

## **FY2014 MINERVA RESEARCH INITIATIVE TOPIC #3**

### **Theories of Power and Escalation**

Political science and international relations have traditionally emphasized the roles of and relationships between formal institutions such as states, inter-governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations. Today, however, many conventional assumptions regarding power relationships and escalation theory no longer hold.

The objective of this research track is to offer new theories, models, and approaches to power projection and conflict escalation that consider strategic behavior between various transnational actors across domains in a globalized, rapidly interconnecting, and cyber-enabled world. For rising military powers, this research will yield a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, and historical factors that define strategic priorities, drive approaches to international engagement, and shape state-internal balances of power between political, military, and industrial forces.

**Areas of interest** include non-state institutions, rising military powers, potential alliance partners, and cyber domains.

### **Subtopic 3-A: The changing role of the state in a globalizing world**

Phenomena such as the “flattening” of labor markets and the increasing flow of people across state borders (whether through immigration or as refugees) have influenced demographics and created global communities that transcend traditional state boundaries. At the same time, the global diffusion of power is yielding a multipolarity of global leadership with its own broad implications. Targeted study may yield new models for effective state behavior in this changed global landscape.

Themes of interest include:

- The balance of power between the state and other traditional institutions.
- Modern vehicles of power projection, including:
  - Differences in the application of strategies for power projection, e.g., economic, political, military, cultural, by state and non-state actors.
  - Proportionality and legitimacy (norms) versus legal or military control as instruments of power.
  - Proxy wars and “vicarious belligerency” as vehicles of power projection by both states and institutions.
- Drivers affecting how a state or states influence, interact, cooperate, and compete with others to achieve nation-state level objectives, including:
- The growing influence of international law and normative processes on the ability of states to achieve desired goals.
  - The range of visions of the state’s future that is present in its political discourse.
  - Trends and drivers for military growth and modernization, strategic interests, and

technological advances in rising military powers.

- Drivers and impacts of increased influence from international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other phenomena such as social movements, on both the state and the international system.
- The changing definitions and compositions of global alliances, including:
  - The role of credibility and trust in establishing international alliances among stakeholders to respond to global issues.
  - The use of principal/agent theory to inform engagement with weak democracies or weak autocracies.
- Assessments of technological system development, security policy and strategy, economic systems, and the broader evolution of society in a globally networked world, including:
  - The implications of the growing reliance on cyber technologies for assessing threats, identifying strategic vulnerabilities, and maintaining crisis stability.
  - The intersection of national interest, international standards, and the associated standards bodies.
  - The impact, if any, of emerging technologies on global culture and political dynamics (including information diffusion, social structures, and power relationships).
  - The impact, if any, of increasing technological capability among insurgents on state government and military power structures.
- Area studies, such as:
  - Political, military, and social environments in rising regional powers and their implications for regional stability.
  - Relations between regional partners such as China and Pakistan over time.
  - Technological and economic aspects of great power competition, as well as the role of transparency and corresponding governance mechanisms.
- Strategies to influence the actions, reactions, and iterative counteractions of allies, partners, third parties, and non-state centers of decision-making.

### **Subtopic 3-B: Beyond conventional deterrence**

Since the end of the Cold War, technology developments and shifts in the environment have challenged and stretched traditional models of conflict escalation and deterrence. Not only do space and cyberspace represent relatively new domains for international actor engagement, but information and communications technologies have empowered individuals and non-state actors to compete with states and potentially threaten state interests across geographic domains as well as cyber and space. Traditional theories of deterrence may no longer be relevant today or in the future security environment.

When actors face asymmetric risks in a given domain, cross-domain deterrence approaches are often necessary. States can choose to exercise leverage where they are strongest and target areas where the adversary is the weakest. For example, a state may attempt to deter cyber-attacks by military actions at sea or on the ground, by economic means, through participation or non-

participation in international treaties, or other approaches. Such deterrent actions across domains yield major challenges that require further study.

The objective of this research track is to offer new theories, models, and approaches to escalation and deterrence theory that incorporate strategic behavior among international actors across new and traditional geographic domains.

Themes of interest include:

- General frameworks for deterrence across different domains, actor types, and issue areas.
- The role of population influence (including social media) in shaping deterrence tactics.
- The effect of unique features of space and cyberspace — related to such factors as information availability, infrastructure vulnerability, or attribution — on existing models of deterrence.
- Asymmetry of stakes and how those stakes change as a crisis or conflict evolves.
  - How can threats be calibrated across different domains for specific actors?
  - How might proportionality of responses be determined in cross-domain deterrence?
  - How can misperception of threats and signals across all domains be reduced?
  - How does the structure of an organization affect its ability to send and process signals of aggression across domains?
- The links between specific *diplomacy, information, military, and economic* (DIME) actions and escalation or de-escalation of unfolding crises. Researchers will ideally look at the combined effect of at least two of the four DIME strategies using empirical data. Some topics that would benefit from analysis and insight include:
  - Novel approaches for validation of proposed causal dynamics between DIME actions and unfolding crises.
  - Dynamics of coalition management during complex multilateral security interventions where each actor has its own military and domestic concerns (e.g., the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan).
- Social and cultural aspects – the “human side” – of cyber security.
- Cyber governance strategies in terms of policies, organizational and technological changes, economic institutionalizations and persuasions, and behaviors.
- Public attitudes within China, the United States, Russia, and the European Union toward the usage of cyber activities to support military goals.
- What are the key benefits and costs to the “Internet information freedom” model? Is the current U.S. model sustainable?
- Other novel approaches to escalation and deterrence theory that incorporate strategic behavior among international actors across new and traditional geographic domains.

Research Topic Chief:

- Dr. Ivy Estabrooke (Office of Naval Research), [ivy.estabrooke@navy.mil](mailto:ivy.estabrooke@navy.mil), 703-588-2396