1816–1965," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 1992, pp. 309–341.

²³ Gibler, 2009.

²⁴ Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jaggers, Polity IV Data Set, College Park, Md.: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, 2002. In keeping with the most commonly used standard in the literature, established democracies were identified when a state had a polity value of 6 or higher on the scale that ranges from –10 for the least democratic states to +10 for the most democratic states.

²⁵ John R. Oneal and Bruce Russett, "The Classical Liberals Were Right: Democracy, Interdependence, and Conflict, 1950–1985," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 41, 1997, pp. 267–294; John R. Oneal and Bruce Russett, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001.

²⁶ Data from the Maddison Project, database, 2013 version.

War and conflict have generally been found to be more common when states have similar military capabilities. In these situations, states are more likely to miscalculate about their bargaining leverage and the prospects for victory in the event of war.²⁷ To account for the greater risk of conflict when states approach military parity, we control for the balance of military capabilities for each state pair.²⁸

Statistical Modeling Approach

To properly assess the relationship between U.S. forward troop presence and interstate conflict behavior, our statistical models need to take into account characteristics of the data and the contextually specific nature of the relationship between U.S. troop presence and the incidence of conflict. The four most important of these issues that affected our modeling approach are briefly discussed below.

Binary Dependent Variables

Since our statistical models concern the incidence of MIDs, which are binary events (a militarized dispute either occurred between the two states or did not), we utilize logit regressions for binary dependent variables. Logit models are designed to account for the distinct characteristics of binary data.²⁹

Identifying Different Types of Actors

A key challenge to empirically testing the theoretical mechanisms linking U.S. forward presence and interstate conflict is identifying the extent to which each country is a partner or potential adversary of the United States. The causal pathways developed in the previous chapter consider the effects of U.S. forward presence on specific actors, such as ally and adversary states. However, there is no agreed-upon system for identifying the strategic relationship of all states in the international system with the United States. Given the lack of consensus on these measures, our main statistical models begin by assessing the average effect of U.S. forward presence on all states rather than differentiating by state type. Additional models attempt to account for different types of actors in the international system. In general, it is easier to identify states that are close allies of the United States (for example, members of NATO) than it is to identify potential adversaries. For example, while Soviet Bloc states during the Cold War seem logical to include as potential adversaries, Iraq in 1990 and Afghanistan in 2000 would

²⁷ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War*, New York: Free Press, 1973.

²⁸ Data on military parity calculated by RAND from National Material Capabilities (v4.0) dataset—see Correlates of War Project, 2017; J. David Singer, Stuart Bremer, and John Stuckey, “Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820–1965,” in Bruce Russett, ed., *Peace, War, and Numbers*, Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1972, pp. 19–48; J. David Singer, “Reconstructing the Correlates of War Dataset on Material Capabilities of States, 1816–1985,” *International Interactions*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1987, pp. 115–132.

²⁹ We also ran all of the models that follow using rare-events logit and found no substantive difference in the model results.

not necessarily have been easy to identify, and the United States went to war with both states in the following years.

Time Lags

Data on U.S. forward troop presence and MID occurrence are annual, which can complicate the attribution of cause and effect. The occurrence of a MID between two states may lead the United States to strategically move U.S. troops near one or both states. From a statistical standpoint, that could incorrectly make it appear that increases in U.S. troop presence led to the incidence of a MID, when in fact the causal arrow points in the opposite direction. To account for this problem, we lag variables of U.S. forward troop presence by one year.

Interstate hostilities may also be related to many of our risk factors of interstate conflict. For instance, militarized conflict in a state pair may lower the GDP of one state or prompt a shift in that country's regime type. Failing to account for this circular relationship may lead analysts to identify erroneous relationships among risk factors of conflict and the incidence of hostilities. As such, we lag our control variables as well, such that our models analyze the effects of the prior year's value of each variable on the likelihood of conflict in the observation year.³⁰

Independence of Observations

Statistical regression models assume that all of the observations they consider are independent of one another and experience the same rate of the observed behavior of interest, in our case conflict initiation. Our observations, directed dyad years, do not meet these criteria. There are repeated observations of state pairs, some of which may be more conflict-prone than others, across time. Moreover, conflict in one year may make conflict the next year more likely. Failing to correct for the clustered nature of conflicts can lead statistical models to identify statistically significant relationships where they may not actually exist. To correct for these potential complications, our statistical models use clustered robust standard errors and include controls for temporal dependence.³¹

³⁰ We do not, however, use a lag of our Cold War indicator, since this variable is itself a temporal control.

³¹ The standard errors in our models are clustered by directed dyad. We include a count of the number of peace years for each state pair, and the squared and cubic polynomials of peace years (Nathaniel Beck, Jonathan N. Katz, and Richard Tucker, "Taking Time Seriously: Time-Series-Cross-Section Analysis with a Binary Dependent Variable," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 42, No. 4, 1993, pp. 1260–1288; David B. Carter and Curtis S. Signorino, "Back to the Future: Modeling Time Dependence in Binary Data," *Political Analysis*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2010, pp. 271–292). There is also the possibility of interdependence between dyads, since state pairs may share a common state that is at a heightened risk of conflict. There are no perfect fixes for the problem, but we did run alternative models that included a dummy variable for all but one state (Paul Poast, "Dyads Are Dead, Long Live Dyads! The Limits of Dyadic Designs in International Relations Research," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 60, 2016, pp. 369–374).

Findings on U.S. Troop Presence and Interstate Conflict Behavior

This section presents the results of our statistical analysis of U.S. forward troop presence and interstate conflict behavior. Our main findings indicate that, on average, U.S. troop presence was associated with a lower likelihood of interstate war occurrence but a higher likelihood of low-intensity MID occurrence. In addition to these overall relationships, we also present findings that depend on a state's strategic relationship with the United States. States hosting larger U.S. troop deployments were more likely to be the target of high-intensity militarized disputes initiated by U.S. adversaries. In contrast, larger deployments of U.S. troops abroad were associated with fewer militarized disputes initiated by allied states. The following sections discuss these findings in more detail.³²

U.S. Troop Presence Near Potential Target States Is Associated with a Lower Likelihood of Interstate War

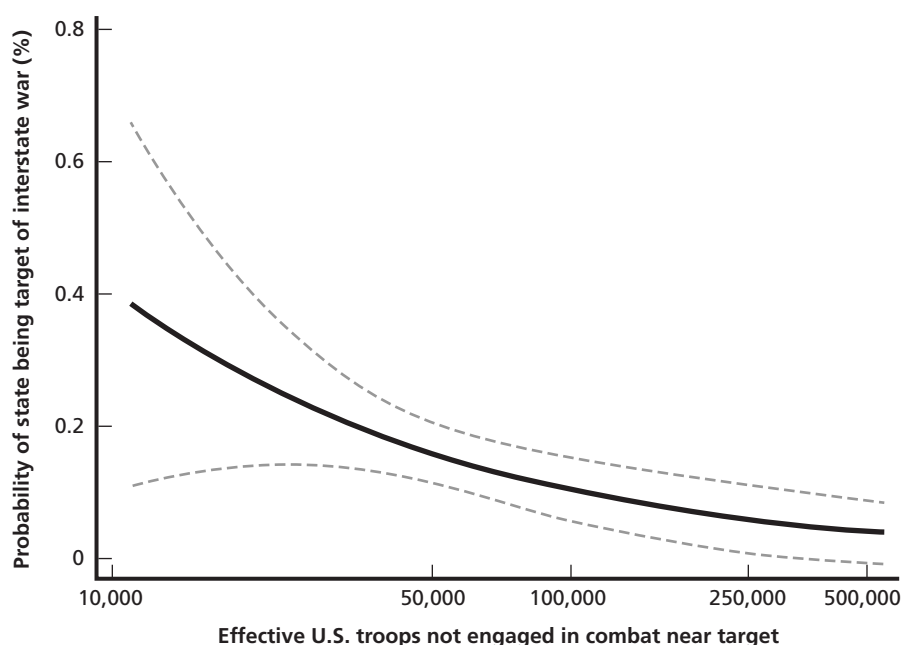
U.S. forward troop presence near, but not in, potential target states is associated with a lower risk of interstate war. The solid black line in Figure 4.3 plots the predicted probability of an interstate war occurrence as the number of U.S. troops not engaged in combat near a potential target state increases. The dashed gray lines represent the 95 percent confidence interval around the point prediction. Taken together, these three lines represent the possible overall predicted relationship between U.S. nearby troops and interstate war occurrence. That is, at the minimum value of nearby U.S. troops, our models predict with 95 percent confidence that the probability of an interstate war could be as little as about 0.10 percent or over 0.60 percent. These results suggest a deterrent effect of U.S. forward troop presence. On average, states are less likely to be the target of an interstate war when there is a large U.S. troop presence nearby.³³

In interpreting these results, it is important to emphasize the rarity of interstate war. Even in state pairs with no U.S. nearby troops, the likelihood of interstate war in a given year remains roughly 0.4 percent. What our models show is that the presence of large numbers of nearby U.S. troops makes a rare event even less likely. Still, these results may be substantively important, considering the immense strategic and political costs that can be associated with interstate war.

³² In addition to the main statistical models discussed here, we also developed several statistical models to examine the sensitivity of our main results. These alternative models examine the effects of using a composite measure of U.S. presence, rather than separating the effects of in-country and nearby U.S. troop presence, the effects of short-term and long-term levels of U.S. troop presence, and the effects of U.S. forward presence when partly accounting for interdependence among our state pairs. The results of these sensitivity analyses are presented in Appendix A.

³³ We also ran an alternative model with the composite measure of U.S. troop presence rather than separating out in-country and nearby troops. Similar to the main model above, this model shows a negative association between the composite measure of U.S. troop presence and interstate war. See Table A.6 in Appendix A.

Figure 4.3
Risk of Interstate War as Nearby U.S. Troop Presence Increases



SOURCE: RAND analysis.

NOTE: The solid black line plots the predicted probability of an interstate war. The dashed gray lines represent the 95 percent confidence interval around the point prediction.

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This finding, which captures an average effect across all state types, could be capturing several potential mechanisms. U.S. forward troop presence could be deterring adversary states from attacking U.S. partners, although our limited ability to consistently identify potential adversaries limits our ability to test this directly, as will be discussed in greater detail below. This average effect could also reflect a restraining influence that the United States is having on U.S. partners. Finally, the apparent deterrent effects of U.S. forward troop presence could be reflecting a general stabilizing effect that makes all states, including those that are neither U.S. allies or adversaries, less likely to initiate conflict.

U.S. Troop Presence Near Potential Initiator States Is Associated with a Lower Likelihood of Interstate War

Similar to the previous finding, large numbers of U.S. troops near potential initiator states are also associated with a reduction in the already low likelihood that such states will initiate an interstate war. While this reduction is associated with a substantial increase in U.S. troop presence in our models, measured in the tens or hundreds of thousands, the strategic consequences of this reduced risk may be very important. As

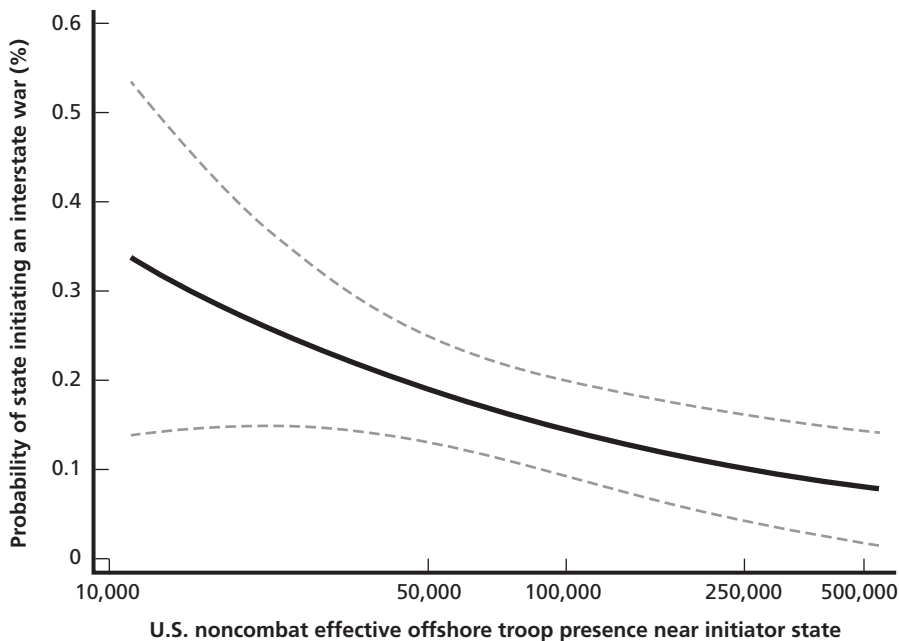
before, in interpreting this result it is important to begin by noting that interstate war is rare, occurring in roughly 0.35 percent of state pairs in a given year even when no U.S. troops are nearby, as shown in Figure 4.4.

U.S. Troop Presence in Potential Target States Is Associated with a Greater Likelihood of Low-Intensity Militarized Behavior

While nearby U.S. troop presence is associated with a lower risk of interstate war, Figure 4.5 shows a positive association between U.S. in-country troop presence and states becoming the target of a low-intensity MID.

This increased risk of low-intensity MIDs that appears to accompany U.S. in-country troop presence is small in overall terms, but large in percentage terms. In our models, a change in U.S. in-country troops from about 100 troops to over 100,000 troops is associated with an increase from about 1.2 to 1.7 percent in the risk of a low-intensity MID. Although more common than interstate war, lower-intensity militarized behavior is still a relatively rare event, and large numbers of U.S. troops appear to only modestly increase its likelihood, by 0.5 percent. However, given the rarity of low-

Figure 4.4
Risk of Interstate War Occurrence as U.S. Troop Presence Near Initiator States Increases

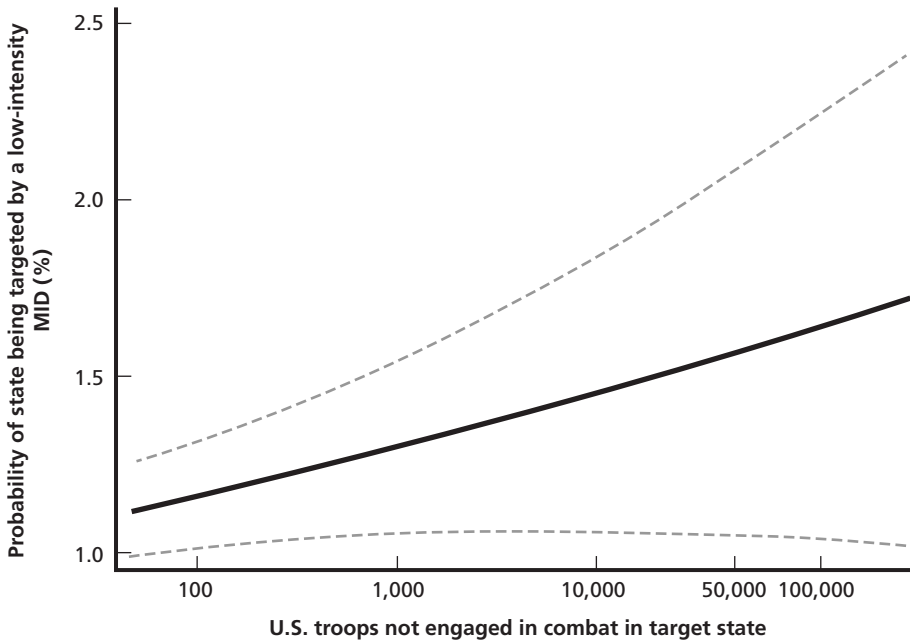


SOURCE: RAND analysis.

NOTE: The solid black line plots the predicted probability of an interstate war. The dashed gray lines represent the 95 percent confidence interval around the point prediction.

RAND RR1906-4.4

Figure 4.5
Risk of Low-Intensity MID Occurrence as U.S. Troop Presence in Target States Increases



SOURCE: RAND analysis.

NOTE: The solid black line plots the predicted probability of a low-intensity MID. The dashed gray lines represent the 95 percent confidence interval around the point prediction.

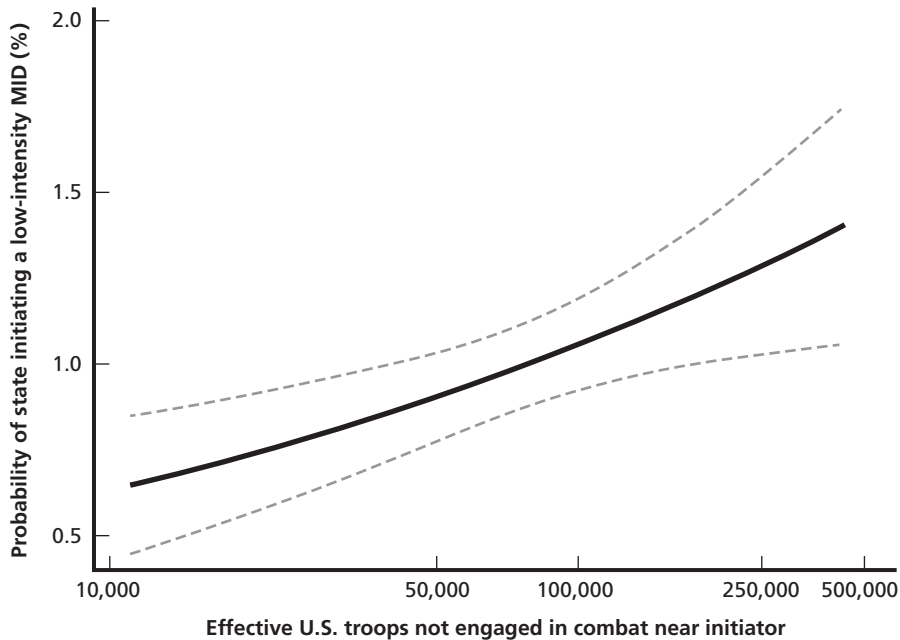
RAND RR1906-4.5

intensity MIDs to begin with, this is a substantial effect in percentage terms, reflecting a 40 percent increase.

U.S. Troop Presence Near Potential Initiator States Is Associated with a Greater Likelihood of Low-Intensity Militarized Behavior

Similarly, increasing the number of U.S. troops not engaged in combat near potential aggressor states significantly increases the risk that those states will initiate a low-intensity MID. Figure 4.6 provides a graphical representation of this relationship. Again, the substantive effect of this potentially threatening effect of U.S. troop presence is small in absolute terms but large in percentage terms. In this model, an increase from 10,000 to 500,000 nearby U.S. troops is associated with an increased risk of low-intensity conflicts from about 0.7 percent to about 1.5 percent, at typical values of our other control variables. This represents only a 0.8 percent increase in the risk of a low-level MID. However, as above, in percentage terms, the effect is large: This rare event is twice as likely to occur when there are a larger number of U.S. troops nearby. This effect strongly parallels the previous finding that U.S. troops in potential target states

Figure 4.6
Risk of Low-Intensity MID Occurrence as U.S. Troop Presence Near Initiator States Increases



SOURCE: RAND analysis.

NOTE: The solid black line plots the predicted probability of a low-intensity MID. The dashed gray lines represent the 95 percent confidence interval around the point prediction.

RAND RR1906-4.6

are associated with an increased risk of potential aggressor states initiating more low-intensity MIDs. Taken together, these effects imply that U.S. forces, either in potential targets or around potential aggressors, are broadly associated with an increased risk of low-intensity militarized disputes.

U.S. Troop Presence in Target States Is Associated with a Greater Likelihood That a Potential U.S. Adversary Will Initiate High-Intensity Militarized Behavior

While the previous findings focused on overall effects on all states, U.S. forward troop presence is typically thought of as being aimed at affecting the calculations of potential adversary states. However, assessing this relationship directly by developing a systematic and rigorous list of potential adversary states is both conceptually and empirically difficult. Some measures, such as states with strongly dissimilar United Nations voting behavior, are intuitively appealing but tend to identify states that differ with the United

States on a small set of issues rather than simply strategic rivals.³⁴ Simply assigning prominent states such as the Soviet Union the role of “adversary” risks becoming ad hoc and biased. As an alternative, our statistical models look at states that have very different alliance portfolios from the United States.³⁵ Diverging alliance portfolios signals that two states are pursuing separate, and potentially competitive, military strategies in the international system. This approach has limitations, including the possibility of capturing states that are simply isolated or eschew formal military alliances. However, it offers a first step toward exploring possible differences in the effect of U.S. troop presence on different types of states.³⁶

Adversary states, defined by alliance dissimilarity with the United States, are more likely to initiate a high-intensity MID against a target state when the United States maintains a large troop presence in that target state.³⁷ This suggests that adversaries may be threatened by U.S. forward presence abroad, leading to an increased risk of militarized behavior. This effect is shown graphically in Figure 4.7, which plots the predicted probability of a high-intensity MID initiated by an adversary state as the number of U.S. troops not engaged in combat in a potential target state increases. In our models, an increase in U.S. troops from under 100 to over 100,000 is associated with more than double the risk of a high-intensity MID initiated by a potential adversary state, given typical values of our other control variables.

However, we also note that many of the MIDs involving these adversary states occur in hot spots or along particularly risk-prone fault lines in the international system. For instance, even excluding the effects of U.S. troops, our statistical models would predict a high risk of MID initiation by the Soviet Union against West Germany, or by North Korea and South Korea, and both West Germany and South Korea were hosts to large numbers of U.S. troops. Although our models take steps to control for these variations in risk of conflict, they do so imperfectly. Therefore, the implication that a smaller U.S. troop presence in these areas would in turn reduce the risk of

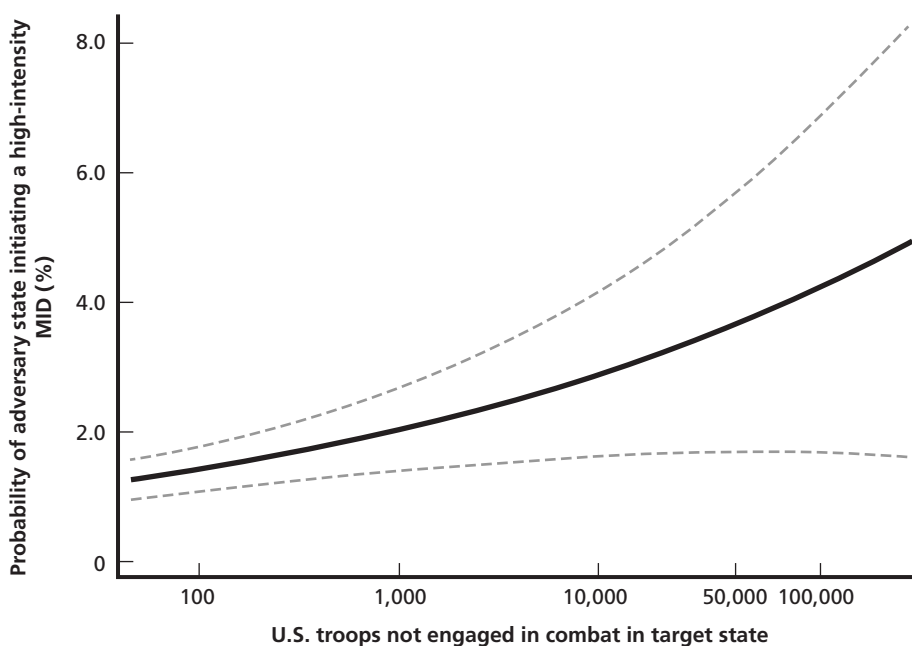
³⁴ Erik Gartzke, “The Affinity of Nations Index, 1946–2002,” 2006; Michael A. Bailey, Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten, “Estimating Dynamic State Preferences Using United Nations Voting Data,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 2017, pp. 430–456.

³⁵ Specifically, we limit our analyses to states whose alliance portfolio similarity with the United States ranks in the bottom 10 percent of all states in the international system, based on the state’s S score. Data from Frank M. Hage, “Choice or Circumstance? Adjusting Measures of Foreign Policy Similarity for Chance Agreement,” *Political Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2011, pp. 287–305; Curtis S. Signorino and Jeffrey M. Ritter, “Tau-b or Not Tau-b: Measuring the Similarity of Foreign Policy Positions,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 1999, pp. 115–144.

³⁶ Using our 10 percent threshold, we determined the majority of states in our adversary cases to be the Soviet Union/Russia and Warsaw Pact states, China, North Korea, and Afghanistan. The 10 percent threshold does not, however, include states that may often be considered U.S. adversaries, such as Iran after 1979 or Iraq after the first Gulf War. A higher threshold, while including additional adversary states, would also include many more states that would typically be considered neutral or isolated.

³⁷ The results of our statistical models are reported in Table A.2 in Appendix A.

Figure 4.7
Risk of High-Intensity MID Initiated by Adversary State as U.S. Troop Presence in Target States Increases



SOURCE: RAND analysis.

NOTE: The solid black line plots the predicted probability of a high-intensity MID. The dashed gray lines represent the 95 percent confidence interval around the point prediction.

RAND RR1906-4.7

high-intensity MID occurrence is difficult to ascertain. As such, while these statistical findings are robust and add nuance to our main statistical findings, we urge caution in drawing substantive inferences from these findings.

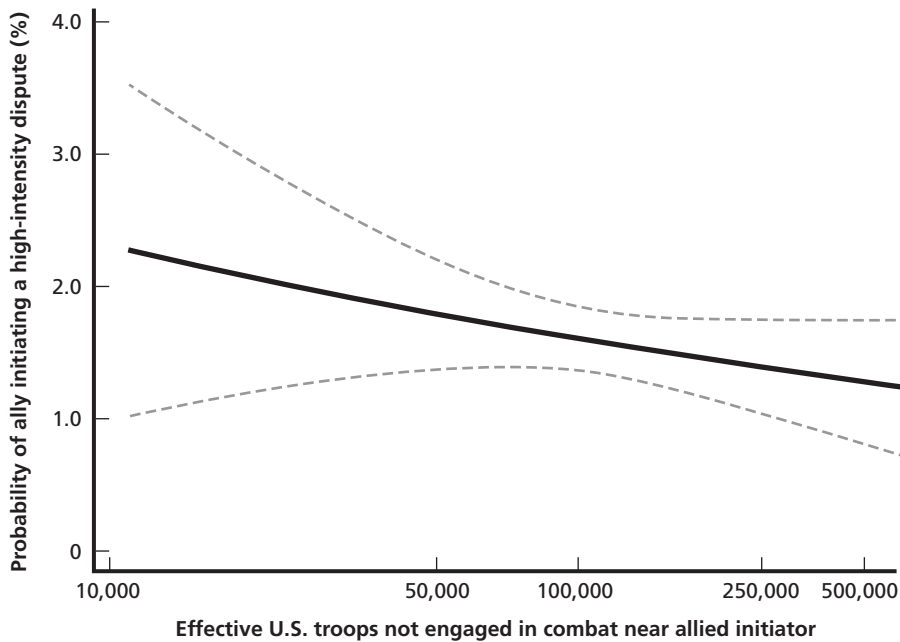
Nearby U.S. Troop Presence Is Associated with a Lower Likelihood of High- and Low-Intensity Militarized Behavior by U.S. Allies

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is often argued that U.S. forward presence can help to restrain allies. We therefore modified our statistical models to consider only the effects of nearby U.S. troop presence on U.S. treaty allies, rather than all states. We found that both in-country and nearby U.S. troop presence appears to be associated with less frequent initiation of both high- and low-intensity MIDs by U.S. allies.³⁸ Increased U.S. in-country troop presence is associated with a decreased risk that allies initiate a low-intensity MID. There is no statistically significant association between

³⁸ The exception to this is that we were unable to develop a statistical model of interstate war initiation by ally states because of a lack of sufficient variation in the dependent variable. U.S. allies have only rarely initiated interstate wars, making it impossible to study using these statistical methods.

in-country U.S. troop presence and the risk that allies initiate a high-intensity MID. However, increased U.S. troop presence *near* ally states is associated with a decreased risk of those states initiating both low- and high-intensity MIDs. This latter effect is shown in Figure 4.8, which plots the predicted risk that an allied state initiates a high-intensity MID against another state. An increase in U.S. troop presence near allied states is associated with a reduction in the risk of high-intensity MID initiation from over 2.0 percent to roughly 0.5 percent.³⁹ This effect could be the product of allies being reassured or restrained by a larger U.S. troop presence in their region.

Figure 4.8
Risk of High-Intensity MID Occurrence as U.S. Troop Presence Near Ally Initiator States Increases



SOURCE: RAND analysis.

NOTE: The solid black line plots the predicted probability of a high-intensity MID. The dashed gray lines represent the 95 percent confidence interval around the point prediction.

RAND RR1906-4.8

³⁹ Similarly, an increase in the effective number of U.S. troops near an allied initiator state is associated with a decreased risk that that ally will initiate a low-intensity MID from over 2.0 percent to about 0.1 percent. An increase of U.S. troop presence in an allied initiator state is associated with a decreased risk of a low-intensity MID initiation from 0.8 percent to about 0.4 percent.

Nearby U.S. Troop Presence Is Associated with a Greater Likelihood That the United States Initiates High- and Low-Intensity Militarized Behavior

The theoretical pathways proposed by the literature also suggest that a larger U.S. troop presence near a potential target state could affect the likelihood that the United States will initiate conflict against that state. As with the previous models, we tested this possibility at three levels of militarized interstate disputes.⁴⁰

The statistical results show that U.S. troop presence near other states is associated with an increased risk that the United States will target those states with both low- and high-intensity MIDs. Theoretically, this increased risk could follow from several mechanisms. First, increased U.S. troop presence could lead to an expansion of U.S. interests in the region or a lower cost of using force. For example, U.S. troop presence in Europe in 1986 allowed the United States to undertake a relatively quick response against Libya for its support of the 1986 terrorist bombing in Berlin. If the United States had needed to deploy forces from the homeland to carry out such an attack, it may have been less likely to do so. Alternatively, this increased risk of conflict could reflect the strategic deployment of U.S. forces near states with which the United States expects to engage in conflict. In 1998, for example, the United States moved substantial forces to Europe in preparation for the NATO bombing campaigns against Yugoslavia.

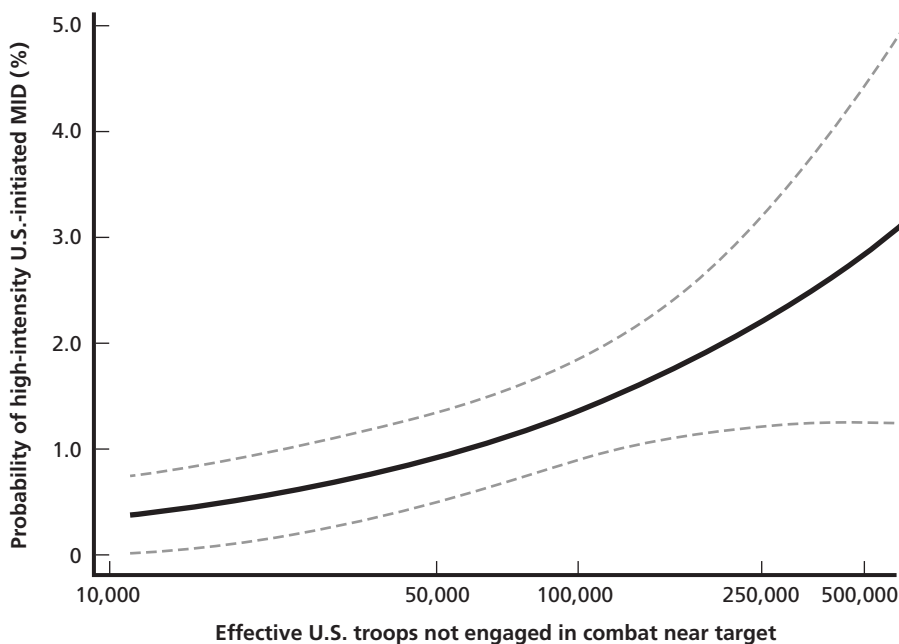
While these effects are statistically significant, substantial increases in the risk of MIDs appear to be associated with very large numbers of nearby U.S. troops as shown in Figure 4.9. As a visual representation of these substantive effects, Figure 4.9 provides predicted probabilities of high-intensity MID initiation by the United States. For example, the model predicts that a change in the effective number of nearby troops from 10,000 to over 500,000 increases the risk of U.S.-initiated high-intensity MIDs by approximately 3.0 percent.⁴¹

Smaller increases in U.S. nearby troops are associated with more-limited increases in the likelihood of such MIDs. Also important to note is that U.S. forward troop presence is not associated with an increased risk that the United States initiates wars against target states. This result could reflect the fact that interstate wars involving the United States are too rare to be statistically significant in our models, that increased U.S. troop presence allows the United States to pursue more-aggressive policies but maintain control over the potential for escalation to war, or that forward presence is simply not related to the likelihood of U.S. interstate war initiation.

⁴⁰ The results of our statistical models are reported in Table A.5 in Appendix A.

⁴¹ Similarly, a change in the effective number of U.S. forces around a potential target state from 10,000 to over 1 million increases the risk of low-intensity MID initiation by less than 3.0 percent.

Figure 4.9
Risk of High-Intensity MID Initiation by U.S. as U.S. Troop Presence Near a Potential Target State Increases



SOURCE: RAND analysis.

NOTE: The solid black line plots the predicted probability of a high-intensity MID. The dashed gray lines represent the 95 percent confidence interval around the point prediction.

RAND RR1906-4.9

Interstate Conflict Models Discussion and Implications

While each of the findings discussed is notable, we highlight three in particular. First, states hosting a larger U.S. troop presence are more likely to be the target of militarized disputes. These militarized disputes may be of higher intensity when the other state is a potential U.S. adversary. These results are consistent with at least two explanations. U.S. troop presence may be larger in or around states that are already most at risk of conflict. Although our models included several controls to better isolate the effect of U.S. troop presence from risk factors for conflict, they cannot fully capture all contextual factors that may influence conflict risk. Alternatively, increased U.S. troop presence may reflect other states, and particularly potential U.S. adversaries, feeling threatened and initiating more militarized behavior against U.S. partners.

Second, a large U.S. troop presence near both target and initiator states is associated with a lower risk of interstate war. Escalating from militarized behavior to war is a consequential decision, so it is reasonable to expect that the apparent deterring effect of U.S. troop presence is stronger at higher levels of conflict intensity. Overall, these findings suggest that even if U.S. troop presence modestly increases the risk of certain

types of militarized behavior, it may also deter escalation to higher levels of conflict. U.S. troop presence may therefore involve trade-offs: a reduced risk of interstate war for a heightened risk of lower-level militarized behavior.

An important addendum to this average effect is that a larger U.S. troop presence is associated with U.S. treaty allies initiating less conflict or militarized behavior at all levels of intensity. This could be because, as outlined in Chapter Three, U.S. troop presence reassures allies or gives the United States more leverage or opportunity to restrain allies. This result is consistent with our theoretical expectation that U.S. forward troop presence has a modest restraining, rather than emboldening, effect on U.S. allies.

Third, states with a larger nearby U.S. troop presence are more likely to be the target of militarized disputes initiated by the United States. This association could reflect strategic increases in U.S. forces in areas where it expects to use them. Alternatively, this could be consistent with an explanation that the United States is more likely to employ forces when the logistical costs to using them are lower.

While all of these findings are statistically significant and robust, application of these findings to specific cases, and to U.S. policy, should be made cautiously. Our statistical results represent average associations between U.S. troop presence and the conflict behavior of different types of states. However, in specific cases, some effects may prove stronger or weaker, and the trade-offs between a reduced likelihood of interstate war and an increased likelihood of lower-level militarized disputes may vary. Moreover, this analysis considers conflict behavior only from 1951 to 2007, a period in which the United States consistently maintained an active role in the international community and a large military presence in areas that are strategically vital to U.S. interests.⁴² This context therefore bounds the scope of our analysis. Our models cannot speak to questions concerning the effects of large-scale U.S. retrenchment, when this context would no longer hold. Relatedly, the United States often uses many tools of foreign policy simultaneously. Our model includes controls to separate out the effects of U.S. military assistance and alliance agreements, but there are likely other levers of U.S. policy (including economic or political tools) that are typically employed alongside troop deployments for which we cannot control.

In spite of these limitations, the analysis still suggests several implications that can inform ongoing policy debates. First, the statistical results suggest that, on average, nearby U.S. troop presence advances a primary U.S. national security goal: reducing the risk of higher-intensity interstate conflict and wars. Second, this benefit may come with a trade-off, potentially making lower-intensity disputes and militarized behavior more likely. The prevalence of such disputes could, in the longer term, have other consequences for U.S. security, such as higher defense spending by adversaries, with potential follow-on effects for higher U.S. defense spending as well. Third, our models

⁴² Stacie L. Pettyjohn, *U.S. Global Defense Posture, 1783–2011*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1244-AF, 2012.

suggest that the deterrent effects noted above are associated with relatively large numbers of U.S. troops. While outside the scope of the present study, the possible deterrent effect of smaller tripwire deployments or threshold effects should be explored in further analysis. Finally, while nearby U.S. troops do appear to make interstate wars less likely, so too may a number of other factors. Our analysis has focused on isolating the effects of U.S. forward presence specifically, but any policy decision to invest greater resources in forward presence as a means of war prevention would need to consider the effectiveness and cost of U.S. troop presence relative to alternative methods.

How U.S. Presence May Influence Intrastate Conflict Behavior

Historically, U.S. troop presence decisions were driven primarily by concerns about deterring interstate war. However, since the end of the Cold War, and especially in the post-9/11 era, U.S. forward presence has also increasingly focused on supporting partner states against internal challengers. U.S. basing decisions and forward troop deployments are particularly focused on addressing state fragility and instability in areas central to the Global War on Terror.¹ Even during the period when U.S. policy was driven mostly by concerns about interstate conflict, U.S. presence may have had unintentional or secondary effects on the risk of intrastate conflict. Just as U.S. presence can affect states' interstate conflict behavior, U.S. presence can alter the strategic calculations of key domestic political actors, including incumbent regimes and opposition groups. Their behavior and interactions, in turn, can affect the likelihood of intrastate conflict. Just as in Chapter Three, where we developed hypotheses regarding the effects of U.S. troop presence and interstate conflict, in this chapter we develop hypotheses on the linkage between U.S. troop presence and intrastate conflict. Moreover, since the literature has highlighted the possibility that military assistance may have important effects on intrastate conflict, we also consider the possible effects of U.S. military assistance on actors in the recipient country.

U.S. Presence and Incentives for Intrastate Conflict Behavior

Intrastate conflict is a complicated process that results from the interaction of multiple groups within the state, including the incumbent regime, opposition movements, ethnic groups, and student or labor groups.² Depending on these various interactions, intrastate conflict can manifest in several ways.

¹ McNerney et al., 2014.

² Andreas Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002; Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, "Why Civil Resistance Works," *International Security*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2008, pp. 7–44.

Scholars and analysts are often concerned with the occurrence of civil wars and insurgencies, in which incumbent governments are pitted against armed rebel or militant groups for control of the state.³ Civil wars and insurgencies often entail prolonged violence within the state and a greater risk that conflict will spread to neighboring states and destabilize entire regions.⁴ In the extreme, prolonged and expansive civil conflicts can lead to complete state collapse, increasing the risk that the state becomes subject to rebel rule and an open host for terrorist groups.⁵ Years of civil war in Somalia, for instance, eventually led to governmental collapse, which led to a military intervention by neighboring Ethiopia to contain the hostilities.

But in much the same way that full-scale interstate wars are often the result of escalations from lower-intensity conflicts, civil wars and insurgencies are themselves often the product of lower-intensity intrastate conflicts. For instance, rebel groups may begin their dissidence as political opposition movements and only turn to violence when forcibly excluded from the domestic political process or in response to government abuses. On the other side of this interaction, incumbent governments may rely on repression and human rights abuses to put down domestic opposition movements, dampening or enflaming the risk of full-scale civil war.

These mechanisms are highlighted in Syria's spiral toward civil war in 2011–2012. As one chapter in the broader Arab Spring of 2011, the conflict began as a series of largely nonviolent protests, with demonstrators demanding democratic and economic reforms. The Syrian regime responded with police crackdowns and an increasingly militarized response to mass demonstrations. Protestors' demands, in turn, became more extensive, and their tactics became increasingly violent. This spiral of government-opposition violence eventually escalated to the point of armed insurrection, setting the stage for full-scale civil war.⁶

As the Syrian example illustrates, processes of intrastate conflict are often interconnected and cyclical. Scholarly works have only recently begun examining how U.S.

³ Nicholas Sambanis, "What Is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 48, No. 6, 2004, pp. 814–858; Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

⁴ David Lake and Donald S. Rothchild, *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998; Halvard Buhaug and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Contagion or Confusion? Why Conflicts Cluster in Space," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 2, 2008, pp. 215–233; Idean Salehyan, "No Shelter Here: Rebel Sanctuaries and International Conflict," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 70, No. 1, 2008, pp. 54–66; Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, Idean Salehyan, and Kenneth Schultz, "Fighting at Home, Fighting Abroad: How Civil Wars Lead to International Disputes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 52, No. 4, 2008, pp. 479–506.

⁵ James A. Piazza, "Incubators of Terror: Do Failed and Failing States Promote Transnational Terrorism?" *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 3, 2008, pp. 468–488.

⁶ Anup Kaphle, "Timeline: Unrest in Syria," *Washington Post*, January 20, 2014; Jason Brownlee, Tarek Masoud, and Andrew Reynolds, *The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015; Samer N. Abboud, *Syria (Hot Spots in Global Politics)*, Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2016.

forward presence can affect these strategic interactions between domestic political forces, so there is scant systematic evidence, and the literature is largely unsettled as to how U.S. forward presence generally affects the risk of intrastate conflict in partner nations. However, the literature does suggest several ways that U.S. presence may affect each of the two key actors, incumbent regimes and opposition groups.

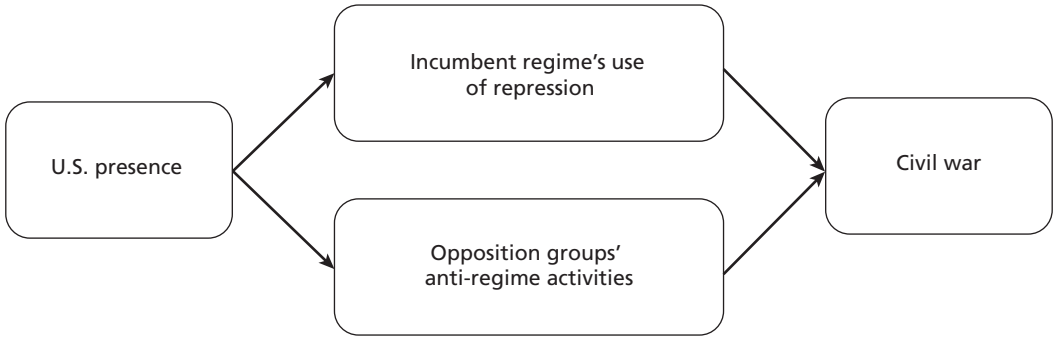
U.S. presence may increase U.S. leverage on partner regimes to improve human rights conditions within their boundaries. Alternatively, potential opposition groups may be deterred from challenging incumbent regimes if the government’s security apparatus is bolstered by U.S. assistance. U.S. presence may also enflame existing grievances against the regime, and governments, feeling secure through outside support, may increase human rights abuses to punish dissent. Table 5.1 summarizes these hypotheses, which are outlined in more detail below.

Increased state repression and opposition grievances can, in turn, make civil war more likely. Cycles of dissent and government violence can escalate to full-scale civil war, just as low-level interstate disputes can escalate to war between states. (Figure 5.1 depicts these relationships visually.) Therefore, to fully evaluate the effects of U.S. presence on civil war and intrastate conflict, it is critical that we consider lower-level responses to U.S. forward presence by partner governments and opposition forces.

Table 5.1
Hypothesized Effects of U.S. Forward Military Presence on Intrastate Conflict

Actor	Decreases Conflict	Increases Conflict
Incumbent regime	Restrained from violence by United States	Emboldened to act violently
Opposition group	Deterred from challenging U.S.-backed regime	Greater motivation to challenge U.S.-backed regime

Figure 5.1
Pathways Linking U.S. Presence, Intrastate Violence, and Civil War



Incumbent Regime

When incumbent regimes lack popular legitimacy, they often rely on repression and human rights abuses to consolidate and maintain their political security in the face of dissent or domestic political challenges.⁷ Specifically, states may make use of restrictions on movement and organization, arrests, torture, extrajudicial killings, or any number of fear tactics to alter dissidents' decisions about opposing the regime.⁸ Such abuses can be targeted and affect only select groups, as with Egyptian bans on the Muslim Brotherhood, or widespread, and they may be utilized either preemptively or in response to specific periods of dissent.⁹ In all cases, the goal of such violence is to limit the influence of opposition groups on the domestic political process and/or inhibit popular capacity to mobilize against the state.¹⁰

U.S. Presence Can Restrain Incumbent Regimes from Using Violence

Increased U.S. presence in partner nations could reduce the likelihood that incumbent regimes resort to violence against their citizens. Legally, the United States is required to consider the human rights records of partner nations when evaluating continued security cooperation.¹¹ And there is evidence that, in practice, the United States does consider human rights practices in some of its military aid and presence decisions.¹²

Given stated U.S. policy and some past precedent, U.S. partners may fear that the use of repression will result in the removal of U.S. presence and the external security and other benefits it provides. In this sense, U.S. presence may make an incumbent

⁷ Christian Davenport and David Armstrong, "Democracy and the Violation of Human Rights: A Statistical Analysis from 1976–1996," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 2004, pp. 538–554; David Armstrong, "Measuring the Democracy-Repression Nexus," *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2009, pp. 403–412; Barbara Geddes, "What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1999, pp. 115–144.

⁸ Christian Davenport, *State Repression and the Domestic Democratic Peace*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007b; Darius Rejali, *Torture and Democracy*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007.

⁹ Consistent preemptive repression, over time, allows the state to govern through fear, as human rights abuses against even low-level dissent becomes institutionalized and part of everyday life (Patrick Regan and Errol Henderson, "Democracy, Threats and Political Repression in Developing Countries: Are Democracies Internally Less Violent?" *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2002, pp. 119–136).

¹⁰ Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1978.

¹¹ David P. Forsythe, "Congress and Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Fate of General Legislation," *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1987, pp. 382–404; U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Office of Policy Planning and Public Diplomacy, *Leahy Vetting*, 2014.

¹² Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998; Sam R. Bell, K. Chad Clay, and Carla Martinez Machain, "The Effect of U.S. Troop Deployments on Human Rights," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2016, pp. 1–24; Shannon Lindsey Blanton, "Foreign Policy in Transition: Human Rights Abuses, Democracy, and U.S. Arms Exports," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 4, 2005, pp. 647–667.

government less likely to resort to violence. There is research that supports this hypothesis, with evidence that some regimes have adjusted human rights practices to strategically maintain levels of U.S. aid.¹³

U.S. presence may also be accompanied by security cooperation and security sector reform activities where U.S. forces can encourage the adoption of norms and institutions that promote human rights. In this way, U.S. presence abroad can assist in the development of long-term security institutions that favor greater respect for human rights.¹⁴

U.S. Presence Can Embolden Incumbent Regimes to Use Violence

There is also evidence to suggest that, in some cases, increased U.S. presence either has no effect or actually increases human rights abuses by partner states. U.S. military assistance to Colombia between 1988 and 2005, for instance, is associated with a substantial increase in governmental attacks on civilians.¹⁵

The key factor linking how U.S. military presence affects partner states' use of repression and human rights abuses is often partner states' strategic importance to U.S. interests.¹⁶ Previous works on the global distribution of U.S. economic and military aid suggest that while the United States often considers the human rights records of partner states, such considerations are often secondary to U.S. strategic and security interests.¹⁷ Similarly, in spite of continued human rights abuses in the wake of the Arab Spring protests of 2011, the U.S. government resumed military support to Bahrain, the long-standing site of a U.S. naval base in the Persian Gulf, in 2015.¹⁸ If U.S. security interests are the key factors driving forward presence, then partners may see little risk

¹³ Jerry M. Laurienti, *The U.S. Military and Human Rights Promotion*, Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2007.

¹⁴ Seth G. Jones, Olga Oliker, Peter Chalk, C. Christine Fair, Rollie Lal, and James Dobbins, *Securing Tyrants or Fostering Reform? U.S. Security Assistance to Repressive and Transitioning Regimes*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-550-OSI, 2006.

¹⁵ It was also associated with increased violence by paramilitary groups, as discussed below (Oeindrila Dube and Suresh Naidu, "Bases, Bullets, and Ballots: The Effect of U.S. Military Aid on Political Conflict in Africa," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 77, No. 1, 2015, pp. 249–267).

¹⁶ Bell, Clay, and Martinez Machain, 2016, pp. 1–24.

¹⁷ James Lebovic, "National Interests and U.S. Foreign Aid: The Carter and Reagan Years," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1988, pp. 115–135; Laurienti, 2007; Shannon Lindsey Blanton, "Impact of Human Rights on U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America," *International Interactions*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 1994, pp. 339–358; Tijen Demirel-Pegg and James Moskowitz, "U.S. Aid Allocation: The Nexus of Human Rights, Democracy, and Development," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 2009, pp. 181–198.

¹⁸ BBC, "U.S. Resumes Military Aid to Bahrain," June 29, 2015; Alexander Cooley and Daniel H. Nexon, "Bahrain's Base Politics: The Arab Spring and America's Military Bases," *Foreign Affairs*, April 5, 2011.

of U.S. punishment for governments' human rights practices. As a result, U.S. presence may not influence substantially the human rights practices of partner governments.¹⁹

In fact, increased U.S. presence may increase the human rights abuses of some partner governments. U.S. troop presence or military aid may improve the incumbent regime's security against external threats, freeing up resources for domestic repression. Additionally, arms transfers to partner states meant to buffer states' security against external threats may unintentionally give an incumbent regime tools that they can turn toward repression.²⁰

Increased U.S. presence also provides regimes with an external source of nontax revenue, and previous works show that increases in nontax revenue increase the risk of government human rights abuses.²¹ As governments' nontax revenue increases, there is less economic incentive for the regime to promote political and economic productivity by its populace for sustained revenue. Combined with external security guarantees offered by U.S. presence, economic security further insulates incumbent regimes from their populace and lowers the costs to the regime associated with human rights abuses.

Potential Rebels and Opposition Groups

U.S. forward presence might affect the likelihood that opposition groups challenge the incumbent regime. Existing scholarship suggests that U.S. forward presence may deter or exacerbate grievances, giving potential rebels greater motivation to take up arms. These pathways are met with mixed empirical support, which may reflect the diversity of opposition motivations globally.

U.S. Presence Can Deter Opposition Groups

As discussed above, by directly supporting incumbent governments militarily, U.S. presence in partner states improves the capacity of the government to put down rebellion and dissent. Potential rebels and opposition groups, for their part, are strategic actors and regularly consider the feasibility of campaigns against the government. Said another way, potential opposition movements, in deciding whether to challenge the regime, calculate their odds of success or survival. As U.S. military presence or aid

¹⁹ Bell, Clay, and Martinez Machain, 2016.

²⁰ Shannon Lindsey Blanton, "Instruments of Security or Tools of Repression: Arms Imports and Human Rights Conditions in Developing Countries," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 1999, pp. 233–244.

²¹ Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith, "The Pernicious Consequences of UN Security Council Membership," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 54, No. 5, 2010, pp. 667–686; Jacqueline H. R. DeMeritt and Joseph K. Young, "A Political Economy of Human Rights: Oil, Natural Gas, and State Incentives to Repress," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2013, pp. 99–120.

increases the capacity of partner states to combat rebellion, opposition groups may be deterred from taking up arms or even launching a nonviolent anti-regime campaign.²²

As an example, continuing U.S. presence in Afghanistan is largely centered on supporting and extending the capabilities of Afghan military units against a persistent insurgency. Similarly, U.S. security assistance to vulnerable states, such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Egypt, has largely focused on improving partner states' capacities to deter radical anti-regime elements, ranging from political to militant groups, that may ultimately threaten U.S. regional interests.

U.S. Presence Can Reduce Opposition Groups' Grievances

U.S. military presence abroad may indirectly decrease the risk of anti-regime campaigns through economic development. Challenges to government rule, either violent or nonviolent, are often driven by economic and political grievances resulting from economic inequality.²³ Some research has found that U.S. troop presence is associated with accelerated economic and social development, in part because of greater access to U.S. trade and investment.²⁴ In addition, increased U.S. presence often removes some of the security burden for partner states, allowing governments to reinvest funds earmarked for security into infrastructure or welfare projects, which can grow political support through economic improvements.²⁵ These pathways may explain why Ethiopia and Djibouti, two of the largest hosts of U.S. military presence in Africa, are also two of the fastest-growing economies in sub-Saharan Africa.²⁶

²² Alex Braithwaite, "Resisting Infection: How State Capacity Conditions Conflict Contagion," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 2010, pp. 311–319; James D. Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 98, No. 1, 2003, pp. 75–90; Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Dominic Rohner, "Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol. 61, No. 1, 2009, pp. 1–27; Davenport, 2007b.

²³ Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, "Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 52, No. 2, 2008, pp. 436–455; Edward N. Muller, "Income Inequality, Regime Repressiveness, and Political Violence," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 1985, pp. 47–61; Erica Chenoweth and Jay Ulfelder, "Can Structural Conditions Explain the Onset of Nonviolent Uprisings?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2015; Halvard Buhaug, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Square Pegs in Round Holes: Inequalities, Grievances, and Civil War," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 2, 2014, pp. 418–431; Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol. 56, No. 4, 2004, pp. 563–595.

²⁴ Garrett Jones and Tim Kane, "U.S. Troop Deployments and Foreign Economic Growth," *Defense and Peace Economics*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2012, pp. 225–249; Tim Kane, "Development and U.S. Troop Deployments," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2012, pp. 255–273; Glenn Biglaiser and Karl DeRouen, "Following the Flag: Troop Deployments and U.S. Foreign Direct Investment," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 4, 2007, pp. 835–854; Glenn Biglaiser and Karl DeRouen, "The Interdependence of U.S. Troop Deployments and Trade in the Developing World," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2009, 247–263.

²⁵ Bell, Clay, and Martinez Machain, 2016.

²⁶ The World Bank, "World Development Indicators," 2016.

As new economic opportunities open as a result of increased U.S. presence, economic grievances may diminish, and previously aggrieved portions of the populace feel less need to mobilize against the regime. At the same time, improving economic conditions may limit the recruiting capabilities of militant and terrorist groups, as fewer individuals are drawn toward armed struggle via economic necessity or anti-regime grievances. Although indirect, these added benefits of U.S. presence may assist in strengthening the long-term stability of partner states against violent opposition.²⁷

U.S. Presence Can Increase Opposition Groups' Motivation

U.S. forward presence, however, also carries a risk of enflaming popular sentiments against incumbent governments and inciting greater anti-regime movements. U.S. forward military presence and U.S. global interests are often cited as central tenets of anti-American sentiments and terrorist attacks in partner states.²⁸

U.S. troop presence in partner nations may be perceived by local populations as a soft occupation or through a lens of post-colonialism, leading to nationalist sentiments against foreign invasion or involvement in domestic politics. Foreign troop presence can also be associated with other negative consequences, such as increased demand for illicit activities, environmental damage, and disruptions to local markets that can further alienate local populations. Such sentiments have plagued external actors in domestic politics, notably in galvanizing militant support against Russian forces in Afghanistan and U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁹ As such, many experts assert that U.S. troop presence abroad often helps foment popular opposition or radicalization that U.S. security cooperation is designed to hinder.³⁰

²⁷ McNerney et al., 2014.

²⁸ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, New York: Penguin Publishing, 2005; Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümper, "Foreign Terror on Americans," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 48, No. 1, January 2011, pp. 3–17. Braithwaite (2015) has found a positive association between in-country troop presence by any foreign power, not just the United States, and transnational terrorist attacks against that foreign power. Similarly, Pape found association between troop presence by any democracy and suicide terrorist attacks (Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3, 2003, pp. 343–361).

²⁹ Joby Warrick, *Black Flags: The Rise of Isis*, Toronto: Random House, 2015; Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*, New York: Knopf, 2006; Coll, 2005; Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon, eds., *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War Two to the Present*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010. For an argument that host nations have been making greater demands on the United States to address such concerns since the end of the Cold War, see Andrew I. Yeo, "Security, Sovereignty, and Justice in U.S. Overseas Military Presence," *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, Winter 2014. In some cases, popular movements against U.S. presence have led to changes in U.S. basing; see Catherine Lutz, ed., *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle Against U.S. Military Posts*, New York: New York University Press, 2009.

³⁰ Alexander Cooley, "Base Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 6, 2005, pp. 79–92; Thomas Gries, Daniel Meierrieks, and Margarette Redlin, "Oppressive Governments, Dependence on the USA, and Anti-American Terrorism," *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol. 61, No. 1, 2015, pp. 83–103.

Similarly, U.S. military presence abroad may indirectly increase opposition movements by increasing human rights abuses by partner governments. Scholars have noted that the use of repression and human rights abuses, designed to suppress anti-regime activity, often serves to increase dissent.³¹ Human rights abuses diminish popular support for the regime and increase popular anti-regime sentiments.³² At the same time, repression of peaceful dissent may prompt opposition movements to substitute violence for peaceful protest as a strategic means of survival.

Net Effects of U.S. Presence on Intrastate Conflict

Each of these pathways link U.S. presence with the belligerent actions of partner regimes and opposition groups, respectively. But these actions by governments and opposition groups, while independent outcomes, are also intermediate effects that may put partner states at an increased risk of civil war. As noted previously, the belligerent actions of governments and opposition groups are interdependent; levels of state repression and anti-regime activity are strategically connected. These lower-level interactions can escalate through increasing levels of violence, resulting in full-scale civil war.

As such, this report focuses on both the intermediate effects of U.S. presence, state repression and anti-regime activity, and the ultimate effect of civil war. However, while our intermediate pathways toward civil war are often interdependent and cyclical, our statistical modeling approach forces us to treat our three outcomes separately. While we recognize this limitation, our approach of separating the effects of U.S. presence by intrastate actor, and examining the combined effects of actors' intermediate actions on the risk of civil war, still can provide important insights into the effects of U.S. forward presence on the risk of intrastate conflict around the world.

³¹ Christian Davenport, "State Repression and Political Order," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 10, 2007a, pp. 1–23; Mark Irving Lichbach, "Deterrence or Escalation? The Puzzle of Aggregate Studies of Repression and Dissent," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 1987, pp. 266–297; Mohammed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Reiner, 2003; William H. Moore, "Repression and Dissent: Substitution, Context, and Timing," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 45, No. 3, 1998, pp. 851–873.

³² Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1946–1991*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Empirical Assessment of U.S. Presence and Intrastate Conflict Behavior

In this chapter, we present a series of statistical models that evaluate the relationship between U.S. forward presence and intrastate conflict. U.S. forward presence, either through troop deployments or military assistance, can have important effects on intrastate dynamics, influencing government actors and opposition groups alike. To capture these potential effects, we consider several distinct outcome measures related to intrastate conflict. We find little evidence that U.S. troop presence—either in country or nearby—has a significant effect on conflict outcomes. The effects of troop presence are neither consistent across models nor robust. In contrast, we find evidence that U.S. military assistance is associated with increased risks of anti-regime campaigns, state repression, and, ultimately, civil war.

Our Approach to Statistically Modeling Intrastate Conflict

In this section, we introduce our measures of intrastate conflict and describe our data sources and their respective limitations. We then discuss our efforts to isolate the effects of U.S. presence on intrastate conflict and describe our modeling strategy.

Steps Toward Intrastate Conflict

As discussed in Chapter Five, U.S. presence can affect incumbent regimes' incentives to pursue state repression and opposition groups' incentives to launch anti-regime activities. The actions and reactions of these groups can give rise to low-level intrastate conflict or widespread civil war. In Chapter Four, we discussed the benefits of considering the relationship between U.S. presence and intermediate indicators short of interstate war, such as low-intensity MIDs. The same logic applies in the case of intrastate war, for three main reasons. First, intermediate intrastate behaviors, such as state repression and anti-regime campaigns, often precede intrastate conflict. Second, looking at the relationship between U.S. presence and intermediate indicators may help to identify which actor is most affected by U.S. presence—the incumbent regime or the opposition groups. This, in turn, could help policymakers to craft policies that can offset any

negative effects of U.S. presence. Finally, state repression and anti-regime campaigns happen more frequently than civil wars, making it easier to detect how U.S. presence may affect them using statistical models.

State Repression

State repression can refer to a broad spectrum of policies. At one end of this spectrum, states may place restrictions on civil and political liberties, such as limiting political speech or banning certain political parties. Many regimes, however, do not stop at such measures and further employ torture, extrajudicial killings, or other forms of targeted violence against civilians. We focus on the latter set of policies, which are often defined as “violations of ‘physical integrity rights.’”¹ We do so because violent infringements are most likely to contribute to the risk of intrastate conflict.

There are several measures of state repression that are used in the academic literature.² We selected a measure created by Christopher Fariss,³ for two reasons. First, the Fariss measure accounts for changes in reporting on and norms about state repression over time. For instance, human rights abuses committed by governments in recent years may receive substantially more attention from news outlets and activist organizations than in previous decades, leading to a seeming increase in the number or severity of abuses. Without correcting for this change, we may mistake increased reports of abuse, which result from better monitoring and detection, as an actual increase in repression. To avoid this problem, the Fariss measure corrects for changing norms and trends in the respect for human rights over time. Second, this indicator of state repression provides the widest temporal coverage, 1949–2013.

Anti-Regime Campaigns

We examine anti-regime campaigns in which domestic opposition groups initiate a coordinated and sustained campaign aimed at achieving maximalist goals against the

¹ Christopher J. Fariss, “Respect for Human Rights Has Improved over Time: Modeling the Changing Standard of Accountability,” *American Political Science Review*, May 2014, Vol. 108, No. 2, p. 303; Reed M. Wood and Mark Gibney, “The Political Terror Scale (PTS): A Re-Introduction and a Comparison to CIRI,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2010, pp. 367–400; David L. Cingranelli and David L. Richards, “The Cingranelli and Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Data Project,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2010, pp. 410–424.

² Two commonly used measures score states on their overall level of repression each year from 1976 to 2008 using the same scale, known as the Political Terror Scale (PTS; Mark Gibney, Linda Cornett, Reed Wood, Peter Haschke, and Daniel Arnon, “The Political Terror Scale 1976–2015,” 2016), but draws on different source materials: Amnesty International (Amnesty International, homepage, 2017) or State Department reports (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Human Rights Reports, various years). A third measure uses State Department reports to score states on specific types of repression then generates a final score by combining these separate factors; we run our models on these datasets as a robustness check on our results, as discussed later in the chapter; Wood and Gibney, 2010; Cingranelli and Richards, 2010.

³ Fariss, 2014.

incumbent regime, have a clear organizational structure, and include at least 1,000 participants.⁴ Groups' goals are described as *maximalist* if they pursue major political change, such as regime turnover or secession. Anti-regime campaigns thus represent substantial and potentially sustained challenges to regime rule, rather than brief movements of isolated protests, riots, or other minor challenges that may not immediately threaten partner governments. Note that this definition allows for campaigns to employ violent or nonviolent tactics. Including both types of campaigns is important for our theoretical pathways, since even nonviolent movements can radicalize or escalate their tactics. As such, this measure can help us get leverage on broader societal grievances that may produce political conflict but not result in clashes or warfare.

Armed Conflict and Civil War

Both state repression and anti-regime campaigns are also potentially intermediate effects that contribute to states' risk of experiencing full-scale civil wars. Broadly, civil wars are armed conflicts pitting organized nonstate rebel or militant groups against the military forces of incumbent governments. For rebels, the aims of such conflicts are to force some substantial change in the state's political environment, such as toppling the regime and taking over political power, seceding from the state, or forcing greater rights and autonomies for certain groups.⁵

Civil wars often vary in their intensity. While the Syrian civil war, for example, has grown to involve multiple rebel groups and become a geopolitical flashpoint, many civil wars involve low levels of violence. Therefore, like our statistical models of interstate conflict, we consider the effects of U.S. forward presence on (1) all civil wars and (2) low-intensity and high-intensity civil wars separately. There are several benefits to this approach. First, like interstate wars, high-intensity civil wars are often the result of escalation from low-level insurgencies. These lower-level conflicts can signal the risk of broader conflict in the state, and U.S. forward presence might influence the risk that these low-intensity conflicts escalate to full-scale civil war. Second, low-intensity civil wars occur far more frequently, making them more amenable to statistical analyses.

Using standard convention in the civil wars literature, we define low-intensity civil wars as conflicts between governments and rebel groups that result in at least 25 battle-related deaths, but not more than 1,000 battle-related deaths. We define high-intensity civil wars as conflicts that result in at least 1,000 battle-related deaths.⁶

⁴ Data from Erica Chenoweth and Orion A. Lewis, "Unpacking Nonviolent Campaigns: Introducing the NAVCO 2.0 Dataset," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 50, No. 3, 2013, pp. 415–423.

⁵ Sambanis, 2004; Kalyvas, 2006.

⁶ Data from Peter Wallensteen, *Understanding Conflict Resolution*, fourth edition, Los Angeles, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2015.

Isolating the Effects of U.S. Presence on Intrastate Conflict

As with our statistical models of interstate conflict, we control for several factors in order to isolate the effect of U.S. presence on conflict. First, we control for a country's risk of intrastate conflict in a given year. Second, we control for the U.S. security relationship with each country. Finally, we control for the global strategic environment.

States at Risk for Intrastate Conflict

Decisions about U.S. troop deployments and military assistance may be affected by a country's preexisting risk of intrastate conflict. To more accurately isolate the effects of U.S. forward presence, we include several control variables to capture the preexisting risk of conflict across states.⁷ Since wealthier states are much less likely to experience intrastate conflicts, we include a measure of GDP per capita.⁸ In addition to being more economically developed, wealthier states tend to have more effective institutions and resources to deter or defeat opposition movements.⁹

The political structure of the state is another important determinant in intrastate conflict risk. Therefore, we include an indicator of the level of democracy/autocracy in the state.¹⁰ Broadly representative and inclusive institutions can help resolve ideological differences and political disagreements through peaceful means, thus preventing conflict from erupting. Alternatively, particularly nondemocratic regimes may effectively utilize institutionalized repression to preemptively crush opposition before conflict.¹¹

Similarly, states undergoing political transition, either toward or away from democracy, tend to experience more conflict. For example, democratization has a

⁷ Ideally, we would have found an instrumental variable to better account for endogeneity between U.S. troop presence and intrastate conflict. Unfortunately, we were unable to identify such a variable. Another study proposed two instruments: U.S. alliances and distance from the United States. However, we have concerns about using these as instruments. First, although U.S. allies do tend to have a larger in-country troop presence, these states tend to be wealthier, more democratic, and more internally stable than most states. As a result, we would expect a positive correlation between U.S. alliances and respect for human rights even in the absence of U.S. troop presence. Second, although distance from the United States is arguably unrelated to human rights abuses, the data presented in Chapter Two do not support the argument that U.S. troop presence is correlated with distance from the United States (Bell, Clay, and Martinez Machain, 2016).

⁸ Data from J. Bolt and J. L. van Zanden, "The Maddison Project: Collaborative Research on Historical National Accounts," *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 67, No. 3, 2014, pp. 627–651.

⁹ Fearon, 2005; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Thad Dunning, *Crude Democracy: Natural Resource Wealth and Political Regimes*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

¹⁰ Specifically, we include the linear and square terms of the Polity IV measure (Marshall and Jaggers, 2002). The polity score is a 21-point measure. At the low end of this scale are authoritarian regimes (e.g., hereditary monarchies and personalist dictatorships), while consolidated democracies make up the high end. In our empirical analysis below, we include this measure, along with a quadratic term (i.e., the variable squared) to capture the potential nonlinear relationship between democracy and conflict discussed above.

¹¹ Håvard Hegre, Tanja Ellingsen, Scott Gates, and Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change and Civil War 1816–1992," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 95, No. 1, 2001, pp. 33–48.

largely positive effect on long-term conflict, but in the short term, as the regime relaxes its control over the population, regime challengers may see new opportunities for civil disobedience and other anti-regime activities. Regimes in transition may also be more likely to use violence to maintain control.¹² To account for these effects, we include an indicator for recent regime change and institutional instability.¹³

We also include three measures that control for characteristics of a state's population. First, we include the size of the state's population.¹⁴ A larger population may suffer congestion problems that increase societal tensions and grievances. This concern is particularly acute for less developed countries with scarce resources. Large populations can be harder to control, and, once a conflict has begun, arresting its spread may be more difficult.

We also include an indicator of whether there is a youth bulge, meaning at least 45 percent of the population is between the ages of 15 and 29.¹⁵ Recent studies on civil wars have documented the relationship between sudden increases in a youth cohort and the onset of armed conflict.¹⁶ Boys and young men often make up the main fighting force of militant groups, and states with large youth populations have a larger supply of fighters, which reduces the cost of conflict and makes escalation relatively cheaper. Compounding this problem, a significant increase in the state's youth population can also stress existing institutions and deplete resources; if the labor market is not able to absorb these young people, unemployment will increase, enflaming economic grievances that drive conflict.

States may also be at an increased risk of intrastate conflict if large portions of their populations, particularly among ethnic minorities, are excluded from the state political apparatus.¹⁷ Political exclusion along ethnic lines enflames grievances against

¹² Fearon and Laitin, 2003.

¹³ We constructed a simple indicator variable for political instability, which is coded one if the country has experienced a recent transition and zero otherwise. A transition is defined as a three-point shift (on polity's 21-point scale) over the preceding five years. Data from Marshall and Jaggers, 2002.

¹⁴ Data from National Material Capabilities (v4.) dataset—see Correlates of War Project, 2017; Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey, 1972; Singer, 1987.

¹⁵ Specifically, we include an indicator of whether the percentage of the state's populace between 15 and 45 is greater than 45 percent. Data from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision," 2015.

¹⁶ Paul Collier, "Doing Well out of War: An Economic Perspective," in Mats Berdal and David M. Malone, eds., *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2000; Henrik Urdal, "The Devil in the Demographics: The Effect of Youth Bulges on Domestic Armed Conflict, 1950–2000," World Bank Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction, Paper No. 14, July 2004; Henrik Urdal, "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 3, 2006, pp. 607–629.

¹⁷ Andreas Wimmer, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Brian Min, "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Data Set," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 74, No. 2, 2009, pp. 316–337; Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min, "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis," *World*

incumbent regimes, and widespread political exclusion challenges norms of popular representation. Being excluded from political power, minority groups have few avenues, other than armed resistance, to redress these grievances. To account for these dynamics, we also include a measure for the share of the state's ethnic population that is systematically excluded from political power.¹⁸

U.S. Alliances

We include an indicator for whether a state was a U.S. ally in a given year. An alliance is a strong indicator of U.S. interest in a country and, therefore, a country where the United States may be most willing to use political influence and to spend resources on other forms of presence.¹⁹

Global Strategic Environment

We include an indicator for the Cold War. During the Cold War, U.S. threat perceptions and strategic calculations were principally concerned with preventing interstate war and containing the Soviet Union. As discussed earlier, after the Cold War, and especially since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States has based more of its presence decisions on risk of intrastate conflict.

Statistical Modeling Approach

This section describes our modeling strategy, including how we constructed the universe of cases, the modeling specification for each of the dependent variables, steps to address interdependence between observations, the annual nature of our data, and changes in U.S. policies on intrastate issues at the end of the Cold War.

Universe of Cases

Our sample includes an observation for each country for every year from 1951 to 2007. As with the interstate models, our time period ends in 2007 due to the availability of data. To account for the possibility that the United States deploys troops or sends additional military assistance to states during periods of ongoing anti-regime campaigns or civil wars, we exclude years of ongoing campaigns or wars from our analyses.

Politics, Vol. 62, No. 1, 2010, pp. 87–119; Halvard Buhaug, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Jan Ketil Rød, “Disaggregating Ethno-Nationalist Civil Wars: A Dyadic Test of Exclusion Theory,” *International Organization*, Vol. 62, No. 3, 2008, pp. 531–551.

¹⁸ Data from Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Wimmer, Cederman, and Min, 2009.

¹⁹ For this analysis, we use Version 4.1; see Douglas M. Gibler, *International Military Alliances, 1648–2008*, Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2009.

Binary and Continuous Dependent Variables

For our models of anti-regime campaign and civil war onset—binary events—we use logit regressions.²⁰ However, our indicator of state repression is continuous, so we use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. As with our models of state repression, we considered the effects of U.S. presence on anti-regime activity in three time periods: all country-years since World War II, the Cold War period, and the post–Cold War period.

Time Lags

Data on U.S. forward presence, level of state repression, anti-regime campaign onset, and civil war onset are collected annually. This can complicate attribution of cause and effect. The outbreak of civil war, for example, may lead the United States to move forces to the area. Since the data do not indicate which came first, the statistical models may incorrectly suggest that U.S. troop presence led to the civil war. To account for this problem, we lag our U.S. presence variables by one year. The outbreak of conflict can also affect other conditions, such economic growth or regime type. Therefore, as in the interstate models, we lag all of our independent variables one year.

Interdependence of Observations

As discussed in the interstate modeling section, statistical models assume that each of the observations are independent of one another. Our observations are country-years, which means that there are multiple observations for each state, some of which may be at higher risk of intrastate conflict than others. Moreover, intrastate conflict in one year may make conflict in future years more likely. To account for these possibilities, we use robust standard errors clustered on each country. In the models of civil war and anti-regime campaign onset, we use the same approach to temporal dependence controls outlined in the interstate section above.²¹ Since the state repression indicator is a continuous variable, we take a slightly different approach to accounting for interdependence across time: including a one-year lag on the level of state repression.²²

Cold War and Post–Cold War Models

As discussed above, in our overall models, we include a control for whether an observation took place during the Cold War. We also considered additional models that considered the Cold War and post–Cold War periods separately. Doing so allows for the possibility that the relationship between U.S. presence and intrastate conflict was

²⁰ Given the cross-national time-serial data, the observations in our statistical models are country-years. We also ran our models using rare-events logit and found no substantive difference in the model results.

²¹ Specifically, we include a count of the number of years between anti-regime campaigns or civil wars and the squared and cubic polynomials of years (Beck, Katz, and Tucker, 1993; Carter and Signorino, 2010).

²² In addition to our main statistical models, we also developed models, reported in Appendix B, that include country and year fixed effects, rather than a lag of human rights abuse.

fundamentally different in these two periods. In particular, U.S. willingness to exercise leverage over partner states may have increased in the post–Cold War period as the United States faced a lower threat environment.²³

Findings on U.S. Forward Presence and Intrastate Conflict

Having described our measures of intrastate conflict and controls to isolate the effects of U.S. presence, we present in this section the results of our statistical models. We first explore the relationship between U.S. presence and levels of state repression. Second, we describe the results of our models examining U.S. presence and anti-regime campaigns. Finally, we discuss the results of our statistical models concerning U.S. presence and civil wars.

The results of our statistical models provide several interesting conclusions. First, we did not find a robust relationship between U.S. forward troop presence and intrastate conflict. In contrast, U.S. military assistance is positively associated with an increased risk of conflict onset, increased anti-regime activities, and greater levels of state repression by incumbent governments. Importantly, however, these relationships differ across time periods. U.S. military assistance is associated with greater levels of state repression in both the Cold War and post–Cold War periods, but it is associated with increased levels of anti-regime activity and armed conflict only during the Cold War period.

U.S. Presence and Levels of State Repression

As discussed in Chapter Five, there are several possible ways that U.S. presence may affect the level of state repression. U.S. presence may lead to less state repression by enabling the United States to better restrain partners or aid in security sector reforms. Alternatively, U.S. presence could convince an incumbent regime that the U.S. commitment is strong and insensitive to the level of state repression. U.S. presence may also give the regime additional resources that it could divert toward domestic repression.

U.S. Troop Presence Is Not Associated with Increased State Repression

We found no statistically significant association between U.S. forward troop presence and levels of state repression. There is no consistent or significant effect of troops, either those in country or deployed nearby, on the use of state repression in either the Cold War or post–Cold War periods.²⁴

²³ Others have looked at differences in U.S. leverage across countries rather than across time (Bell, Clay, and Martinez Machain, 2016). We replicated this approach in our human rights models but did not find statistically significant results.

²⁴ Table B.1 of Appendix B. The lack of a statistically significant relationship between U.S. forward troop presence and levels of state repression holds across three of our four measures of state repression. Only one measure

U.S. Military Assistance Is Associated with Increased State Repression

By contrast, U.S. military assistance exhibits a statistically significant and positive relationship with levels of state repression. Figure 6.1 provides a visual representation of this relationship.²⁵ The x-axis denotes increasing levels of military assistance in U.S. dollars, while the y-axis corresponds to the predicted level of state repression (with repression increasing as the values near zero). The solid black line in Figure 6.1 represents the predicted level of state repression—where higher scores indicate more human rights violations—across the range of military assistance. The dashed lines represent the 95 percent confidence interval around this prediction. An increase from \$0 to \$100 million in U.S. military assistance is associated with a 69 percent increase in a state's level of repression. This relationship is consistent across both the Cold War and post-Cold War periods.²⁶

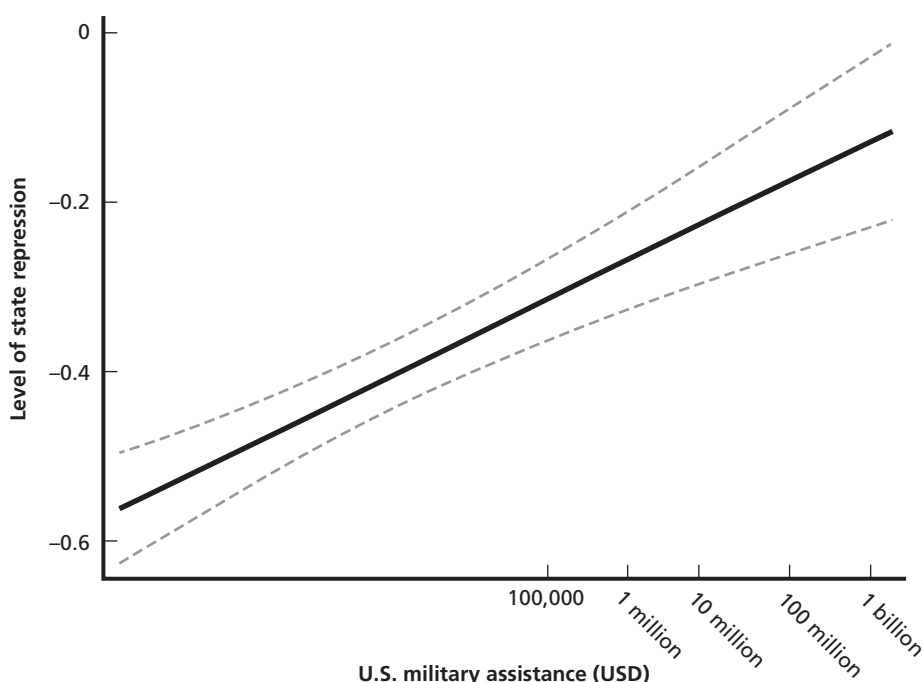
Our statistical analysis considers average effects that, as discussed earlier, may reflect selection effects that are difficult to disentangle. Still, a preliminary review of relevant cases highlighted by our model illustrates how U.S. military assistance can contribute indirectly to state repression. As an important ally, Turkey received high levels of U.S. military assistance in the post-WWII period. Beginning in the 1980s, the U.S. State Department and nongovernmental groups reported attacks on civilians, torture, and disappearances by the Turkish state in its counterinsurgency campaign against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). For whatever reason, U.S. military aid

of state repression (PTS Amnesty in Table B.3) finds even marginally significant results for our measures of U.S. troop presence. These results, however, are not robust and even change direction depending on time period. All told, these models provide scant evidence that U.S. forward troop presence has a consistent or significant effect on levels of state repression. Moreover, since intrastate violence levels could also affect the level of repression, we ran these models using an additional control for other types of intrastate violence (using Major Episodes of Political Violence data—Monty G. Marshall, “Major Episodes of Political Violence, 1946–2015,” website, Center for Systemic Peace, 2016). Although, as expected, the coefficient on this variable was positive, adding this control did not substantively change the coefficients on the other variables of interest. Our findings are partially consistent with other work on this subject. Bell, Clay, and Martinez Machain (2016) also found that, on average, U.S. in-country troop presence has no effect on state repression. However, that study found that in states of low strategic importance to the United States, U.S. troop presence has been associated with less state repression, especially in the post-Cold War period. We used their variable for strategic importance in our models but could not confirm this finding. The differences in these findings could reflect differences in model design including their decision to use an instrumental variable for U.S. troop presence.

²⁵ Table B.1 of Appendix B.

²⁶ This relationship is robust to alternative specifications for state repression. The statistically significant relationship between U.S. military assistance and levels of state repression holds across our primary measure of state repression, scores of state repression measured by Amnesty International, and the CIRI Physical Integrity Rights Index (David L. Cingranelli, David L. Richards, and K. Chad Clay, “The CIRI Human Rights Dataset,” version 2014.04.14, 2014). The only exception is the PTS score from the State Department (Gibney et al., 2016; U.S. State Department, various years). While also positive, the estimated effect was not statistically significant. For detailed results, see Appendix B.

Figure 6.1
Levels of State Repression as U.S. Military Assistance to Partner State Increases



SOURCE: RAND analysis.

NOTE: The solid black line plots the predicted level of state repression. The dashed gray lines represent the 95 percent confidence interval around the point prediction.

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did not give the United States leverage to restrain its ally in its actions against the PKK.²⁷

U.S. Presence and Anti-Regime Activities

In this section, we test hypotheses about the relationship between U.S. presence and the initiation of anti-regime campaigns by opposition groups. As discussed above, these groups may be deterred from initiating an anti-regime campaign against a regime that is receiving U.S. support. Alternatively, U.S. presence could lead to more anti-regime campaigns by generating new grievances against the existing government. Groups may also be emboldened to initiate campaigns, believing that U.S. presence will allow the United States to restrain the incumbent regime from using violence to suppress opposition.

²⁷ Tamar Gabelnick, "Turkey: Arms and Human Rights," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, May 1, 1999; Human Rights Watch, *Weapons Transfers and Violations of the Laws of War in Turkey*, New York: Human Rights Watch, November 1995.

U.S. Troop Presence Is Not Associated with the Likelihood of Anti-Regime Activities

Similar to the results of our models of state repression, we found no evidence that U.S. forward troop deployments, whether in-country or in nearby states, have any statistically significant effect on the risk that opposition groups launch anti-regime campaigns.²⁸

U.S. Military Assistance Is Associated with Increased Anti-Regime Campaigns During the Cold War

Mirroring the results of our models of state repression, we found that increased U.S. military assistance to partner states is significantly associated with an increased risk of anti-regime campaigns. This statistically significant relationship holds for our full model (i.e., all country-years in the post-WWII period) and specifically for the Cold War period. Interestingly, however, the relationship between U.S. military assistance and the risk of anti-regime campaigns is not statistically significant when considering only the post-Cold War period.

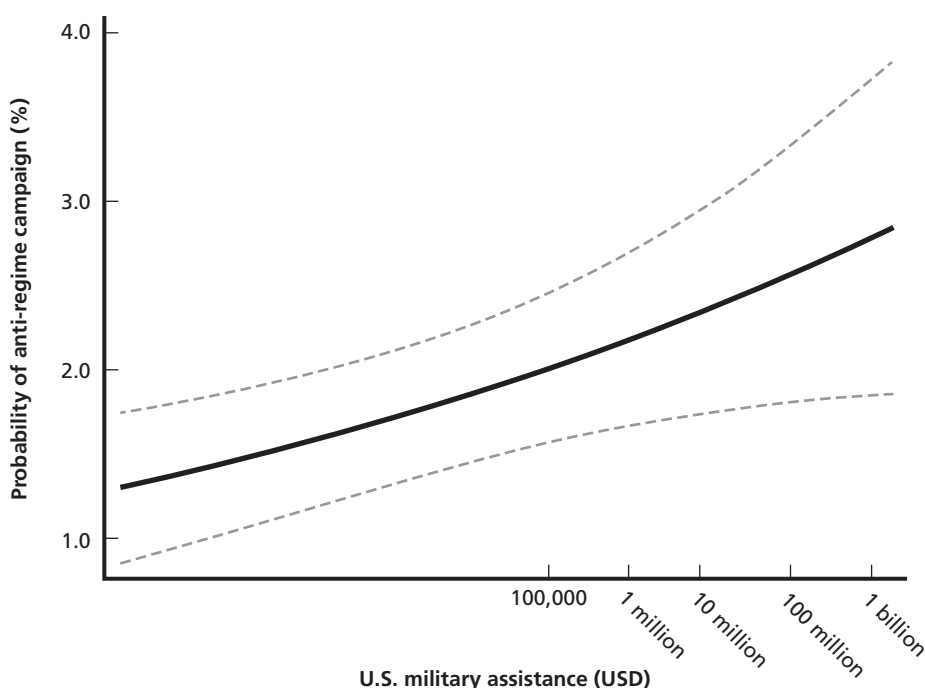
To help visualize the magnitude of this relationship, Figure 6.2 plots the predicted probability that a state faces an anti-regime campaign as U.S. military assistance increases.²⁹ The x-axis plots U.S. military assistance in U.S. dollars. The y-axis represents the probability that opposition groups in the state initiate an anti-regime campaign against the incumbent government. Our statistical models predict that, absent any U.S. military assistance (i.e., zero dollars sent to a partner state), the probability an anti-regime campaign begins in a given year is less than 1.3 percent. An increase in U.S. military assistance of \$1 million is associated with a roughly 2 percent risk that an opposition group initiates an anti-regime campaign. This probability steadily increases over the range of U.S. military assistance, with the risk of anti-regime activity more than doubling, at roughly 3 percent, at \$1 billion.

In one possible example of this relationship, U.S. aid to South Korea may have contributed to at least some of the anti-regime sentiment that took place in the 1970s and 1980s. Like Turkey, South Korea consistently received high levels of U.S. military assistance in this period. By 1987, opposition groups viewed the United States as complicit in their country's persistent authoritarianism and the failure of past democratization efforts. That year, tensions produced a series of protests that culminated in the June Democracy Movement, which successfully pushed for sweeping democratic reforms. While our statistical models cannot say precisely how much U.S. military assistance contributed to these protests, anti-American rhetoric from the opposition

²⁸ The results of our statistical models are reported in Table B.5 of Appendix B.

²⁹ Specifically, Figure 6.2 plots the relationship between U.S. military assistance and the risk of an anti-regime campaign generally across the post-WWII period using the results of Table B.5 of Appendix B.

Figure 6.2
Risk of Anti-Regime Campaign Onset as U.S. Military Assistance Increases



SOURCE: RAND analysis.

NOTE: The solid black line plots the predicted probability of an anti-regime campaign. The dashed gray lines represent the 95 percent confidence interval around the point prediction.

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suggests that the aid and U.S. military presence may have enflamed an already bitter opposition.³⁰

U.S. Presence and Intrastate Conflict

As discussed in Chapter Five, U.S. presence can affect the incentives and behavior of both incumbent regimes and opposition groups. The previous sections have presented the results for our statistical models concerning two intermediate steps toward intrastate conflict: levels of state repression and anti-regime campaigns by opposition groups. In this section, we consider the overall relationship between U.S. presence and the onset of civil war.

³⁰ James Fowler, "The United States and South Korean Democratization," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 114, No. 2, 1999.

U.S. Troop Presence Was Associated with Less Intrastate Conflict During the Cold War and More in the Post–Cold War Period

We found no significant relationship between U.S. troop presence in partner states and intrastate conflict occurrence over the 1951–2007 period.³¹ However, when we examined the Cold War and post–Cold War periods separately, our models did show some weakly statistically significant results. During the Cold War, increasing levels of nearby U.S. troops were associated with a decreased risk of intrastate conflict. In contrast, in the post–Cold War period, nearby U.S. troops were associated with a significantly increased risk of armed conflict.

As with our other results, there is the possibility that U.S. troop presence caused these two different outcomes. However, there are two reasons that we discount this possibility. First, there was no statistically significant relationship between U.S. troop presence and the intermediate steps to intrastate conflict: state repression and anti-regime campaigns. Given that we could not detect a relationship at this earlier stage, we have less confidence that the relationship with civil war outcomes is causal. Second, the alternative explanation—that this result is due to selection effects—is plausible. During the Cold War, U.S. forward presence was centered on Western Europe, which was more politically stable. In contrast, in the post–Cold War period, the United States has shifted more of its forces to areas such as the Middle East, which have been more prone to intrastate conflict.

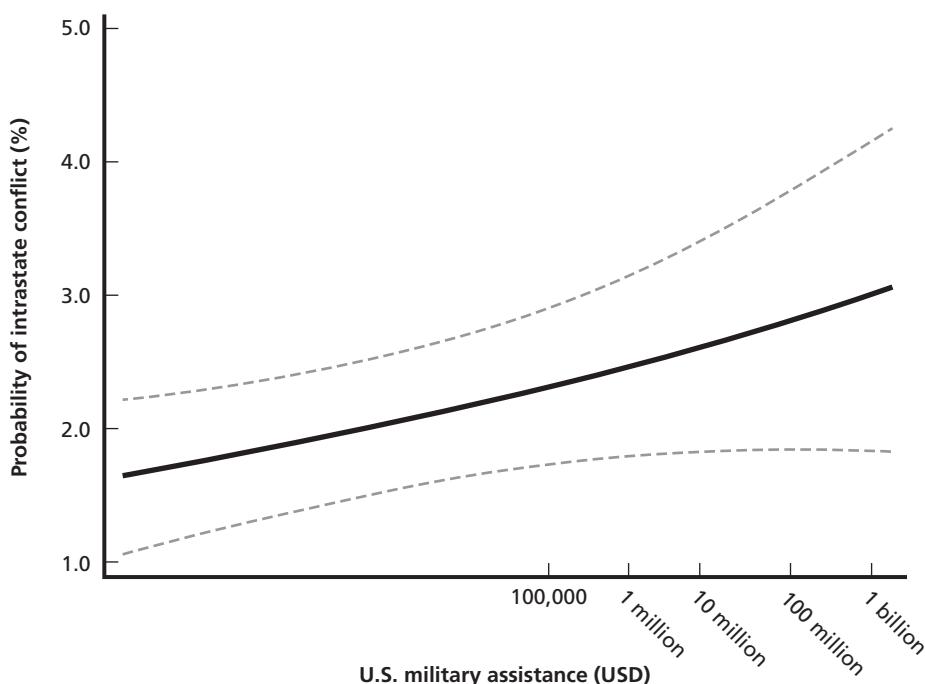
U.S. Military Assistance Was Associated with Increased Intrastate Armed Conflict During the Cold War

Our statistical models do suggest a positive relationship between U.S. military assistance and armed conflict onset. U.S. military aid to partner states significantly increases the risk that those states experience an intrastate conflict. Importantly, this association is particularly strong in the Cold War but not significant in the post–Cold War period, suggesting that the mechanisms linking U.S. military assistance to armed conflict may be partly driven by the broader geopolitical dynamics at work during the Cold War.

To better visualize these effects, Figure 6.3 graphs the predicted probability that, during the Cold War period, a state experiences an armed conflict relative to the amount of U.S. military assistance it receives. The positive slope indicates that armed conflict becomes more likely as U.S. assistance increases. The overall likelihood that any state suffers an intrastate armed conflict is small. However, this risk increases substantially over the range of U.S. military assistance used in our models. An increase from \$0 to \$100 million in military aid is associated with an increase in the risk of armed conflict from 1.6 percent to roughly 3 percent, a notable increase in the likelihood of a comparatively rare event. In contrast, U.S. military assistance since the end

³¹ The results of our statistical models are reported in Tables B.6–B.8 of Appendix B. For low-intensity civil wars only, there was a negative relationship between U.S. troop presence and intrastate conflict, but it was only weakly statistically significant. This result was not replicated overall or for higher-intensity civil wars.

Figure 6.3
Risk of Intrastate Armed Conflict Onset as U.S. Military Assistance Increases (Cold War Years)



SOURCE: RAND analysis.

NOTE: The solid black line plots the predicted probability of an intrastate conflict. The dashed gray lines represent the 95 percent confidence interval around the point prediction.

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of the Cold War is not statistically associated with an increased risk of armed conflict, suggesting that the factors driving this relationship have diminished in recent decades.

The Second Sudanese Civil War provides an example of how U.S. military assistance is not always used as a source of leverage to restrain governments. The war began in 1983 after the central government pushed to extend its control over the semi-autonomous south. Beginning in the mid-1970s, after its first civil war ended, Sudan became a major recipient of aid from the United States, which was concerned with Soviet support in Libya and Ethiopia. The Sudanese government used this aid to rebuild its military capability, which it employed in 1983 when it sought to extend its control over the semi-autonomous south. Given the strategic importance of Sudan in this period, U.S. policymakers did not initially try to use the aid as leverage to restrain the Sudanese regime.³²

³² Library of Congress, Federal Research Division (Helen Chapoin Metz, ed.), *Sudan: A Country Study*, Washington, D.C., 1992. In later years, when U.S. aid did decline, the Sudanese government found new foreign backers (e.g., China, Libya) willing to offset these losses for greater influence in the region.

The statistical results presented above suggest that this same logic may have been at work in other cases. During the Cold War, when the United States was concerned about the Soviet threat, it may have been less willing to attach conditions or remove military aid to restrain its partners from using violence. The finding that U.S. assistance has had no statistically significant relationship with conflict since the Cold War suggests that, free from the Soviet threat, the United States has been more willing to risk a break with its partners if it could reduce the risk of civil war.

Interpreting Intrastate Results

U.S. troop presence and military assistance may influence the incentives of actors—state and nonstate alike—in a variety of ways. Our statistical models have explored these mechanisms by examining three distinct outcomes relating to intrastate conflict: levels of state repression, anti-regime campaigns, and armed conflicts. Our statistical models found no robust relationship between U.S. forward troop presence and any of our measures of intrastate conflict, implying that U.S. troop deployments may have little bearing on the risk of armed conflicts, anti-regime activity, or the use of violent repression by governments.

In contrast, we found consistent evidence that U.S. military assistance is positively associated with each of our outcomes, indicating a significant relationship between U.S. military aid and intrastate conflict generally, particularly during the Cold War period. While statistically significant, the substantive impacts of these effects are debatable, as only large-scale investments of U.S. military assistance (which tend to be rare) are associated with major changes in levels of state repression or the risk of conflict.

It is important to point out that while our models detail statistically significant relationships between U.S. presence and intrastate conflict, application of these findings to specific cases, especially regarding U.S. military assistance, should be made cautiously. Like the strategic relationship between U.S. troop deployments and the risk of interstate conflict, U.S. military assistance is often funneled to states at an increased risk of conflict in an effort to stabilize partner regimes. As such, the positive association between U.S. military assistance and intrastate conflict may simply reflect that the United States provides aid to states with a preexisting risk of conflict. Alternatively, however, this positive association could imply that U.S. military assistance increases the likelihood of intrastate conflict, though any number of potential mechanisms, such as emboldening the government to act against domestic opposition or enflaming local grievances. Our data do not permit us to fully adjudicate between these potential mechanisms. Similarly, our statistical models represent average associations between U.S. presence and intrastate conflict across all states. As with our models of interstate conflict, these effects may prove stronger or weaker (or even change direction) in particular states, based on local contexts and conditions.

In spite of these limitations, the results of our statistical models still offer important insights and implications for U.S. policy. Most of all, U.S. forward troop deployments do not appear to significantly influence partner states' risk of intrastate conflict or their use of repression. That U.S. forces do not in general destabilize domestic political environments is particularly important, especially as the United States continues to maintain a strong overseas presence to deter or counter interstate aggression.

In contrast, U.S. military assistance to partner states is significantly associated with both the use of repression by states and an increased risk of intrastate conflict. While this relationship is not necessarily surprising, especially considering that U.S. military assistance is often funneled toward high-risk states, it does suggest that policymakers should be aware of potential adverse effects, especially relating to governments' willingness to divert U.S. military assistance to support repressive measures, when deciding to continue aid to partner regimes.

Findings and Implications for Future U.S. Presence and Operating Environment

Our research sought to assess the validity of the assertion that U.S. forward presence affects state and nonstate actor decisions to engage in militarized conflict. We developed and then, using all available datasets, tested the various conflicting hypotheses regarding the effect of U.S. forward presence and incidence of conflict, separating between the effects on interstate and intrastate conflict.

Findings

Our findings offer some broad guidelines for U.S. planners and policymakers considering future forward presence decisions. The most basic guideline to inform such decisions is that stationing U.S. forces can be an effective tool in deterring state aggression but it is not likely to have an effect in deterring intrastate conflict. There is also an important trade-off, in that U.S. troop presence may provoke more militarized activities.

U.S. forward presence may reduce the likelihood of interstate conflict in at least two ways. When a partner or ally is under threat, stationing U.S. forces in the region can aid in deterring armed aggression by the potential adversary state. U.S. troop presence can also restrain U.S. allies and partners from initiating militarized behavior. Whether troops are stationed to reassure an ally or to gain leverage over the ally, the effect is the same—stationing U.S. forces in the country moderates partner behavior against other states.

The above general guidelines need to be used with caution. A strong deterrent effect may require large numbers of troops. Especially against powerful adversaries, the effect does not come cheaply. Moreover, U.S. in-country presence may lead to potential U.S. adversaries being more likely to initiate militarized behavior toward those countries. In other words, proximity of forces may increase the number of disputes and provocations by a potential adversary. Those disputes may not escalate to the level of outright major hostilities, but they may create a tense environment.

U.S. forward presence, regional or in-country, does not seem to reduce the incidence of intrastate conflict. Stationing U.S. forces in an ally or partner under internal threat in general does not have a deterrent effect on the potential for such conflict to arise. In addition, the United States providing support to a partner short of the stationing of U.S. forces, such as by providing military assistance and aid, may be associated with increased state repression and incidence of civil war. Selection effects may offer a viable explanation for these findings, so there may be cases in which the provision of military assistance is still an appropriate policy. But our results suggest that, in these cases, the United States should monitor the effects of aid closely, as there is potential for an uptick in regime repression.

As U.S. decisionmakers grapple with these questions about the effect of U.S. presence on conflict, they might also consider the experiences of other states. Although there has been some research on how foreign interventions affect the duration of civil wars and on the implications of foreign troop presence on the incidence of terrorism, there is not a strong literature looking at how foreign troop presence (e.g., by countries other than the United States) in peacetime affects the incidence of interstate and intrastate conflict.¹ This is, therefore, a potential area for future research.

Policy Implications

Our research also has implications for near-term decisionmaking on U.S. forward presence in Europe and Asia. Russian assertiveness in Europe has led to a debate in the United States and within NATO states on the role of forward troop deployments in deterring Russia. The geographically exposed NATO states, most of all Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, are at the center of such debates. Militarily weak, with topography making them difficult to defend, and proximate to Russia, the three Baltic states would be no match for a conventional Russian offensive. Wargames suggest that Russia could seize these states in less than three days.² Stronger NATO presence in the Baltic states could change the Russian calculus and buy time to reinforce these states so as to prevent a quick conquest. A tripwire presence in the Baltic states may have value, but our research suggests that the primary deterrent effect to any Russian initiation of war against the Baltic states stems from overall U.S. (and NATO) capabilities in the European theater. In fact, our research indicates that basing forces in the Baltic states

¹ See, for example, Patrick M. Regan, "Third-Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 46, No.1, 2002, pp. 55–73; Pape, 2003; Simon Collard-Wexler, Constantino Pischedda, and Michael G. Smith, "Do Foreign Occupations Cause Suicide Attacks," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 58, No. 4, June 2014, pp. 625–657; Burcu Savun and Brian J. Phillips, "Democracy, Foreign Policy, and Terrorism," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 53, No. 6, December 2009, pp. 878–904.

² David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1253-A, 2016.

may increase the deterrent effect but also may lead to the initiation of more disputes and provocations by Russia against the Baltic states. On the other hand, additional U.S. forward-based capabilities in the European theater may achieve a deterrent effect in a manner that is less confrontational. In this sense, basing additional U.S. forces such that they are relatively far from Russian forces but they are still close enough to respond rapidly to any evolving contingency in the Baltic states may be a viable way to proceed. The locations for such forward basing might be in western Poland, eastern Germany, or eastern Czech Republic. Infrastructure and political considerations would drive the specific location decisions.³

Chinese claims to islands in the East and South China seas have increased concern among the U.S. partners in Southeast and East Asia. The same principles as outlined regarding the European theater may apply to larger U.S. forward presence in the western Pacific—namely, a substantial increase in U.S. combat capabilities in the vicinity of the contested islands may help deter China from initiating major military operations against the states that have claims on the contested islands. However, that same increase in U.S. troop presence closer to China may lead to the intensification of Chinese militarized activities and provocations toward the partner states that host U.S. forces. Increasing U.S. military assistance to Southeast Asian states in lieu of U.S. troop presence may exacerbate the underlying domestic tensions in these countries.

The long-standing conflict on the Korean peninsula offers another East Asian example of the trade-offs in U.S. forward stationing of forces. U.S. troop presence has likely deterred North Korean aggression against South Korea, but it has potentially done so at the cost of numerous militarized activities and provocations by North Korea during many decades.

Our findings are also applicable to thinking about containing Iranian influence. Increasing U.S. military assistance may strengthen U.S. partners in the region, but it may do so at the cost of increased risk of repression and greater domestic instability among the recipient states.

Finally, we stress that the guidelines we draw above are general principles. Any planning for forward presence of U.S. forces in order to deter a specific potential adversary and reassure a partner would need to explore the particular actor-specific strategic and domestic factors, and the correlation of forces and capabilities.

³ Thomas S. Szayna, Paul Dreyer, Derek Eaton, and Lisa Saum-Manning, *Army Global Basing Posture: An Analytic Framework for Maximizing Responsiveness and Effectiveness*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-158-A, 2015.

Interstate Model Results

This appendix provides the results of our statistical models of interstate conflict and describes the alternative statistical models referenced in Chapter Four. The tables in this appendix are presented in the same progression as the results presented in Chapter Four.

The first models correspond to those discussed in the main text. Table A.1 presents the results of our main statistical model assessing the effects of U.S. forward presence in and around target states. Table A.2, also discussed in the main text, examines the relationship between U.S. troop presence around target states and conflict initiation by adversary states. Table A.3 presents the results of our main statistical model examining the effects of U.S. troop presence around potential initiator states. Table A.4 extends these findings by examining the effects of U.S. troop presence specifically around ally states. Focusing on U.S. conflict behavior, Table A.5 presents the results of our statistical model examining U.S. forward presence and U.S. MID initiation.

The sensitivity analyses are based on our main statistical models that assess the effects of U.S. troop presence around target and initiator states on interstate conflict. Tables A.6 and A.7 replicate our main statistical model, but replace our separate measures of in-country and nearby U.S. troop presence with composite measures of U.S. troop presence, as discussed in Chapter Four. While our main statistical models assess the effects of long-term levels of U.S. forward troop presence, Tables A.8 and A.9 present the results of our alternative models that include both long-term levels of U.S. troop presence and short-term changes in U.S. troop presence around target and initiator states, respectively. Table A.10 models short-term changes in U.S. forward presence as it relates to U.S. conflict initiation. Tables A.11 and A.12 replicate our main statistical models but include additional country fixed-effects to partly account for possible interdependence among our state pairs. Table A.13 replicates our main model of U.S. conflict initiation but also includes additional controls to account for the added risk of conflict between the United States and particular states.

Main Statistical Models of U.S. Forward Presence and Interstate Conflict

Table A.1

Main Model. Association of U.S. Troop Presence Around Potential Target States and MID Occurrence

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
U.S. troops in-country not in combat in target state	0.0250 (0.0165)	0.0498** (0.0218)	0.0128 (0.0210)	-0.133 (0.101)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence around target state	-0.0856 (0.0714)	0.0184 (0.101)	-0.125 (0.0831)	-0.755** (0.301)
U.S. alliance with target state	0.368*** (0.122)	0.366** (0.181)	0.402*** (0.142)	-1.052 (0.646)
U.S. military assistance to target state	0.00720 (0.00472)	-0.00570 (0.00696)	0.0149** (0.00603)	0.0575* (0.0315)
Higher-salience territorial claim	1.117*** (0.115)	0.899*** (0.175)	1.239*** (0.127)	2.403*** (0.345)
Dyadic democracy	-0.857*** (0.164)	-1.129*** (0.238)	-0.887*** (0.197)	0.290 (0.798)
Minimum GDP per capita in dyad	-0.148** (0.0599)	-0.0608 (0.0775)	-0.202*** (0.0781)	-0.135 (0.272)
Balance of capabilities in dyad	-1.028*** (0.268)	-1.180*** (0.370)	-1.100*** (0.323)	-1.716 (1.093)
Alliance in dyad	-0.216** (0.0988)	-0.135 (0.144)	-0.254** (0.111)	-0.722 (0.445)
Total U.S. military personnel	-1.324*** (0.244)	-2.006*** (0.426)	-1.314*** (0.305)	-0.789 (1.318)
Cold War	0.306** (0.124)	0.166 (0.188)	0.423*** (0.163)	1.028 (0.660)
Peace years	-0.466*** (0.0231)	-0.276*** (0.0261)	-0.531*** (0.0293)	-1.370*** (0.198)
Peace years squared	0.0173*** (0.00121)	0.00889*** (0.00114)	0.0200*** (0.00157)	0.0823*** (0.0129)
Peace years cubed	-0.000187*** (1.76e-05)	-8.32e-05*** (1.38e-05)	-0.000217*** (2.32e-05)	-0.00137*** (0.000247)

Table A.1—continued

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Constant	12.48*** (2.023)	14.92*** (3.353)	13.14*** (2.609)	14.33 (12.10)
Observations	45,333	45,333	45,333	45,333
Log likelihood	-5,041	-2,419	-3,583	-281.6
Chi-squared	1,446	447.9	1,476	548.4
Pseudo R-squared	0.265	0.100	0.305	0.462

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.2
Main Model. Association of U.S. Troop Presence Around Potential Target States and Potential Adversary MID Occurrence

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs
U.S. troops not in combat in target state	0.105** (0.0452)	0.0689 (0.0578)	0.171*** (0.0554)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence around target state	-0.0470 (0.183)	0.218 (0.269)	-0.178 (0.202)
U.S. alliance with target state	0.376 (0.390)	0.00615 (0.634)	0.489 (0.364)
U.S. military assistance to target state	-0.000308 (0.0114)	-0.0230 (0.0223)	0.00608 (0.0154)
Higher-salience territorial claim	0.946** (0.402)	1.055** (0.521)	0.927** (0.425)
Dyadic democracy	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Minimum GDP per capita in dyad	-0.0723 (0.210)	0.256 (0.368)	-0.370* (0.194)
Balance of capabilities in dyad	-1.497** (0.753)	-0.443 (1.396)	-2.375*** (0.777)

Table A.2—continued

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs
Alliance in dyad	0.147 (0.474)	−0.482 (0.627)	0.676 (0.546)
Total U.S. military personnel	−1.041 (0.668)	−1.964* (1.125)	−0.451 (0.837)
Cold War	0.331 (0.601)	0.332 (0.669)	1.032 (1.523)
Peace years	−0.335*** (0.0894)	−0.298*** (0.0865)	−0.795*** (0.192)
Peace years squared	0.0100* (0.00554)	0.00708 (0.00455)	0.0617*** (0.0189)
Peace years cubed	−8.76e-05 (9.21e-05)	−3.58e-05 (6.37e-05)	−0.00141*** (0.000513)
Constant	8.659 (6.506)	9.454 (9.712)	7.163 (7.973)
Observations	4,510	4,510	4,510
Log likelihood	−440.2	−233.6	−256.6
Chi-squared	308	80.48	581.3
Pseudo R-squared	0.274	0.164	0.386

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.3
Main Model. Association of U.S. Troop Presence Around Potential Initiator States and MID Occurrence

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
U.S. troops in-country not in combat in initiator state	-0.0149 (0.0159)	-0.0171 (0.0232)	-0.0101 (0.0179)	0.0438 (0.0532)
Effective nearby noncombat U.S. troop presence around initiator state	0.00706 (0.0756)	0.230*** (0.0763)	-0.0958 (0.0996)	-0.428** (0.189)
U.S. alliance with initiator state	0.0926 (0.175)	-0.0149 (0.219)	0.160 (0.218)	-1.897** (0.888)
U.S. military assistance to initiator state	0.00307 (0.00518)	0.0114 (0.00709)	0.00108 (0.00651)	-0.0350 (0.0290)
Higher-salience territorial claim	1.108*** (0.117)	1.031*** (0.178)	1.193*** (0.127)	1.819*** (0.346)
Dyadic democracy	-0.741*** (0.163)	-0.961*** (0.232)	-0.790*** (0.190)	-0.131 (0.856)
Minimum GDP per capita in dyad	-0.0835 (0.0554)	0.00816 (0.0768)	-0.124* (0.0699)	-0.111 (0.250)
Balance of capabilities in dyad	-1.229*** (0.306)	-1.762*** (0.382)	-1.186*** (0.363)	-2.027** (1.032)
Alliance in dyad	-0.173* (0.102)	-0.145 (0.148)	-0.188* (0.113)	0.0853 (0.298)
Total U.S. military personnel	-1.328*** (0.244)	-2.322*** (0.436)	-1.210*** (0.299)	0.147 (1.302)
Cold War	0.334*** (0.129)	0.286 (0.201)	0.413** (0.163)	-0.433 (0.649)
Peace years	-0.467*** (0.0238)	-0.272*** (0.0253)	-0.535*** (0.0296)	-1.041*** (0.173)
Peace years squared	0.0175*** (0.00127)	0.00890*** (0.00111)	0.0205*** (0.00163)	0.0532*** (0.0107)
Peace years cubed	-0.000190*** (1.87e-05)	-8.42e-05*** (1.36e-05)	-0.000226*** (2.46e-05)	-0.000762*** (0.000183)
Constant	11.27*** (2.105)	14.85*** (3.467)	11.68*** (2.696)	4.035 (11.32)

Table A.3—continued

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Observations	45,634	45,634	45,634	45,634
Log likelihood	−5,130	−2,290	−3,771	−389.7
Chi-squared	1,381	469.9	1,350	603.2
Pseudo R-squared	0.260	0.0970	0.297	0.358

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.4
Main Model. U.S. Troop Presence Around U.S. Allies and U.S. Ally MID Initiation

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs
U.S. troops in-country not in combat in initiator state	−0.0294 (0.0255)	−0.0631** (0.0275)	−0.0205 (0.0323)
Effective nearby noncombat U.S. troop presence around initiator state	−0.354*** (0.137)	−0.575*** (0.145)	−0.306* (0.166)
U.S. military assistance to initiator state	0.0133 (0.0119)	0.0100 (0.0161)	0.0154 (0.0128)
Higher-salience territorial claim	0.717** (0.281)	0.784* (0.464)	0.818*** (0.233)
Dyadic democracy	−0.911*** (0.228)	−0.912*** (0.292)	−1.108*** (0.259)
Minimum GDP per capita in dyad	−0.246** (0.117)	−0.154 (0.162)	−0.350** (0.138)
Balance of capabilities in dyad	−1.109** (0.536)	−2.260*** (0.685)	−1.080* (0.603)
Alliance in dyad	0.393* (0.231)	0.386 (0.295)	0.409* (0.246)
Total U.S. military personnel	−1.494*** (0.523)	−2.395** (0.989)	−1.472** (0.575)
Cold War	0.0857 (0.317)	0.540 (0.392)	0.0714 (0.391)

Table A.4—continued

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs
Peace years	−0.513*** (0.0415)	−0.307*** (0.0493)	−0.578*** (0.0579)
Peace years squared	0.0190*** (0.00214)	0.00985*** (0.00224)	0.0208*** (0.00260)
Peace years cubed	−0.000203*** (2.98e-05)	−9.40e-05*** (2.76e-05)	−0.000213*** (3.18e-05)
Constant	18.62*** (5.053)	27.34*** (8.193)	18.59*** (6.039)
Observations	16,594	16,594	16,594
Log likelihood	−1,138	−569.4	−798.2
Chi-squared	489.1	338.4	411.2
Pseudo R-squared	0.298	0.158	0.310

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.5**Main Model. U.S. Troop Presence Around Potential Target States and U.S. Conflict Initiation**

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Effective nearby noncombat U.S. troop presence around target state	0.436** (0.182)	0.507** (0.242)	0.663*** (0.213)	1.057 (0.773)
U.S. alliance with target state	−0.0933 (0.321)	−0.408 (0.475)	−0.231 (0.444)	
U.S. military assistance to target state	−0.0257 (0.0197)	−0.0337 (0.0282)	−0.0395* (0.0230)	−0.0393 (0.0285)
Dyadic democracy	−1.518*** (0.417)	−0.978* (0.559)	−2.284*** (0.673)	
Minimum GDP per capita in dyad	−0.150 (0.185)	−0.0190 (0.233)	−0.313 (0.208)	−1.239*** (0.366)
Balance of capabilities in dyad	−0.869 (0.993)	−1.000 (1.097)	−0.835 (1.256)	0.461 (3.774)

Table A.5—continued

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Total U.S. military personnel	−0.646 (0.760)	−3.071** (1.229)	0.435 (0.870)	−0.0382 (1.775)
Cold War	−0.251 (0.492)	1.542*** (0.515)	−1.254** (0.557)	−1.598** (0.707)
Peace years	−0.531*** (0.0947)	−0.339*** (0.0818)	−0.574*** (0.132)	−1.415*** (0.475)
Peace years squared	0.0174*** (0.00400)	0.0106*** (0.00354)	0.0181*** (0.00512)	0.0511*** (0.0157)
Peace years cubed	−0.000158*** (4.63e-05)	−9.23e-05** (4.05e-05)	−0.000155*** (5.49e-05)	−0.000504*** (0.000132)
Constant	1.596 (6.718)	17.32* (8.969)	−8.272 (8.215)	−1.961 (19.57)
Observations	7,054	7,054	7,054	3,827
Log likelihood	−444.7	−252.3	−277.1	−54.58
Chi-squared	274.9	173.3	247.2	241.8
Pseudo R-squared	0.342	0.191	0.392	0.625

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Sensitivity Analyses of U.S. Forward Presence and Interstate Conflict

Sensitivity Results of Composite U.S. Troop Presence and MID Occurrence

Table A.6

Sensitivity Results: Association of Composite U.S. Troop Presence Around Potential Target States and MID Occurrence

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Composite U.S. troop presence around target state	-0.0298 (0.0718)	0.0697 (0.0996)	-0.0646 (0.0852)	-0.607** (0.257)
U.S. alliance with target state	0.444*** (0.135)	0.542*** (0.174)	0.431*** (0.158)	-1.317** (0.625)
U.S. military assistance to target state	0.00933** (0.00453)	-0.00333 (0.00719)	0.0163*** (0.00559)	0.0396* (0.0226)
Higher-salience territorial claim	1.125*** (0.118)	0.912*** (0.175)	1.243*** (0.129)	2.321*** (0.377)
Dyadic democracy	-0.875*** (0.165)	-1.160*** (0.237)	-0.900*** (0.198)	0.226 (0.800)
Minimum GDP per capita in dyad	-0.146** (0.0603)	-0.0406 (0.0759)	-0.208*** (0.0794)	-0.183 (0.283)
Balance of capabilities in dyad	-1.029*** (0.266)	-1.198*** (0.365)	-1.101*** (0.321)	-1.797 (1.138)
Alliance in dyad	-0.243** (0.102)	-0.174 (0.146)	-0.271** (0.114)	-0.744* (0.444)
Total U.S. military personnel	-1.332*** (0.249)	-2.038*** (0.431)	-1.322*** (0.313)	-0.874 (1.409)
Cold War	0.298** (0.123)	0.167 (0.188)	0.411** (0.162)	0.918 (0.625)
Peace years	-0.468*** (0.0233)	-0.279*** (0.0257)	-0.532*** (0.0294)	-1.370*** (0.203)
Peace years squared	0.0175*** (0.00122)	0.00907*** (0.00112)	0.0201*** (0.00157)	0.0823*** (0.0132)
Peace years cubed	-0.000188*** (1.77e-05)	-8.56e-05*** (1.36e-05)	-0.000218*** (2.33e-05)	-0.00138*** (0.000252)
Constant	11.94*** (2.040)	14.56*** (3.362)	12.60*** (2.646)	13.78 (12.63)

Table A.6—continued

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Observations	45,333	45,333	45,333	45,333
Log likelihood	−5,044	−2,422	−3,585	−283.9
Chi-squared	1,404	425.2	1,419	571.7
Pseudo R-squared	0.265	0.0988	0.305	0.457

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.7

Sensitivity Results: Association of Composite U.S. Troop Presence Around Potential Initiator States and MID Occurrence

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Composite U.S. troop presence around initiator state	−0.0114 (0.0754)	0.210*** (0.0802)	−0.111 (0.0972)	−0.426** (0.189)
U.S. alliance with initiator state	0.0419 (0.155)	−0.108 (0.183)	0.143 (0.195)	−1.580** (0.773)
U.S. military assistance to initiator state	0.00180 (0.00513)	0.0106 (0.00681)	7.04e-05 (0.00647)	−0.0310 (0.0289)
Higher-salience territorial claim	1.103*** (0.118)	1.020*** (0.178)	1.193*** (0.127)	1.838*** (0.349)
Dyadic democracy	−0.739*** (0.162)	−0.964*** (0.233)	−0.786*** (0.189)	−0.116 (0.854)
Minimum GDP per capita in dyad	−0.0862 (0.0563)	0.00413 (0.0758)	−0.126* (0.0718)	−0.0968 (0.254)
Balance of capabilities in dyad	−1.247*** (0.304)	−1.772*** (0.386)	−1.195*** (0.356)	−1.870* (1.020)
Alliance in dyad	−0.160 (0.1000)	−0.120 (0.148)	−0.183 (0.111)	0.0824 (0.299)
Total U.S. military personnel	−1.327*** (0.245)	−2.379*** (0.439)	−1.170*** (0.297)	0.287 (1.337)

Table A.7—continued

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Cold War	0.337*** (0.127)	0.305 (0.203)	0.405** (0.161)	−0.451 (0.649)
Peace years	−0.467*** (0.0238)	−0.272*** (0.0254)	−0.535*** (0.0296)	−1.045*** (0.171)
Peace years squared	0.0174*** (0.00127)	0.00888*** (0.00111)	0.0204*** (0.00163)	0.0535*** (0.0105)
Peace years cubed	−0.000189*** (1.87e-05)	−8.38e-05*** (1.36e-05)	−0.000226*** (2.46e-05)	−0.000767*** (0.000181)
Constant	11.48*** (2.080)	15.55*** (3.464)	11.53*** (2.624)	2.718 (11.61)
Observations	45,634	45,634	45,634	45,634
Log likelihood	−5,131	−2,291	−3,771	−389.9
Chi-squared	1,369	458.2	1,329	519.6
Pseudo R-squared	0.260	0.0965	0.297	0.357

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Sensitivity Results of Short-Term Changes in U.S. Troop Presence

Table A.8
Sensitivity Results: Association of Short- and Long-Term U.S. Troop Presence Around Potential Target States and MID Occurrence

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Change in U.S. noncombat in-country troops in target state	-0.0123 (0.00883)	-0.0186 (0.0147)	-0.00693 (0.0102)	-0.0740 (0.0772)
Change in U.S. offshore troops around target state	0.0109*** (0.00409)	0.0114* (0.00692)	0.0122*** (0.00469)	0.0158 (0.0231)
U.S. troops in-country not in combat in target state	0.0182 (0.0160)	0.0462** (0.0216)	0.00323 (0.0205)	-0.0974 (0.0929)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence around target state	-0.112 (0.0720)	-0.0108 (0.103)	-0.145* (0.0829)	-0.829*** (0.290)
U.S. alliance with target state	0.361*** (0.116)	0.370** (0.176)	0.392*** (0.135)	-0.778 (0.645)
U.S. military assistance to target state	0.00489 (0.00466)	-0.00756 (0.00684)	0.0119** (0.00586)	0.0301 (0.0295)
Higher-salience territorial claim	1.044*** (0.112)	0.881*** (0.173)	1.129*** (0.124)	2.124*** (0.365)
Dyadic democracy	-0.790*** (0.162)	-1.106*** (0.238)	-0.798*** (0.193)	0.437 (0.741)
Minimum GDP per capita in dyad	-0.134** (0.0586)	-0.0578 (0.0768)	-0.178** (0.0760)	-0.105 (0.251)
Balance of capabilities in dyad	-0.911*** (0.256)	-1.127*** (0.365)	-0.945*** (0.306)	-1.541 (1.033)
Alliance in dyad	-0.222** (0.0956)	-0.125 (0.142)	-0.270** (0.106)	-0.721* (0.400)
Total U.S. military personnel	-0.971*** (0.244)	-1.653*** (0.428)	-0.944*** (0.303)	-0.0802 (1.218)
Cold War	0.189 (0.125)	0.0666 (0.193)	0.288* (0.167)	0.719 (0.570)
Peace years	-0.473*** (0.0231)	-0.297*** (0.0271)	-0.544*** (0.0295)	-1.396*** (0.190)

Table A.8—continued

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Peace years squared	0.0175*** (0.00120)	0.00967*** (0.00117)	0.0203*** (0.00155)	0.0818*** (0.0121)
Peace years cubed	−0.000187*** (1.72e-05)	−9.11e-05*** (1.41e-05)	−0.000219*** (2.28e-05)	−0.00135*** (0.000230)
Constant	9.900*** (2.008)	12.53*** (3.337)	10.32*** (2.595)	9.919 (10.68)
Observations	43,682	43,682	43,682	43,682
Log likelihood	−4,806	−2,325	−3,397	−257.2
Chi-squared	1,549	497.3	1,605	935
Pseudo R-squared	0.273	0.107	0.316	0.487

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.9

Sensitivity Results: Association of Short- and Long-Term U.S. Troop Presence Around Potential Target States and MID Occurrence

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Change in U.S. troops in-country not in combat in initiator state	−0.0111 (0.00784)	−0.0244 (0.0150)	−0.00391 (0.00899)	0.0164 (0.0332)
Change in effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence around initiator state	0.0102** (0.00420)	0.00597 (0.00727)	0.0130*** (0.00483)	0.0404** (0.0175)
U.S. troops in-country not in combat in initiator state	−0.0214 (0.0161)	−0.0262 (0.0237)	−0.0154 (0.0179)	0.0312 (0.0538)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence around initiator state	−0.00980 (0.0764)	0.226*** (0.0784)	−0.124 (0.101)	−0.476** (0.195)
U.S. alliance in initiator state	0.0926 (0.172)	−0.0460 (0.223)	0.174 (0.213)	−1.788* (0.915)
U.S. military assistance, A to initiator state	0.00334 (0.00508)	0.0132* (0.00712)	9.40e-05 (0.00632)	−0.0399 (0.0272)

Table A.9—continued

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Higher-salience territorial claim	1.024*** (0.115)	1.007*** (0.177)	1.077*** (0.125)	1.602*** (0.340)
Dyadic democracy	-0.675*** (0.160)	-0.938*** (0.232)	-0.704*** (0.185)	-0.0473 (0.812)
Minimum GDP per capita in dyad	-0.0719 (0.0544)	0.0216 (0.0764)	-0.107 (0.0679)	-0.0279 (0.218)
Balance of capabilities in dyad	-1.071*** (0.302)	-1.655*** (0.384)	-1.006*** (0.353)	-1.425 (0.959)
Alliance in dyad	-0.173* (0.0984)	-0.138 (0.146)	-0.193* (0.107)	0.0600 (0.269)
Total U.S. military personnel	-1.057*** (0.247)	-2.210*** (0.449)	-0.861*** (0.303)	1.314 (1.168)
Cold War	0.256** (0.127)	0.312 (0.206)	0.290* (0.162)	-0.980 (0.645)
Peace years	-0.477*** (0.0237)	-0.298*** (0.0266)	-0.548*** (0.0295)	-1.131*** (0.168)
Peace years squared	0.0177*** (0.00125)	0.00989*** (0.00115)	0.0208*** (0.00160)	0.0567*** (0.0104)
Peace years cubed	-0.000192*** (1.84e-05)	-9.45e-05*** (1.40e-05)	-0.000228*** (2.41e-05)	-0.000802*** (0.000181)
Constant	9.196*** (2.059)	13.95*** (3.576)	9.113*** (2.624)	-5.029 (9.758)
Observations	43,976	43,976	43,976	43,976
Log likelihood	-4,855	-2,194	-3,541	-352.4
Chi-squared	1,463	502.4	1,451	794.7
Pseudo R-squared	0.269	0.103	0.309	0.404

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses.

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

Table A.10
Sensitivity Results: Association of Short- and Long-Term U.S. Troop Presence Around Potential Target States and U.S. Conflict Initiation

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Change in U.S. noncombat troop presence around target state	0.00234 (0.0110)	0.00651 (0.0155)	0.00123 (0.0144)	0.0293 (0.0286)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence around target state	0.425** (0.186)	0.648** (0.251)	0.556*** (0.204)	1.084 (0.899)
U.S. alliance with target state	-1.920*** (0.350)	-0.120 (0.515)	-2.340*** (0.472)	
U.S. military assistance to target state	-0.0498*** (0.0144)	-0.0436* (0.0243)	-0.0767*** (0.0179)	-0.0886*** (0.0201)
Dyadic democracy	-1.888*** (0.423)	-1.575** (0.621)	-2.532*** (0.652)	
Minimum GDP per capita in dyad	-0.229 (0.183)	-0.0947 (0.243)	-0.390** (0.192)	-1.722*** (0.570)
Balance of capabilities in dyad	-1.413 (0.923)	-0.871 (1.054)	-1.188 (1.044)	-1.422 (3.330)
Alliance in dyad	2.092*** (0.346)	-0.558 (0.604)	2.959*** (0.425)	
Total U.S. military personnel	-0.0239 (0.889)	-3.199*** (1.153)	1.277 (0.946)	1.001 (2.207)
Cold War	-0.467 (0.490)	1.478*** (0.454)	-1.467** (0.593)	-2.645** (1.179)
Peace years	-0.513*** (0.0845)	-0.308*** (0.0774)	-0.593*** (0.126)	-1.111*** (0.276)
Peace years squared	0.0160*** (0.00347)	0.00851*** (0.00317)	0.0186*** (0.00501)	0.0391*** (0.00918)
Peace years cubed	-0.000138*** (3.91e-05)	-6.20e-05* (3.43e-05)	-0.000160*** (5.43e-05)	-0.000392*** (0.000109)
Constant	-1.960 (7.125)	17.47** (7.697)	-12.69 (8.374)	-4.426 (20.91)
Observations	6,819	6,819	6,819	3,669

Table A.10—continued

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Log likelihood	−412.4	−243	−251.6	−53.56
Chi-squared	376.5	263.7	243.7	485.6
Pseudo R-squared	0.392	0.251	0.439	0.664

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Sensitivity Results of Interdependence and Conflict Risk Among State Pairs

Table A.11

Sensitivity Results: Association of U.S. Troop Presence Around Potential Target States and MID Occurrence (Country Fixed Effects)

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
U.S. troops in-country not in combat in target state	0.0136 (0.0176)	0.0581** (0.0241)	−0.00938 (0.0226)	−0.219** (0.106)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence around target state	−0.0554 (0.0921)	−0.129 (0.118)	−0.00744 (0.106)	−0.769 (0.527)
U.S. alliance with target state	0.296 (0.204)	−0.0276 (0.244)	0.389 (0.284)	−1.853* (1.055)
U.S. military assistance to target state	0.00109 (0.00457)	−0.0131** (0.00659)	0.00846 (0.00548)	0.0353 (0.0242)
Higher-salience territorial claim	0.957*** (0.113)	0.525*** (0.167)	1.102*** (0.123)	1.517*** (0.553)
Dyadic democracy	−0.522*** (0.142)	−0.752*** (0.229)	−0.436*** (0.156)	1.736*** (0.569)
Minimum GDP per capita in dyad	−0.339*** (0.0948)	−0.173 (0.139)	−0.459*** (0.117)	−0.395 (0.476)
Balance of capabilities in dyad	−0.890*** (0.319)	−1.115** (0.448)	−0.974** (0.384)	−4.507* (2.428)
Alliance in dyad	0.0951 (0.119)	0.0777 (0.171)	0.120 (0.144)	−0.497 (0.718)
Total U.S. military personnel	−1.326*** (0.249)	−1.755*** (0.413)	−1.332*** (0.311)	0.625 (1.022)

Table A.11—continued

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Cold War	0.266** (0.131)	0.113 (0.191)	0.344** (0.172)	0.862 (0.753)
Peace years	−0.398*** (0.0200)	−0.216*** (0.0244)	−0.457*** (0.0245)	−0.974*** (0.125)
Peace years squared	0.0149*** (0.00105)	0.00716*** (0.00110)	0.0173*** (0.00133)	0.0586*** (0.00885)
Peace years cubed	−0.000159*** (1.51e-05)	−6.70e-05*** (1.34e-05)	−0.000187*** (1.96e-05)	−0.000961*** (0.000173)
Constant	12.10*** (2.655)	15.08*** (4.056)	12.32*** (3.107)	39.19*** (14.84)
Observations	42,531	36,516	37,837	6,043
Log likelihood	−4,699	−2,177	−3,291	−198
Pseudo R-squared	0.304	0.157	0.336	0.481

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.12**Sensitivity Results: Association of U.S. Troop Presence Around Potential Initiator States and MID Occurrence (Country Fixed Effects)**

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
U.S. troops in-country not in combat in initiator state	-0.0294* (0.0166)	-0.0314 (0.0285)	-0.0189 (0.0188)	0.0576 (0.0677)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence around initiator state	-0.0118 (0.0933)	0.175 (0.125)	-0.106 (0.106)	0.132 (0.405)
U.S. alliance with initiator state	-0.321 (0.204)	-0.454 (0.277)	-0.257 (0.265)	-1.754* (0.920)
U.S. military assistance to initiator state	-0.00268 (0.00431)	0.0102 (0.00741)	-0.00618 (0.00521)	-0.0481** (0.0245)
Higher-salience territorial claim	0.923*** (0.110)	0.575*** (0.177)	1.018*** (0.115)	1.394*** (0.508)
Dyadic democracy	-0.524*** (0.141)	-0.827*** (0.227)	-0.429*** (0.149)	1.275* (0.722)
Minimum GDP per capita in dyad	-0.273*** (0.0875)	-0.0331 (0.135)	-0.378*** (0.107)	-0.262 (0.352)
Balance of capabilities in dyad	-0.837*** (0.306)	-1.074** (0.465)	-0.856** (0.359)	-2.544 (1.789)
Alliance in dyad	0.121 (0.125)	0.102 (0.183)	0.159 (0.144)	0.910 (0.774)
Total U.S. military personnel	-1.306*** (0.250)	-2.076*** (0.425)	-1.135*** (0.302)	2.607** (1.156)
Cold War	0.267** (0.134)	0.178 (0.196)	0.329* (0.175)	-1.552** (0.666)
Peace years	-0.394*** (0.0203)	-0.212*** (0.0229)	-0.455*** (0.0248)	-0.807*** (0.117)
Peace years squared	0.0148*** (0.00109)	0.00704*** (0.00104)	0.0173*** (0.00136)	0.0415*** (0.00706)
Peace years cubed	-0.000160*** (1.59e-05)	-6.68e-05*** (1.29e-05)	-0.000189*** (2.05e-05)	-0.000583*** (0.000115)
Constant	12.98*** (2.621)	13.73*** (4.086)	12.89*** (3.478)	-17.43 (11.70)

Table A.12—continued

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Observations	43,245	35,914	38,263	6,724
Log likelihood	−4,755	−2,050	−3,446	−260
Pseudo R-squared	0.305	0.155	0.332	0.419

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table A.13

Sensitivity Results: Association of U.S. Troop Presence Around Potential Target States and U.S. Conflict Initiation (High-Risk Country Fixed Effects)

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence around target state	0.865*** (0.193)	0.983*** (0.225)	1.010*** (0.211)	3.029*** (0.380)
U.S. alliance with target state	−2.360*** (0.584)	−0.273 (0.443)	−2.969*** (0.678)	
U.S. military assistance to target state	−0.0481*** (0.0172)	−0.0269 (0.0255)	−0.0780*** (0.0228)	−0.163*** (0.0293)
Dyadic democracy	−1.668*** (0.530)	−1.345** (0.672)	−2.183** (0.857)	
Minimum GDP per capita in dyad	−0.261 (0.279)	0.0333 (0.258)	−0.588* (0.340)	−3.458*** (0.845)
Balance of capabilities in dyad	1.704 (3.205)	4.560 (5.736)	0.594 (5.059)	−9.530 (10.12)
Alliance in dyad	2.120*** (0.657)	−0.903 (0.705)	3.069*** (0.719)	
Total U.S. military personnel	−0.143 (0.853)	−2.699*** (0.815)	1.041 (1.119)	2.366 (2.414)
Cold War	−0.0789 (0.474)	1.908*** (0.434)	−1.253** (0.594)	−1.333 (0.855)
Peace years	−0.428*** (0.0966)	−0.208** (0.0876)	−0.465*** (0.116)	−0.861*** (0.229)

Table A.13—continued

	(1) All MIDs	(2) Low-Intensity MIDs	(3) High-Intensity MIDs	(4) Interstate War
Peace years squared	0.0131*** (0.00379)	0.00461 (0.00351)	0.0144*** (0.00435)	0.0368** (0.0167)
Peace years cubed	−0.000105*** (4.01e-05)	−1.54e-05 (3.73e-05)	−0.000117** (4.56e-05)	−0.000451 (0.000289)
Russia dyad	1.059 (1.269)	2.204 (2.236)	0.538 (2.220)	−4.844 (5.802)
China dyad	1.917 (1.353)	3.240 (2.033)	1.509 (2.149)	−3.363 (4.292)
Iran dyad	2.631*** (0.506)	3.397*** (0.516)	2.634*** (0.683)	
Iraq dyad	3.255*** (0.318)	2.410*** (0.338)	3.372*** (0.481)	7.406*** (1.427)
DPRK dyad	1.113*** (0.361)	2.074*** (0.374)	1.018* (0.536)	
Peace years				
Constant	−10.11 (7.511)	1.497 (7.593)	−17.54** (8.155)	−20.89 (18.42)
Observations	7,054	7,054	7,054	3,706
Log likelihood	−399.1	−236.1	−249.5	−51.69
Pseudo R-squared	0.426	0.298	0.452	0.677

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses.

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

Intrastate Model Results

This appendix provides the results of our statistical models of intrastate conflict referenced in Chapter Six. The tables in this appendix are presented in the same progression as the results presented in Chapter Six.

The first four tables correspond to our statistical models assessing the effects of U.S. forward presence on levels of state repression. Table B.1 presents the results of our main statistical model that uses a latent measure of state repression. Tables B.2–B.4 provide alternative specifications of this model, using levels of state repression measured by the U.S. State Department, Amnesty International, and the CIRI physical integrity rights index, respectively.

Table B.5 examines the effects of U.S. forward presence on levels of anti-regime activity, measured through violent and nonviolent anti-regime campaigns. Tying these intermediate effects together, Table B.6 examines the effects of U.S. forward presence on armed conflict and civil war between states and militant groups. Tables B.7 and B.8 extend these findings by separately examining the effects of U.S. presence on low-intensity armed conflicts and high-intensity civil wars, respectively.

Table B.1
Main Model. Effects of U.S. Troop Presence on Levels of State Repression (Fariss Human Rights Abuse Measure)

	(1) 1951–2007	(2) Cold War	(3) Post–Cold War
U.S. troops in-country not in combat	0.00101 (0.000931)	0.00124 (0.00119)	0.00265 (0.00182)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence	–0.00150 (0.00281)	–0.00185 (0.00371)	0.00438 (0.00600)
U.S. military assistance	0.00203*** (0.000345)	0.00173*** (0.000440)	0.00240*** (0.000489)
U.S. alliance	–0.0101* (0.00581)	–0.00842 (0.00830)	–0.0252** (0.0106)
GDP per capita	–0.00539* (0.00314)	–0.00682 (0.00418)	–0.0127** (0.00529)
Population size	0.00287** (0.00115)	–0.000812 (0.00172)	0.00389*** (0.00147)
Excluded population size	0.0189 (0.0126)	0.0107 (0.0158)	0.0221 (0.0254)
Polity score	–4.09e-05 (0.00214)	0.00470* (0.00250)	–0.00846** (0.00383)
Polity score (squared)	–5.99e-05 (0.000103)	–0.000247** (0.000121)	0.000307* (0.000173)
Political instability	–0.00854 (0.00717)	0.00785 (0.00923)	–0.0286** (0.0110)
Youth bulge	0.00675 (0.00560)	0.00681 (0.00702)	0.00753 (0.0109)
Lagged latent human rights abuse (HRA) score	0.988*** (0.00198)	0.996*** (0.00242)	0.980*** (0.00343)
Cold War	0.0358*** (0.00727)		
Constant	–0.00620 (0.0424)	0.0636 (0.0547)	0.00801 (0.0882)
Observations	7,081	4,050	3,031
R-squared	0.988	0.990	0.986

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B.2
Main Model. Effects of U.S. Troop Presence on Levels of State Repression (PTS State Department HRA Measure)

	(1) 1951–2007	(2) Cold War	(3) Post–Cold War
U.S. troops in-country not in combat	0.00331 (0.00465)	–0.0118 (0.0105)	0.00771 (0.00585)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence	0.0224 (0.0154)	0.00475 (0.0272)	0.0188 (0.0198)
U.S. military assistance	0.00219 (0.00163)	0.000381 (0.00236)	0.00321* (0.00190)
U.S. alliance	0.0352 (0.0332)	0.0528 (0.0519)	0.0212 (0.0391)
GDP per capita	–0.0756*** (0.0197)	–0.00678 (0.0305)	–0.109*** (0.0222)
Population size	0.0201*** (0.00424)	0.0654*** (0.0164)	0.0164*** (0.00430)
Excluded population size	0.312*** (0.0687)	0.277*** (0.0913)	0.345*** (0.0847)
Polity score	0.0248** (0.00990)	0.0374** (0.0150)	0.0136 (0.0120)
Polity score (squared)	–0.00168*** (0.000479)	–0.00249*** (0.000720)	–0.00111* (0.000569)
Political instability	0.0119 (0.0251)	0.0559 (0.0463)	–0.000461 (0.0271)
Youth bulge	0.0125 (0.0282)	0.101** (0.0450)	–0.0429 (0.0363)
Lagged PTS State Department HRA score	0.753*** (0.0167)	0.702*** (0.0273)	0.760*** (0.0179)
Cold War	–0.102*** (0.0262)		
Constant	0.795*** (0.226)	–0.0159 (0.329)	1.176*** (0.311)
Observations	4,464	1,462	3,002
R-squared	0.762	0.713	0.777

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses.

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

Table B.3
Main Model. Effects of U.S. Troop Presence on Levels of State Repression (PTS Amnesty International HRA Measure)

	(1) 1951–2007	(2) Cold War	(3) Post–Cold War
U.S. troops in-country not in combat	0.00668 (0.00561)	–0.0232* (0.0127)	0.0125* (0.00689)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence	0.0228 (0.0164)	–0.0128 (0.0392)	0.0290 (0.0216)
U.S. military assistance	0.00418** (0.00184)	0.00500* (0.00268)	0.00451** (0.00228)
U.S. alliance	0.0373 (0.0387)	0.186*** (0.0661)	–0.0182 (0.0466)
GDP per capita	–0.0537** (0.0220)	0.0169 (0.0323)	–0.0849*** (0.0260)
Population size	0.0194*** (0.00516)	0.0561*** (0.0171)	0.0179*** (0.00538)
Excluded population size	0.340*** (0.0711)	0.298*** (0.0946)	0.377*** (0.0972)
Polity score	0.0304*** (0.0116)	0.0179 (0.0183)	0.0243* (0.0135)
Polity score (squared)	–0.00191*** (0.000545)	–0.00141 (0.000881)	–0.00159** (0.000620)
Political instability	0.0442 (0.0303)	0.139*** (0.0517)	0.00773 (0.0320)
Youth bulge	0.0224 (0.0344)	0.0836 (0.0548)	–0.0278 (0.0426)
Lagged PTS Amnesty HRA score	0.725*** (0.0189)	0.653*** (0.0262)	0.735*** (0.0219)
Cold War	–0.00704 (0.0276)		
Constant	0.617** (0.248)	0.321 (0.468)	0.838** (0.333)
Observations	3,817	1,197	2,620
R-squared	0.669	0.614	0.690

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B.4
Main Model. Effects of U.S. Troop Presence on Levels of State Repression (CIRI HRA Measure)

	(1) 1951–2007	(2) Cold War	(3) Post–Cold War
U.S. troops in-country not in combat	0.0106 (0.0111)	–0.00541 (0.0236)	0.0166 (0.0131)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence	0.0425 (0.0341)	0.0345 (0.0617)	0.0312 (0.0395)
U.S. military assistance	0.00825** (0.00324)	0.00161 (0.00538)	0.0112*** (0.00383)
U.S. alliance	0.0313 (0.0667)	0.0369 (0.127)	0.0137 (0.0752)
GDP per capita	–0.130*** (0.0463)	–0.0374 (0.0607)	–0.186*** (0.0506)
Population size	0.0719*** (0.00843)	0.129*** (0.0356)	0.0701*** (0.00846)
Excluded population size	0.620*** (0.144)	0.541** (0.216)	0.657*** (0.165)
Polity score	0.0253 (0.0249)	0.0635* (0.0382)	0.00167 (0.0277)
Polity score (squared)	–0.00242** (0.00115)	–0.00394** (0.00177)	–0.00150 (0.00127)
Political instability	–0.0101 (0.0576)	0.0129 (0.123)	–0.0160 (0.0591)
Youth bulge	0.0138 (0.0744)	0.240** (0.110)	–0.0942 (0.0828)
Lagged CIRI HRA score	0.742*** (0.0198)	0.746*** (0.0286)	0.727*** (0.0211)
Cold War	–0.104* (0.0606)		
Constant	–1.317** (0.562)	–2.821*** (0.740)	–0.637 (0.657)
Observations	3,888	950	2,938
R-squared	0.743	0.744	0.744

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B.5
Main Model. U.S. Presence and Anti-Regime Campaign Occurrence

	(1) 1951–2007	(2) Cold War	(3) Post–Cold War
U.S. troops in-country not in combat	0.0178 (0.0352)	0.0114 (0.0429)	–0.00438 (0.0774)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence	–0.0399 (0.124)	–0.166 (0.184)	0.383 (0.353)
U.S. military assistance	0.0365*** (0.0128)	0.0365** (0.0146)	0.0480 (0.0294)
U.S. alliance	–0.105 (0.307)	–0.211 (0.364)	0.102 (0.874)
GDP per capita	–0.0602 (0.117)	0.0719 (0.162)	–0.391* (0.208)
Population size	0.406*** (0.0649)	0.456*** (0.0763)	0.308** (0.140)
Excluded population size	0.571 (0.379)	0.313 (0.449)	0.893 (0.735)
Polity score	0.174*** (0.0645)	0.220*** (0.0768)	0.0408 (0.146)
Polity score (squared)	–0.0111*** (0.00328)	–0.0126*** (0.00393)	–0.00715 (0.00739)
Political instability	–0.261 (0.194)	–0.286 (0.262)	–0.0437 (0.320)
Youth bulge	0.428** (0.189)	0.464* (0.250)	0.358 (0.376)
Cold War	0.449 (0.278)		
Time since last anti-regime campaign onset	–0.250*** (0.0515)	–0.225*** (0.0808)	–0.142* (0.0832)
Time since last anti-regime campaign onset (squared)	0.0104*** (0.00263)	0.00758 (0.00490)	0.00609 (0.00403)
Time since last anti-regime campaign onset (cubed)	–0.000119*** (3.60e-05)	–5.98e-05 (7.97e-05)	–7.55e-05 (5.34e-05)
Constant	–6.443*** (1.536)	–6.171*** (2.264)	–7.309* (4.398)

Table B.5—continued

	(1) 1951–2007	(2) Cold War	(3) Post–Cold War
Observations	5,469	3,472	1,997
Log likelihood	–673.1	–445.3	–218.8
Chi-squared	161.1	128.4	59.55
Pseudo R-squared	0.135	0.146	0.143

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B.6
Main Model. U.S. Presence and Intrastate Conflict Occurrence

	(1) 1951–2007	(2) Cold War	(3) Post–Cold War
U.S. troops in-country not in combat	0.0338 (0.0346)	–0.00989 (0.0468)	0.0366 (0.0779)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence	–0.0361 (0.114)	–0.351* (0.184)	0.428* (0.220)
U.S. military assistance	0.0214* (0.0115)	0.0289** (0.0137)	0.0171 (0.0214)
U.S. alliance	–0.279 (0.228)	–0.147 (0.332)	–0.615 (0.494)
GDP per capita	–0.178 (0.120)	–0.0802 (0.175)	–0.227 (0.195)
Population size	0.105*** (0.0324)	0.266*** (0.0875)	0.0742* (0.0408)
Excluded population size	0.728** (0.339)	0.767* (0.445)	0.462 (0.483)
Polity score	0.205*** (0.0663)	0.217*** (0.0727)	0.171 (0.133)
Polity score (squared)	–0.0101*** (0.00324)	–0.0100*** (0.00359)	–0.00942 (0.00607)
Political instability	0.260 (0.169)	0.334 (0.227)	–0.00753 (0.352)
Youth bulge	0.474*** (0.184)	0.414* (0.226)	0.742** (0.372)
Cold War	0.214 (0.238)		

Table B.6—continued

	(1) 1951–2007	(2) Cold War	(3) Post–Cold War
Time since last armed conflict	–0.0371 (0.0330)	0.0763 (0.0765)	–0.0450 (0.0515)
Time since last armed conflict (squared)	0.00167 (0.00149)	–0.00607 (0.00476)	0.00236 (0.00237)
Time since last armed conflict (cubed)	–2.69e-05 (1.79e-05)	0.000110 (8.03e-05)	–3.95e-05 (2.92e-05)
Constant	–3.776** (1.599)	–2.593 (2.212)	–7.926*** (3.058)
Observations	6,000	3,507	2,493
Log likelihood	–693.4	–415.8	–267.9
Chi-squared	133.9	82.37	66.39
Pseudo R-squared	0.0692	0.0702	0.0996

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses.

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.

Table B.7
Main Model. U.S. Presence and Low-Intensity Intrastate Conflict Occurrence

	(1) 1951–2007	(2) Cold War	(3) Post–Cold War
U.S. troops in-country not in combat	0.0330 (0.0385)	–0.00134 (0.0493)	0.0472 (0.0780)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence	–0.199* (0.109)	–0.519*** (0.198)	0.292 (0.189)
U.S. military assistance	0.0195 (0.0123)	0.0275* (0.0146)	0.0146 (0.0233)
U.S. alliance	0.0297 (0.230)	0.156 (0.340)	–0.421 (0.464)
GDP per capita	–0.102 (0.130)	0.00256 (0.189)	–0.237 (0.209)
Population size	0.0783** (0.0347)	0.166 (0.103)	0.0694 (0.0427)
Excluded population size	0.592* (0.353)	0.771 (0.476)	0.126 (0.552)
Polity score	0.201*** (0.0682)	0.234*** (0.0734)	0.113 (0.135)

Table B.7—continued

	(1) 1951–2007	(2) Cold War	(3) Post–Cold War
Polity score (squared)	–0.0101*** (0.00334)	–0.0112*** (0.00364)	–0.00667 (0.00620)
Political instability	0.239 (0.171)	0.326 (0.231)	0.0196 (0.350)
Youth bulge	0.534** (0.210)	0.420* (0.250)	0.756* (0.405)
Cold War	0.163 (0.262)		
Time since last low-intensity conflict	–0.0497 (0.0344)	0.0343 (0.0796)	–0.0276 (0.0523)
Time since last low-intensity conflict (squared)	0.00217 (0.00163)	–0.00385 (0.00480)	0.00114 (0.00248)
Time since last low-intensity conflict (cubed)	–3.08e–05 (2.09e–05)	8.21e–05 (8.01e–05)	–2.07e–05 (3.17e–05)
Constant	–2.337 (1.703)	–0.494 (2.451)	–6.176** (2.957)
Observations	6,000	3,507	2,493
Log likelihood	–620.1	–360.7	–251.8
Chi-squared	123.2	76.11	53.74
Pseudo R-squared	0.0614	0.0637	0.0858

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table B.8
Main Model. U.S. Presence and High-Intensity Civil War Occurrence

	(1) 1951–2007	(2) Cold War	(3) Post–Cold War
U.S. troops in-country not in combat	0.0765 (0.0479)	0.0304 (0.0546)	0.185* (0.102)
Effective offshore noncombat U.S. troop presence	0.132 (0.175)	–0.0693 (0.320)	0.296 (0.196)
U.S. military assistance	0.0364** (0.0145)	0.0400* (0.0211)	0.0241 (0.0203)

Table B.8—continued

	(1) 1951–2007	(2) Cold War	(3) Post–Cold War
U.S. alliance	–0.537 (0.400)	–0.636 (0.489)	–0.312 (0.661)
GDP per capita	–0.308** (0.155)	–0.216 (0.256)	–0.582*** (0.224)
Population size	0.138*** (0.0337)	0.359*** (0.0684)	0.0198 (0.0542)
Excluded population size	1.772*** (0.372)	1.772*** (0.442)	1.732*** (0.662)
Polity score	0.112 (0.0807)	0.139 (0.0919)	0.198 (0.145)
Polity score (squared)	–0.00622 (0.00391)	–0.00775* (0.00466)	–0.0103 (0.00691)
Political instability	0.0772 (0.215)	0.122 (0.296)	–0.0336 (0.366)
Youth bulge	0.177 (0.236)	0.405 (0.297)	–0.420 (0.427)
Cold War	0.275 (0.280)		
Time since last civil war	–0.351*** (0.0699)	–0.418*** (0.113)	–0.239*** (0.0572)
Time since last civil war (squared)	0.0129*** (0.00355)	0.0186*** (0.00631)	0.00684** (0.00280)
Time since last civil war (cubed)	–0.000139*** (4.77e-05)	–0.000240** (9.39e-05)	–6.33e-05* (3.65e-05)
Constant	–3.819** (1.947)	–4.239 (3.256)	–2.370 (2.677)
Observations	6,849	3,913	2,936
Log likelihood	–499.6	–295.5	–193.2
Chi-squared	261.8	124.3	154.7
Pseudo R-squared	0.195	0.220	0.198

NOTES: Robust standard errors clustered by state in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

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Abbreviations

CIRI	Cingranelli and Richards
COW	Correlates of War Project
CSL	cooperative security location
DMDC	Defense Manpower Data Center
GDP	gross domestic product
HRA	human rights abuse
MID	militarized interstate dispute
OLS	ordinary least squares
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PTS	Political Terror Scale
RUGID	RAND U.S. Ground Intervention Database
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

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There is an ongoing debate about the effects of U.S. military presence on conflict around the globe. In one view, U.S. military presence helps to deter adversaries, restrain U.S. partners from adopting provocative policies, and make it easier for the United States to achieve its aims without the use of force. In another view, U.S. military presence tends to provoke adversaries and encourage allies to adopt more reckless policies, and it increases the likelihood that the United States will be involved in combat.

The authors of this report analyze historical data to assess how U.S. military presence—in particular, U.S. troop presence and military assistance—is associated with the interstate and intrastate conflict behavior of states and nonstate actors. Troop presence and military assistance have different effects. Stationing U.S. troops abroad may help deter interstate war. A large U.S. regional troop presence may reduce the likelihood of interstate conflict in two ways: by deterring potential U.S. adversaries from initiating interstate wars or by restraining U.S. allies from initiating militarized behavior. However, U.S. military presence may increase interstate militarized activities short of war. U.S. adversaries may be more likely to initiate militarized disputes against states with a larger U.S. in-country troop presence. U.S. troop presence does not appear to reduce the risk of intrastate conflict or affect the level of state repression. U.S. military assistance is not associated with changes in interstate conflict behavior. However, provision of U.S. military assistance may be associated with increased state repression and incidence of civil war. These findings have implications for near-term decisionmaking on U.S. forward troop presence in Europe and Asia.



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