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Introduction

Department of Defense (DoD) force planners use integrated security constructs and multiservice force deployment scenarios to project the numbers and types of demands likely to be placed on U.S. forces in future years. The documents define possible “states of the world,” each of which includes steady-state activities and small- and larger-scale contingency scenarios that would require surges in U.S. military forces in a given region. Although these projections do make use of data, models, and simulations, they also rely heavily on two key assumptions—one used to estimate the frequency of future contingencies and the other used to estimate the likelihood the United States will deploy forces overseas. To define the likelihood of different types of scenarios, the current DoD planning process assumes their frequency in the past is the best predictor of their frequency in the future. This approach provides an empirical basis for selecting scenarios but ignores the fact that the nature of conflict may change rapidly over time and may exhibit regional or temporal spillover. To define the likelihood that the United States will intervene militarily, DoD planners consider the level of threat to U.S. strategic interests and the risk associated with the intervention. In this approach, the timing of U.S. military deployments does not follow any systematic pattern or underlying distribution, and each intervention is considered to be largely independent from others.

This does not mean that force planning processes ignore questions about intervention timing. First, they address concurrency or conflict overlap by defining resource constraints. Second, they incorporate duration or conflict length as they map out the phases of a deployment or a contingency. The existing force planning process does not consider, however, whether there is a correlation between military deployments over time that makes the likelihood of future interventions a function not only of U.S. interests and the potential risk but also of the frequency of interventions in the recent past. This relationship would be different from the standard notion of concurrency, in which several deployments occur at that same time, because it would not require overlap between interventions and would be predictable and systematic, not simply a random or chance event.

The question of how the term *intervention* is defined in force planning and in this report is also important. *Interventions* may include many different types and levels of

military activity, ranging from the movement of an aircraft carrier from one area to another, to an air strike, to a substantial deployment of ground troops. For the purpose of the empirical analysis in this report, I define *intervention* as a deployment of ground troops, of at least company size. This definition is appropriate because I am most interested in activities that significantly affect the demands on ground troops and that have force planning implications. However, in force planning exercises, interventions may also include smaller, short-term deployments of troops to conduct evacuation operations, the insertion of teams of elite soldiers to accomplish important strategic goals, tactical airstrikes, or other types of operations. The general discussion of interventions and intervention timing in this report refers to these types of military activity as well.

There are empirical, theoretical, and anecdotal reasons to expect relationships between interventions that affect their timing, likelihood, or frequency. First, there are clear examples of events related to military deployments that are not serially independent and that do occur in dependent clusters or waves. For example, several empirical studies of conflict and most empirical work on unconventional threats—such as terrorist attacks—find that the likelihood of future crises, conflicts, and attacks rises when similar events have occurred in immediately preceding years. This type of relationship, in which the likelihood of an event in the present and the future is directly dependent on its incidence in the past, is referred to as *temporal dependence*. Temporal dependence can contribute to event clusters, or uneven, clumpy distributions of events. Temporal dependence observed in terrorist attacks, civil war, and other types of conflict may contribute to similar patterns in military interventions and deployments. There is also evidence of temporal dependence between financial market crises over time, resulting in the wavelike patterns often cited by economists (Corsetti, Pericoli, and Sbraicia, 2005; Caramzaa, Ricci, and Salgado, 2000; Bae, Karolyi, and Stulz, 2003). Parallels between the international economic and political systems make patterns in financial markets relevant to questions about deployment timing.

There is also more direct, qualitative evidence that military interventions and deployments occur in dependent clusters or groups over time. For example, the 1960s saw a string of U.S. military interventions in Southeast Asia, and the early 1990s brought a significant number of U.S. military activities in Bosnia, Haiti, and Somalia. As another example, since 2001, U.S. forces have been involved in numerous small interventions in regionally disparate locations and against terrorist and insurgent groups with anti-U.S. agendas. There are several possible explanations for why such dependent clusters form. Interventions may react to a single set of underlying political factors (the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics [USSR]) or political instability, or they may reflect an integrated set of policy responses to a single problem (September 11, 2001). Alternatively, the clusters may be driven by the dynamics of the interventions themselves. For example, each U.S. intervention may result in additional instability that demands additional interventions in the near term. Interventions may also trigger changes in the domestic political climate that increase the likelihood or

ease of second and third deployments after the first. Finally, interventions may form dependent clusters when one intervention requires supporting interventions to ensure its success.

These examples and possible mechanisms do not prove the existence of temporal dependence or provide information that might guide military planners. However, they do provide a significantly strong enough challenge to the assumption that military interventions are serially independent to warrant additional investigation. The questions of whether and how strongly temporal dependence affects the timing of military interventions should be of interest to military planners because the failure to incorporate this relationship could result in projected force requirements that are too small or do not include the right types of people to meet the demands placed on military personnel. This gap, which emerges when force plans do not account for the rapid increases in demands clustered interventions create, could significantly undermine military readiness and performance.

In this report, I test for the existence of temporal dependence between military interventions and provide some sense of the size of this relationship, defining interventions to include U.S. Army peacekeeping and contingency deployments between 1949 and 2010 (above company size). The next chapter discusses the academic literature on the drivers and timing of U.S. military interventions, the predictors of stability and conflict at the international level, and the economic literature on temporal contagion of financial crises that also informs an understanding of temporal dependence. The third chapter tests for temporal dependence. It describes the data, empirical approach, and results of the empirical analysis, reporting significant evidence of temporal dependence between instances of conflict and instability and military interventions. The fourth chapter discusses the implications of these findings for force planning, including how temporal dependence will affect projected military requirements and how it can be incorporated into planning processes. The final chapter concludes with a discussion of next steps for a research agenda that will further explore the nature and extent of temporal dependence.

