



STEPHEN WATTS, JEFFREY MARTINI, JASON H. CAMPBELL,
MARK TOUKAN, INHYOK KWON

Securing Gains in Fragile States

Using U.S. Leverage in Iraq, Afghanistan,
and Beyond



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Preface

This report documents research and analysis conducted as part of a project entitled *Preventing the Reconstitution of Defeated Insurgents in the Middle East and Beyond*, sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7, U. S. Army. The purpose of the project was to contribute to the Army's understanding of actions necessary to turn military gains against violent extremist organizations into durable change.

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Summary

The research reported here was completed in May 2020, followed by security review by the sponsor and the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, with final sign-off in May 2021.

The U.S. experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan and the resulting U.S. military doctrine emphasize the need for the United States to consolidate the gains it has realized on the battlefield. Recognizing this need, however, is much easier than understanding the measures necessary to succeed. Both U.S. decisionmakers and a variety of analysts have generally agreed that broad-based, inclusive governance and institutionalized capacity-building consistent with the rule of law are the long-term goals for stabilizing fragile states. How to realize these goals is much more contentious.

This report provides research to advance at least partial answers to these questions. The policy community has long been divided about the practicality of using leverage and specific conditions on military and civil assistance to nudge local partners toward better governance practices. The findings in this report suggest that conditionality measures can indeed work, so long as leverage strategies are appropriately designed, and “success” is defined in appropriately modest and incremental terms.

Research Approach

The research reported here proceeded in three steps. First, we reviewed the policy debates around stabilization efforts and the use of conditionality in foreign assistance. From prior policy and academic writings, we derived a framework to help better understand when we might expect U.S. leverage to be successful in nudging partners toward better governance practices.

Second, we tested this framework in a series of 18 specific episodes, or *influence events*, in Iraq (since 2003) and Afghanistan (since 2001). In our descriptions of each episode, we trace the consequences of U.S. efforts to cajole, induce, or compel more-inclusive and/or rule-bound governance from its partners. These episodes were drawn from periods in which the United States had large numbers of troops present but also periods in which the United States had only a small military footprint. These case studies were based on a review of hundreds of primary- and secondary-source documents in English and Arabic (and a few in Dari) and dozens of interviews with practitioners ranging from senior White House officials and ambassadors to field-grade military officers and implementing partners for civil society programs.

To assess whether some of the top-level findings from these two case studies might be generalizable to other contexts, we conducted a statistical analysis of all postconflict countries from 1975–2009 (the period for which we have all necessary data). This analysis helped elucidate the relationship between foreign intervention and (1) the likelihood that a government will include formerly excluded groups in the postconflict period and (2) how likely the postconflict political order is to remain at peace.

Findings

In our analysis of influence events in Iraq and Afghanistan, we evaluated the effects of four types of interactions:

1. **Aligned interests:** instances in which U.S. and partner interests aligned

2. **Strong leverage:** instances in which interests were misaligned; the United States used its leverage; and the conditions for effective leverage—a clear U.S. demand, the ability of the United States to observe the desired partner behavior, and a strong sanction threatened for noncompliance—were in place
3. **Weak leverage:** instances in which interests misaligned, the United States used its leverage, but one or more conditions for effective leverage was absent
4. **Mismatched strategy:** instances in which interests were misaligned but the United States relied on persuasion or inducements rather than conditionality.

In each case, we assessed outcomes within the first two to three years of the United States issuing a demand (short-term outcomes) and out to five years from the influence event (long-term outcomes). Outcomes were assessed as successes (if all or nearly all U.S. goals were achieved), partial successes (if outcomes fell well short of U.S. goals, but important changes nonetheless resulted), and failures. Figures S.1 and S.2 summarize the results

As Figure S.1 shows, when U.S. and partner interests aligned or when the United States used its leverage with all the necessary prerequisites in place (“strong leverage”), the United States was highly successful in the short term; approximately two-thirds or more of such cases can be considered successes. In contrast, when one or more of the prerequisites for effective leverage were missing (“weak leverage”) or when the United States did not attempt to use leverage despite misaligned interests between it and its partner, the outcomes were typically poor. In contrast to the prior two types of influence events, the latter types of influence events ended in failure approximately two-thirds of the time. In the short term, U.S. leverage could be a powerful tool, but only when the necessary conditions were in place.

When we look at the effects of influence efforts five or more years after they occurred, the broad pattern is similar. As Figure S.2 shows, instances of aligned interests perform best, while instances of strong leverage perform only slightly less well. In contrast, cases of weak leverage or mismatched strategies were almost uniformly failures. As might

Figure S.1
Short-Term Outcomes of U.S. Leverage Efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan

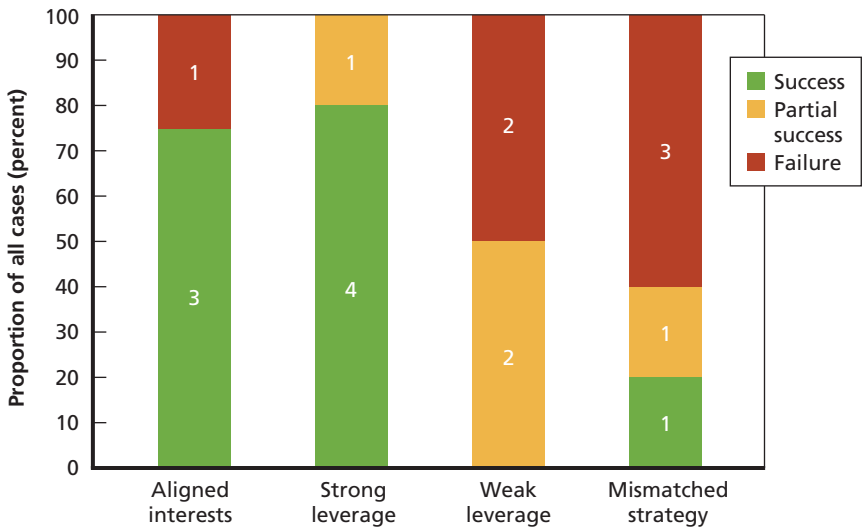
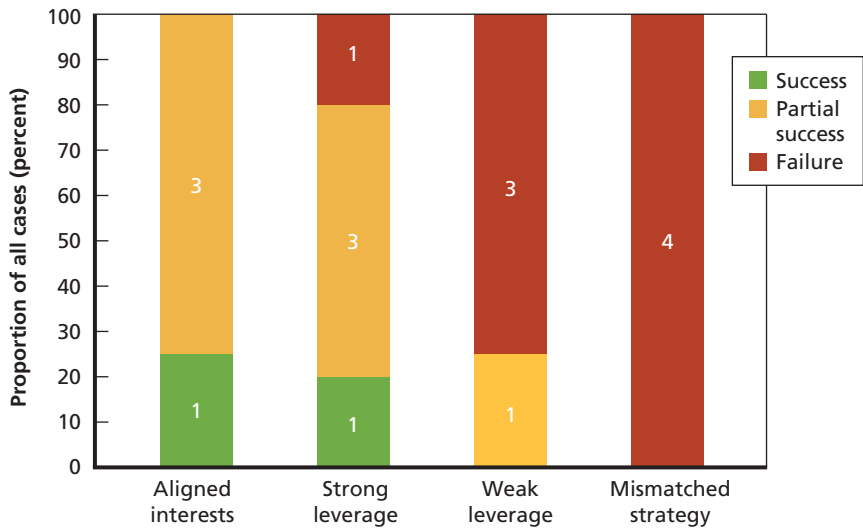


Figure S.2
Long-Term Outcomes of U.S. Leverage Efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan



be expected, rates of success decline when outcomes are observed over longer time horizons. The uniform failure of weak leverage and inducement or persuasion in cases of misaligned interests is particularly sobering. But even in the better-performing types of influence efforts, full success is rare. That said, in these cases, U.S. efforts were almost always at least partially successful. These results stand in stark contrast to the expectations of policy observers who are skeptical of conditionality.

Our statistical findings suggest that the U.S. experience in Iraq and Afghanistan has broader applicability. Appropriate quantitative data were unavailable to test all the elements of our framework for understanding the effectiveness of leverage. We were, however, able to assess hundreds of conflicts between governments and nonstate groups to determine whether these nonstate groups were included in a post-conflict government and whether foreign assistance was associated with a higher likelihood of such political inclusion. We were also able to test whether foreign assistance was associated with longer, more-stable periods of peace. Statistical analysis revealed that foreign assistance—especially assistance from members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, often called the “club” of wealthy democracies)—is consistently associated with higher levels of political inclusion and longer periods of peace in the post–Cold War period. While these findings do not provide proof that foreign leverage was the cause of these outcomes, they are consistent with the findings of our case study analysis and suggest that these findings may indeed be applicable to conflict-affected countries more generally.

Policy Recommendations

These findings have important implications for U.S. practitioners. The overarching conclusion of this report is that there are opportunities for well-designed leverage strategies to promote better governance practices in conflict-affected states and that the United States should seize such opportunities to improve the odds of achieving long-term stabilization. Beyond this top-level conclusion, however, our research offers more-detailed guidance for practitioners.

Begin with Reasonable Expectations About What “Consolidating Gains” Means

The research in this report suggests that foreign stabilization efforts can indeed promote inclusion and institutionalized capacity-building and ultimately improve partners’ resilience. However, such improvements are often obtained at great cost and may not be enough to prevent renewed instability in some fraction—potentially a very large fraction—of all cases. Senior decisionmakers should begin by understanding that countries experiencing civil war return to some level of conflict more than one-half of the time within five years of the end of the initial conflict and that strengthening a partner’s commitment to political inclusion and rule-bound institutional development is a long-term endeavor that will likely require years or even decades of sustained effort.

Prioritize the Inclusion of as Many Factions as Practical in the Postwar Order

Once the United States has chosen to intervene in a civil conflict, promoting inclusion and building rule-bound capacity in the host country can lead to lower levels of conflict. In general, winnowing the pool of “irreconcilable” factions to the smallest number possible will improve chances of avoiding war recurrence. Moreover, the United States should provide offramps as well as redlines—that is, clear indications of what behavior will not be tolerated but also openings to fuller inclusion and participation if the rules of the game are observed.

Focus U.S. Leverage on Critical Objectives

U.S. material resources are finite, as are the patience and room to maneuver the partner’s leaders have. For leverage to work, it must be properly focused on key priorities. To minimize contradictions between realizing the underlying conditions that reduce the risk of conflict recurrence and achieving immediate warfighting objectives, the United States must carefully prioritize where it will focus its leverage. When that prioritization is settled, hard (*ex ante*) conditionality should be considered for the highest priority demands, with success

more likely when U.S. demands are delivered by a cabinet secretary or other senior official from Washington.

Clearly and Consistently Communicate U.S. Demands

The best-designed leverage strategy will fail if the partner does not understand what the United States is demanding of it. Conflicting signals from the United States only serve to strengthen the partner's position at the expense of the United States. When engaging with a partner, the United States must speak with a single voice, and senior leaders should ensure that message is faithfully conveyed by all interlocutors. Planners also need to resist the temptation to engineer elaborate, highly complex solutions that the partner is less likely to understand. This requires simplifying requests for the sake of clear communication. It also requires taking into account cultural factors and considering the partner's room to maneuver before deciding to use leverage.

Develop Frameworks and Capabilities for Monitoring Partner Compliance

One of our findings is that the United States has typically had the information it needed to monitor critical elements of partner compliance. This finding does not mean, however, that the United States faces few challenges in observing partner behavior. U.S. personnel can take a number of actions to improve decisionmakers' understanding of U.S. partners. There is a particular need for developing leading (as opposed to lagging) indicators and warnings that alert the United States to partner efforts to exclude identity groups or hijack the development of security forces to advance personal ambitions. There is also a need to improve understanding of partner preferences at the subnational level.

Carefully Select Sanctions for Noncompliance and Inducements for Cooperation

U.S. practitioners need to offer carrots and sticks in such a way as to compel compliance with the most critical U.S. demands while not alienating the partner. By carefully mapping what the partner is seeking, the United States will be in the best position to advance its pri-

orities while compensating the partner with inducements for its cooperation. Even relatively small gestures demonstrate sensitivity to the leaders of another nation and provide them with face-saving opportunities to reinforce their position among their followers. As for sanctioning noncompliance, this task is the responsibility not only of senior officials and general officers but also of unit commanders operating in the field. Unit commanders can base the amount of military assistance they provide to the partner on the partner's commitment to principles it has agreed to. These commanders often control the key assets (e.g., fires support, targeting packages) the partner seeks, increasing U.S. leverage.

Acknowledgments

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We conducted all interviews with currently serving uniformed military and civilian personnel on a strictly not-for-attribution basis. Former military personnel and civilian officials, however, were free to speak on a for-attribution basis, and many chose to do so. Although we cannot thank all of our interview subjects by name, given the conditions under which they spoke to us, our research benefitted tremendously from the time and insights they shared with us, and we owe them all a debt of gratitude.

We would also like to recognize the contributions of our colleagues at the RAND Corporation and in academia. We benefitted greatly from the insights and introductions made by our colleagues who have recently served in government. These include Ambassador Charles Ries, Ambassador James Dobbins, Javed Ali, and J. D. Williams, who offered their insights and made introductions to others who provided complementary or alternative perspectives. We thank Daniel Byman (Georgetown University), David Lake (University of California, San Diego), Jennifer Kavanagh (RAND), and Trevor Johnston (RAND) for their very helpful reviews of the draft report.

Introduction

Between 2003 and 2011, the United States invested at least several hundred billion dollars and the lives of over 4,000 U.S. soldiers in stabilizing Iraq. Yet, only three years after U.S. forces had departed, Iraq again stood on the verge of collapse. In 2014, forces of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) routed many of the forces of the government of Iraq and seized control of large swathes of the country.

The success of ISIS prompted many critics of U.S. stabilization efforts to ask why these efforts fell apart so quickly. Many observers agreed on the answers. First, the narrow sectarian rule of Nouri al-Maliki had undermined the tenuous partial peace that the United States had helped establish, alienating Iraq's Sunni minority and causing them to again embrace insurgency.¹ Second, U.S. efforts to build the capacity of the Iraqi government—including its security forces—were undone by Iraqi leaders more committed to retaining personal power than developing effective institutions.² The prescription for Iraq going forward appeared similarly obvious: governance that was more inclusive and bound by the rule of law. Ambassador Brett McGurk, the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State responsible for Iraq, declared in congressional testimony that “only leaders who can govern with an

¹ See, for instance, International Crisis Group, *Make or Break: Iraq's Sunnis and the State*, Brussels, August 14, 2013, and Toby Dodge, *Iraq: From War to a New Authoritarianism*, London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2012.

² In addition to Iraqi leaders contributing to the conditions that enabled the rise of ISIS, changes in context outside Iraqi control are also part of the explanation. Most notably, the civil war in neighboring Syria expanded sanctuary for ISIS in the Euphrates River Valley.

inclusive agenda are going to be able to pull the country together and guide the Iraqi people through this crisis.”³

Such statements echoed a broader consensus about how to stabilize fragile states. The current U.S. government guidance for stabilization efforts insists that

Stabilization is inherently political, which means it must focus on local, national, and/or regional societal and governing dynamics, agents, and systems that lead populations toward inclusive, non-violent settlement and agreement.⁴

Similar prescriptions abound in official guidance published by international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), World Bank, and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).⁵

The United States, of course, has not been consistent in pursuing such objectives. Early on in its intervention in Afghanistan, for instance, the United States helped engineer the selection of its then-preferred candidate, Hamid Karzai, to become the first president of the newly formed republic and rejected the reconciliation efforts of various former Taliban leaders who might have formed part of a power-

³ Brett McGurk, “Statement of Brett McGurk, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iraq and Iran, U.S. Department of State,” in *Iraq at a Crossroads: Options for U.S. Policy*, hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 113th Cong., 2nd Sess., July 24, 2014, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2015, p. 5. Similarly, the foreign ministers of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS proclaimed in a joint statement that “[a]ddressing the root causes of conflict will be key for long-term peace and stabilization, including through inclusive security forces and governance that meets the needs of all Iraqis” (U.S. Department of State, “Statement by Ministers of the Global Coalition to ss/DAESH,” media note, Washington, D.C.: Office of the Spokesperson, February 6, 2019).

⁴ U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, and U.S. Department of Defense, *A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas*, 2018. This document is more commonly known as the Stabilization Assistance Review.

⁵ See, for instance, OECD, *From Power Struggles to Sustainable Peace: Understanding Political Settlements*, Paris, 2011; World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*, Washington, D.C., 2011, and UN Advisory Group of Experts, *2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture*, New York: United Nations, 2015.

sharing government. Similarly, in Iraq, the United States tried to strictly control governance in the early occupation period and, in a series of highly controversial decisions, excluded any figures associated with the former regime. Even when the United States eventually gravitated toward more-inclusive, institutionalized approaches to governance, it normally did so as a means of reducing the costs of intervention by co-opting hostile or potentially hostile factions, not necessarily out of any normative commitment to democracy. Even then, its governance initiatives were often criticized as insufficiently attuned to local context, insufficiently resourced, or lacking in any number of other ways. Nevertheless, regardless of its early actions or ultimate intentions, U.S. policy ultimately came to approximate (however roughly) the inclusive and institutionalized approach enshrined in its formal policy objectives and the public pronouncements of leading officials.

By the time of the ISIS offensive, the United States had been trying to help the Iraqis build inclusive governance and the rule of law for the better part of a decade. Why should policymakers expect different outcomes after 2014 if they failed to build inclusive and rule-bound governance after 2003? More broadly, if inclusive political structures and state capacity governed by the rule of law are so commonly posited as the way to stabilize conflict-affected and fragile states, how do we get there? What evidence do we have that foreign interveners, no matter how well-intentioned and well-resourced, can nudge local actors toward governance that is inclusive enough or rule-bound enough to substantially increase the odds of achieving at least minimally acceptable levels of stability in fragile states and postconflict environments?

Research Questions and Contribution

This report assesses the ability of the United States (and similar intervening states) to influence local partners toward better governance. More specifically, it seeks answers to the following questions:

- Do improvements in governance—in particular, more-inclusive politics and the building of state capacity governed by the rule of law—help secure more durable peace?

- To what extent and under what circumstances are interventions by the United States and similar international actors associated with improvements in local governance?
- If the United States and the local partner have different priorities for governance and capacity-building, under what circumstances can the United States shape the partner's preferences, with what policy levers, and for how long?
- What are the implications for U.S. decisionmakers and those charged with implementing U.S. policy, from ambassadors and commanding generals to front-line forces, military planners, and doctrine writers?

Our answers to these questions are grounded in the policy and academic literature on leverage and conditionality but extend prior research in at least two important ways. First, while much of the literature is prone to sweeping claims—that leverage and conditionality must be consistently and aggressively used to obtain U.S. objectives or that leverage and conditionality are futile or counterproductive—our conclusions are more nuanced. Through a research approach that is both quantitative and qualitative, we have sought to demonstrate the conditions under which leverage is most likely to be successful and to provide rough indications of the extent to which it is successful. Our basic conclusion is that leverage is a useful tool and should be applied more frequently than it has been in the past in such contingencies. It is not, however, a cure-all, and overly aggressive use of conditionality poses risks that its proponents inadequately appreciate. Second, although our analysis is grounded in rigorous methods, it is intended primarily for practitioners. In the course of our research, we spoke with dozens of officials, military officers, and civil society experts and implementers from the United States, partner countries, and elsewhere in an effort to understand not only broad patterns of success and failure but also how leverage is applied in practice.

The answers to our research questions have important policy implications. Most immediately, they can help inform U.S. policy toward Iraq and Afghanistan. As of this writing, the United States is negotiating with the Taliban in an effort to end the nearly two-

decade-long war in Afghanistan. However, the literature on negotiated settlements and power-sharing arrangements suggests that such deals are usually fragile and prone to break down without outside assistance. How can the United States continue to nudge the parties in Afghanistan toward stability after U.S. troops have either departed or drawn down to extremely limited numbers? Similarly, now that the physical control of ISIS has diminished, to what extent will governments in Baghdad remain committed to working with Sunni constituencies? Can the United States help buttress political processes in both countries?

More broadly, the findings in this report can help inform U.S. policy and doctrine for stabilization. Current U.S. military doctrine emphasizes the importance of securing gains, of converting military victories into enduring political advantage for the United States and its partners.⁶ The record of achievements in Iraq and Afghanistan suggests that we still have a highly imperfect understanding of how to do so. Again, this report does not offer any panaceas. Military interventions in fragile states are uniformly difficult, usually expensive (often prohibitively), and often disappointing. *Often*, however, is not *always*. There will be circumstances in the future in which the United States may choose to try to stabilize conflict-affected countries, albeit likely on a scale more similar to that of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR, the U.S. military operation in Iraq after 2014) than of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF, the U.S. occupation of Iraq from 2003–2010). This report offers guidance on how the United States might improve the odds of securing hard-won gains.

Finally, this report has important implications for competition with other great powers. The willingness of the United States to prioritize good governance in its military interventions and the success with which it has applied leverage toward this goal have varied, in part as a function of geopolitical rivalries and the actions of other states. This report provides insights into the conditions under which the United States can successfully apply leverage, as well as warnings about the

⁶ See Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, March 16, 2018.

additional challenges to stabilization efforts during periods of intense great power competition.

Research Approach

The research in this report is based on a multimethod approach. To assess the frequency with which the United States is able to achieve its governance and stabilization objectives (as articulated in official guidance documents, such as the Stabilization Assistance Review, and in public pronouncements, such as those cited earlier), we conduct a statistical analysis of all postconflict countries from 1975–2009 (the period for which we have all necessary data). This analysis helps elucidate the relationship between foreign intervention (of various types, by various actors) and (1) the likelihood that a government will include formerly excluded groups in the postconflict period and (2) how likely the postconflict political order is to remain at peace.

Statistical analyses of this sort can answer the question “how often” but not the questions of “how” or “why.” For the latter questions, qualitative analysis is helpful. Consequently, our quantitative analysis is followed by two extended case studies—one on Iraq and one on Afghanistan. These case studies are divided into multiple specific episodes or *influence events* in which we can trace the consequences of U.S. efforts to cajole, induce, or compel more-inclusive and/or rule-bound governance from its partners in Iraq and Afghanistan. These episodes are drawn from periods in which the United States had large numbers of troops present but also periods in which the United States had only a small or even negligible military footprint. Comparisons among these episodes help indicate the different dilemmas of leverage that U.S. policymakers and implementers are likely to encounter at various levels of U.S. commitment. These case studies were based on a review of hundreds of primary- and secondary-source documents in English and Arabic (and a few in Dari), as well as dozens of interviews with practitioners. These interviews were conducted with senior White House officials, U.S. generals, a large number of the U.S. ambassadors and special envoys and special representatives to Iraq and Afghanistan,

senior intelligence officials who oversaw the collection and analysis of intelligence for these operations, military officers and diplomats at the “working levels” charged with implementing U.S. policies on the ground, and civil society experts and implementers of democracy and governance programs.

The report proceeds in four main steps. It begins (in Chapter Two) with an overview of the policy debates around these issues, followed by a detailed analysis of key events in Iraq and Afghanistan (Chapters Three, Four, and Five), followed by our statistical analysis of the broader range of cases (Chapter Six), and concluding with a summary of findings and policy recommendations (Chapter Seven). Two appendixes provide technical details of our analysis.

Debates About Using Leverage to Secure Gains

Outside powers, such as the United States, face enormous challenges in stabilizing fragile and conflict-affected states. The path to fully self-sustaining stability is long, normally lasting decades. Nevertheless, many such states are able to achieve either a tentative peace or at least low levels of violence. External assistance can be crucial in securing such “good enough” outcomes.

In this chapter, we review the challenges the United States has faced and will likely continue to face in trying to secure or consolidate gains from its military operations in such states. We then discuss the options available to outside powers, such as the United States, seeking to buttress fragile political orders. For democracies that seek to stabilize partners while minimizing their own commitment of resources, there are few viable alternatives to supporting broad-based and rule-bound governance. Local partners, however, often have strong incentives to subvert such agendas. This chapter therefore discusses debates in the academic and policy communities about the ability of outside powers to “nudge” local partners toward better governance practices through some combination of persuasion, inducement, and coercion. The final section of this chapter lays out the research design for the rest of the report—the ways in which subsequent chapters will systematically assess various episodes in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the broader record of postconflict stabilization, to help provide policy-relevant insights into the extent to which and the circumstances in which the United States can best apply its leverage to secure gains in fragile states.

The Challenge of Securing Gains

Postconflict countries are highly fragile. Wars often degrade a country's resilience at the same time as they build networks that have the capabilities and sometimes the incentive to resume war after one has ended, leaving these states at high risk of conflict recurrence.

Resilience is weakened through the destruction of physical and human capital. Physical infrastructure may be destroyed directly through fighting or indirectly through looting or lack of maintenance. Human capital is slowly degraded through deaths, brain drain as refugees resettle elsewhere, and disrupted education systems. Bridging civil society networks that mediated conflicts between ethnic or sectarian groups are often weakened, as are norms of tolerance and compromise.

Even as resilience weakens, networks that specialize in violence typically persist even after the war ends. Even if disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs are implemented, the incentives, knowledge, and skills to restart a militant group or criminal enterprise often remain in place. DDR may provide former combatants with a way to earn a living but may not compensate them for the status and influence they enjoyed when they operated as an armed group. Former combatants remember the old command-and-control structures and often retain patronage networks that help maintain loyalty. Former combatants also frequently retain connections to illicit networks that can be used to finance and arm a new movement. Renewed violence—or the threat of such violence—can prove lucrative, providing a material incentive to undermine the postconflict political order.

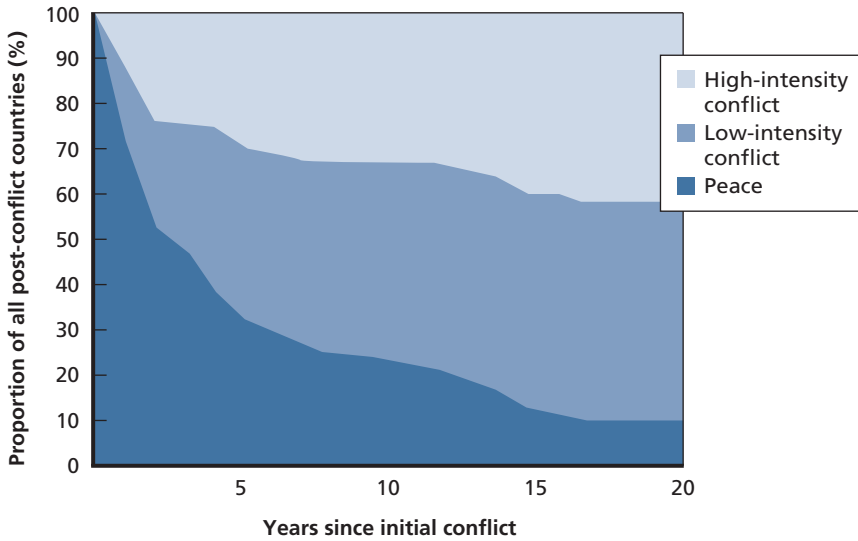
It should therefore not be surprising that a high proportion of postconflict states return to conflict within a few years. Indeed, civil conflict has been described as a trap from which it is difficult to recover.¹

Scholars often suggest that approximately one-half of civil wars reignite.² As Figure 2.1 illustrates, the actual proportion depends on

¹ Paul Collier, V. L. Elliott, Havard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, and Nicholas Sambanis, *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*, Washington, D.C.: World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2003.

² See, for instance, Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Måns Söderbom, "Post-Conflict Risks," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 45, No. 4, July 2008, pp. 461–478.

Figure 2.1
Durability of Peace and Risk of War Recurrence in Postconflict Countries



SOURCE: RAND Arroyo Center calculations based on Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)/Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) data; RAND Arroyo Center calculations. NOTES: Figure 2.1 displays the rate at which civil wars that experienced at least one year of high-intensity violence recur. A year is coded as high intensity if it generates at least 1,000 battle-related deaths. Conflicts are coded as recurring when at least two years of peace transpire between conflict episodes. Low-level recurrences are coded when the new episode generates at least 25 battle-related deaths; high-intensity recurrences are coded when at least one year in the new episode generates 1,000 battle-related deaths.

the time horizon used and the way that war is defined. Within five years, only one-half of postconflict countries remain fully at peace (meaning fewer than 25 people are killed in any given year in organized political violence between rival armed groups). By 20 years out, a very low proportion of countries has never returned to at least low-intensity violence.

The picture is not so bleak as these numbers imply, however. Most countries that return to armed conflict do so at a relatively low intensity—somewhere between 25 and 1,000 people killed in a given year. Even two decades after the end of a war, a majority of postconflict states have never returned to higher-intensity warfare. Of the countries

that do return to conflict, many do so intermittently, with violence flaring for only a couple or a few years before returning to an uneasy peace.

Given the fragility of postconflict states, how might U.S. policymakers best secure gains when U.S. action has helped end a war on acceptable terms? The literature on postconflict stabilization suggests four options:

- End the original conflict through the decisive military defeat of all challengers.
- Stabilize the postconflict order through the deployment of a sizable third-party military force, such as a UN peace operation.
- Build the capacity of the postconflict state to provide public goods, including internal security, in a manner consistent with the rule of law.
- Help construct an inclusive (or “inclusive enough”) postconflict political order in which all major organized groups with the capacity to disrupt the peace are represented in some manner.

The decisive military defeat of insurgents is associated with higher levels of postconflict stability. Indeed, Columbia University scholar Page Fortna wrote

[t]hat peace is more stable after decisive military victories than after wars that end in a tie is perhaps the most consistent finding of the literature on the durability of peace after both civil and Interstate conflict.³

It is thus tempting to “give war a chance” and insist that the United States should hold out for decisive military victory if it intervenes at

³ Virginia Page Fortna, “Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace After Civil War,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 2, June 2004, p. 273. See also Roy Licklider, “The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945–1993,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 89, No. 3, September 1995; Monica Duffy Toft, “Ending Civil Wars: A Case for Rebel Victory?” *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 4, Spring 2010; and Suzanne Werner and Amy Yuen, “Making and Keeping Peace,” *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 2, Spring 2005.

all.⁴ Such an approach, while seductive, is problematic. First, the proportion of wars that have ended in outright military victory has been declining for decades, in part because of international norms that favor negotiated settlements but at least as much because of the spread of the techniques of guerrilla warfare and the ready availability of small arms and light weapons.⁵ The oft-cited victory of the government of Sri Lanka over the Tamil Tigers is the rare exception in recent conflicts. Second, while foreign military intervention on behalf of a government can greatly decrease the likelihood that the supported government will be defeated, it typically does not increase the odds of victory.⁶ Third, even where such victories can be obtained, they often come at a tremendous human cost. The average duration of civil wars has increased from approximately two years in 1946 to 15 years by the end of the 20th century, and each year a decisive victory is pursued brings more devastation.⁷ Wars that end in decisive military victory and the absolute control of one side also run a much higher risk of genocide.⁸

A second option for stabilizing postconflict states is the deployment of third-party military forces, such as peace operations under the

⁴ Edward N. Luttwak, "Give War a Chance," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 4, July–August 1999.

⁵ Toft, 2010. The norm of nonnegotiation with terrorists has further contributed to a decline in all forms of civil war termination, including negotiated settlements and decisive victories. See Lise Morjé Howard and Alexandra Stark, "How Civil Wars End: The International System, Norms, and the Role of External Actors," *International Security*, Vol. 42, No. 3, Winter 2017–2018.

⁶ Stephen Watts, Patrick B. Johnston, Jennifer Kavanagh, Sean M. Zeigler, Bryan Frederick, Trevor Johnston, Karl P. Mueller, Astrid Stuth Cevallos, Nathan Chandler, Meagan L. Smith, Alexander Stephenson, and Julia A. Thompson, *Limited Intervention: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Limited Stabilization, Limited Strike, and Containment Operations*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-2037-A, 2017, Chapter Two.

⁷ On the changing duration of conflict, see James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1, February 2003, p. 68, and Howard and Stark, 2017–2018.

⁸ Licklider, 1995, and Barbara Harff, "No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder Since 1955," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1, February 2003. See also Scott Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2015.

flag of the UN or a regional organization, such as the African Union. Several studies have found that such deployments can be an important or even essential condition for durable peace.⁹ Unfortunately, such operations are often large and expensive; in the current environment, few countries seem willing to support such operations, at least in dangerous environments. Moreover, UN operations have typically been deployed in regions—especially Africa—in which the interests of the major powers on the UN Security Council are not critically engaged. These limitations circumscribe their utility in many parts of the world, including much of the Middle East. That gap is further underscored by the weakness of regional organizations in some of the most conflict-prone regions, such as the Arab League, which has no demonstrated capability to field a peacekeeping or peace enforcement mission.

A third option is to build the capacity of the partner state to govern its own territory, providing public goods, such as critical public health and sanitation services, maintenance of physical infrastructure, justice and conflict resolution, and security. Doing so potentially allows the partner state to co-opt discontent and increase the opportunity costs of rebellion. It can also provide the partner state with more-effective capabilities to disrupt, degrade, and defeat militants, if necessary. Some scholars have emphasized the importance of capacity-building (such as in the security services),¹⁰ which has been a critical element of U.S. policy in most instances in which the United States has intervened.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to build durable capacity in service of the state rather than of particular leaders and their cronies or support

⁹ Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, “International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 94, No. 4, December 2000, pp. 779–801; Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006; Fortna, 2004; Virginia Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work?* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008; Barbara F. Walter, “Designing Transitions from Civil War: Demobilization, Democratization, and Commitments to Peace,” *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Summer 1999; Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil War*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002; Håvard Hegre, Lisa Hultman, and Håvard Mokleiv Nygård, “Evaluating the Conflict-Reducing Effect of UN Peacekeeping Operations,” *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 81, No. 1, January 2019.

¹⁰ Toft, 2010.

bases. Corruption in such contexts is often endemic and, indeed, may be a critical component of many essential governmental functions.¹¹ On the military side, the United States has frequently discovered that, while it is possible to build tactical-level military capabilities quickly, it is much more difficult to build security forces that are not hollowed out by corruption, respect at least basic human and civil rights in their treatment of the population, and observe appropriate civil-military relations. Past research has found that security capacity-building efforts seem most likely to contribute to stability in countries that are already at least reasonably well governed.¹²

It is challenging to determine the appropriate depth and breadth of capacity building necessary to achieve sufficient sustainability and independence in a partner government to allow for transition and eventual disengagement—that is, what level of capacity building is good enough, and how achievable are the improvements in a policy-relevant period? Security capacity-building efforts can contribute to violence reduction in much weaker states, but usually only when they are embedded in a broader and long-term international effort to provide for security and political reconstruction, such as during UN peace operations.¹³ In addition, capacity-building is a long-term endeavor that must be sustained over decades, challenging outside actors' ability to maintain focus even as priorities inevitably shift to new areas.¹⁴

¹¹ Pranab Bardhan, "Corruption and Development: A Review of Issues," *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. 35, No. 3, September 1997.

¹² 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, 2014, RR-350-A.

¹³ Stephen Watts, Trevor Johnston, Matthew Lane, Sean Mann, Michael J. McNerney, and Andrew Brooks, *Building Security in Africa: An Evaluation of U.S. Security Sector Assistance in Africa from the Cold War to the Present*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-2447-OSD, 2018.

¹⁴ Lant Pritchett, Michael Woolcock, and Matt Andrews, "Looking Like a State: Techniques of Persistent Failure in State Capability for Implementation," *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 1, 2013.

Finally, a large number of studies have found that democracy, power-sharing, and other mechanisms of political inclusion are associated with a lower likelihood of civil war and insurgency onset or recurrence, less-intense conflicts when they do arise, and lower likelihood of state repression and human rights abuses.¹⁵ Power-sharing mechanisms must be carefully designed to reflect local context, and democratic politics must include guarantees for all major factions,¹⁶ or both have the potential to undermine regime stability and/or exacerbate conflict.¹⁷ But assuming they are appropriately implemented, mechanisms of political inclusion can contribute substantially to post-conflict stabilization.

¹⁵ Caroline Hartzell, Matthew Hoddie, and Donald Rothchild, "Stabilizing the Peace After Civil War: An Investigation of Some Key Variables," *International Organization*, Vol. 55, No. 1, Winter 2001; Caroline Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, "Institutionalizing Peace: Power Sharing and Post-Civil War Conflict Management," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 47, No. 2, April 2003; Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and Andrea Ruggeri, "Political Opportunity Structures, Democracy, and Civil War," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 2010; Lars-Erik Cederman, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Simon Hug, "Elections and Ethnic Civil War," *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2012, pp. 387–417; Christian Davenport and David A. Armstrong II, "Democracy and the Violation of Human Rights: A Statistical Analysis from 1976 to 1996," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 3, July 2004; Courtenay R. Conrad and Jacqueline H. R. DeMeritt, "Constrained by the Bank and the Ballot: Unearned Revenue, Democracy, and State Incentives to Repress," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 2012; Lindsay Heger and Idean Salehyan, "Ruthless Rulers: Coalition Size and the Severity of Civil Conflict," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 2, June 2007; Håvard Hegre and Håvard Mokleiv Nygård, "Governance and Conflict Relapse," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 59, No. 6, 2013; Lars-Erik Cederman, Simon Hug, Andreas Schädel, and Julian Wucherpfennig, "Territorial Autonomy in the Shadow of Conflict: Too Little, Too Late?" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 109, No. 2, May 2015; Michaela Mattes and Burcu Savun, "Fostering Peace After Civil War: Commitment Problems and Agreement Design," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 3, September 2009.

¹⁶ Michael Christopher Marshall and John Ishiyama, "Does Political Inclusion of Rebel Parties Promote Peace After Civil Conflict?" *Democratization*, Vol. 23, No. 6, June 2016.

¹⁷ Caroline Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, "The Art of the Possible: Power Sharing and Post-Civil War Democracy," *World Politics*, Vol. 67, No. 1, January 2015; Benjamin A. T. Graham, Michael K. Miller, and Kaare W. Strøm, "Safeguarding Democracy: Powersharing and Democratic Survival," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 111, No. 4, November 2017; Kristin M. Bakke and Erik Wibbels, "Diversity, Disparity, and Civil Conflict in Federal States," *World Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 1, October 2006.

Taken together, these findings in the existing literature suggest that good governance—including both broad-based political inclusion and provision of public goods in accordance with the rule of law—has the potential to stabilize postconflict states, even in the absence of decisive military victory or a large, stabilizing foreign military presence. If the current government and other parties to a previous conflict do not embrace these practices, however, their absence may undermine hard-fought gains after U.S. military operations. Indeed, it appears that many countries become caught in the conflict trap and are subject to repeated violence precisely because the same poor governance practices that caused an initial war reappear after that war is over, laying the groundwork for new conflicts.¹⁸ In such cases, gains are unlikely to be consolidated unless outside powers, such as the United States, are able to persuade, induce, or compel local actors to adopt political reforms. Is such a goal realistic?

The Role of External Actors in Incentivizing Inclusion and Capacity-Building

The ability of the United States and other external actors to support good governance as a strategy of stabilization depends on (1) the extent of agreement between the outside powers and local leaders on goals and (2) the ability of external actors to nudge their partners toward improved practices. Many observers are pessimistic on both counts.

Local Actors' Governance Preferences

Local actors—political leaders, military officers, civil servants, and others—frequently have entirely rational reasons for resisting practices that the United States and similar donor nations and military interveners believe to constitute good governance. Under such circumstances, it may be difficult to persuade these actors to adopt reforms or to offer sufficient positive inducements to sway them.

¹⁸ Barbara F. Walter, “Why Bad Governance Leads to Repeat Civil War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 59, No. 7, October 2015.

Political inclusion is often difficult for these actors because of the dynamics of political coalition-building, uncertainties related to future violence, and legacies of suspicion and hatred left over from the previous conflict. In well-functioning democracies, political leaders have an incentive to provide state services to a wide range of the public—potentially the entire public but at least a sufficiently large proportion to secure a majority of the vote. In autocracies and poorly performing democracies, however, political leaders typically remain in power by providing goods and services to a much narrower support base. Any effort to include additional groups in government decisionmaking is a zero-sum game; resources will have to be diverted away from a leader's existing support base to include new factions. Thus, power-sharing arrangements or other mechanisms intended to bring former combatants into government decisionmaking will leave a leader's support base materially less well off, at least in the short term. A leader who makes what may appear to be an enlightened decision to expand political inclusion may rapidly face a revolt from within his or her own support base.¹⁹ Compounding these problems are concerns related to security. If a government reaches out to former adversaries to include them in decisionmaking, these other groups might use that position to weaken the central government and amass resources for themselves—resources that might later be used against the government.²⁰ Concerns about

¹⁹ Cold War-era analyses simply assumed that U.S. partners almost universally held a preference for autocratic governance. See, especially, Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance, 1950 to the Present*, New York: Free Press, 1977; and D. Michael Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988. More-recent analyses have been more nuanced, looking at the conditions under which narrow or broad support bases are more likely to enhance a leader's chances for political survival. See, for instance, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith, "Leader Survival, Revolutions, and the Nature of Government Finance," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 54, No. 4, October 2010.

²⁰ On the pathologies of power-sharing, see Philip G. Roeder and Donald S. Rothchild, eds., *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy after Civil Wars*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005.

such outcomes are likely to be magnified in the aftermath of violent conflict, when suspicions and hatreds can become entrenched.²¹

Similarly, local actors often have reasons to undermine efforts to build state capacity, at least in any way that is strictly consistent with the rule of law. In particular, leaders frequently have incentives to weaken state institutions through corruption and through making key portions of the military and other security services loyal to them personally rather than to the state.

Corruption, especially at moderate levels, is often an effective strategy for retaining rule. So long as leaders channel a substantial portion of diverted resources to the patronage network that supports them, they can retain sufficient support to remain in power.²² Indeed, because levels of trust in government are low, followers may punish leaders for *failing* to divert state resources to their patronage networks, assuming that these resources are going to line leaders' pockets rather than being used to provide hard-to-observe public goods. Some level of corruption is endemic in developing countries (and, indeed, in developed countries). It becomes problematic, however, when the extent of corruption becomes so high that the state is starved of critical resources and/or the public comes to believe that leaders have exceeded historical norms of corruption and have instead become predatory.²³

Similarly, capacity-building in the military and other security services is frequently subordinated to the perceived requirements of political survival. In particular, political leaders frequently have incentives to weaken much of the military so that it does not pose a threat of coups against the political leadership. Instead of strengthening the military or security sector as a whole, the political leadership tends to concentrate resources in elite forces that report directly to the political leadership

²¹ See, for instance, Chaim Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4, Spring 1996.

²² Luigi Manzetti and Carole J. Wilson, "Why Do Corrupt Governments Maintain Public Support?" *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 8, August 2007.

²³ Philippe Le Billon, "Buying Peace or Fuelling War: The Role of Corruption in Armed Conflicts," *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 15, 2003.

rather than through the typical military chain of command.²⁴ Such coup-proofing strategies frequently undermine efforts to build local capacity to defeat or deter insurgencies.²⁵

For all these reasons, many observers believe that local actors are unlikely to share the U.S. preference for good governance as a mechanism for stabilizing fragile states. These actors, the observers argue, are instead likely to undermine U.S. efforts toward inclusion and impartial, rule-bound capacity-building wherever possible.²⁶

Ongoing Debates About Conditions and Leverage

If the pessimists are correct and if local actors have strong incentives to sabotage efforts to promote good governance, the United States will likely be unable to persuade its partners to implement such agendas. Instead, the pessimists argue, the United States is likely to make progress only if it conditions all assistance on its partners' compliance with U.S. goals and intermediate benchmarks.²⁷

The appropriateness and effectiveness of using conditions on assistance to secure specific political outcomes has long been debated, both within postconflict contexts and more generally. In these debates,

²⁴ See, for instance, James T. Quinlivan, "Coups-Proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East," *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Fall 1999, and Philip Roessler, "The Enemy Within: Personal Rule, Coups, and Civil War in Africa," *World Politics*, Vol. 63, No. 2, April 2011.

²⁵ Daniel L. Byman, "Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Fall 2006, pp. 79–115; Walter C. Ladwig III, "Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency: U.S. Involvement in El Salvador's Civil War, 1979–92," *International Security*, Vol. 41, No. 1, Summer 2016; Walter C. Ladwig, *The Forgotten Front: Patron-Client Relationships in Counterinsurgency*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

²⁶ Blaufarb, 1977; Shafer, 1988; Benjamin C. Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and El Salvador: The Frustrations of Reform and the Illusions of Nation Building*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, R-4042-USDP, 1991; Byman, 2006; Ladwig, 2016; Ladwig, 2017; Stephen Biddle, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 2017.

²⁷ See, especially, Ladwig, 2016; Ladwig, 2017; and Eli Berman and David A. Lake, eds., *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence Through Local Agents*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2019.

the pendulum of expert opinion has swung between the enthusiastic embrace of conditionality and equally passionate rejection. The height of enthusiasm for conditions was likely in the 1990s and early 2000s, with the end of the Cold War and the apparent ascendance of liberal orthodoxy. But the returns on aggressive use of conditionality proved disappointing in a large proportion of cases.²⁸ The 2005 *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* signaled a shift away from using leverage to enforce a particular vision of development (both economic and political) toward a focus on local ownership.²⁹

Good practice in the development field, however, is not precisely the same as good practice in the realm of international security. In particular, the development field is able to embrace local ownership in part because donors can walk away from the worst-performing partners, focusing their limited resources elsewhere. Indeed, the flagship development initiative under the administration of President George W. Bush, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, was founded on the principle that aid would be disbursed only to countries that had already proven themselves. Where the United States is willing to commit military forces in an intervention, however, it has already made the decision that walking away would entail sacrificing significant national interests.

The use of conditionality and other forms of leverage may thus be necessary to consolidate the gains from U.S. military operations in fragile states. Some scholars believe that U.S. policymakers can gain leverage over its partners relatively easily in such situations, so long as they are willing to negotiate aggressively. The economist Eli Berman and political scientist David Lake have claimed that, when the United States and similar international actors “use rewards and punishments

²⁸ See, for instance, Andrew Mold, *Policy Ownership and Aid Conditionality in the Light of the Financial Crisis: A Critical Review*, Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, August 26, 2009.

²⁹ OECD, *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, Paris, 2005. The OECD further adapted the practices in the Paris Declaration to the requirements of fragile and conflict-affected states with the “Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations,” April 2007.

tailored to [their partners'] domestic political context, proxies typically comply."³⁰ Kings College London professor Walter Ladwig wrote that

[a]lthough it is tempting to think that significant amounts of assistance will easily shape a client's behavior and policies, influence is more likely to flow from tight conditions on aid than from boundless generosity. These conditions must be carefully structured so that the requirements are measurable and achievable, and that the aid the client desires most—in all likelihood military aid—is offered as the reward. To enhance its leverage, a patron may need to press its client government hard to make reforms, even when it is at its weakest, rather than take immediate measures to strengthen it against the insurgents. These recommendations to condition aid to a friendly government, to bargain hard with it, and to exploit its vulnerability may run counter to the instincts of many policymakers. But sometimes being a good ally means being a stern friend.³¹

Other scholars, however, are much more skeptical. They typically argue that the misalignment in interests between the United States and its partners is so great and the requirements for enforcing conditionality on recalcitrant partners so stringent that success will be the rare exception.³²

The stakes in these debates are large. If the pessimists are correct, the United States should seldom, if ever, intervene in fragile states; even if initial military operations are successful, the United States will be extremely unlikely to consolidate its gains. If the optimists are correct, the United States is not only capable of consolidating its gains but may be able to do so at low cost when partners are particularly dependent on the United States and similar international donors. To adjudicate between the two camps, it is necessary to better understand the precise conditions under which leverage is possible.

³⁰ Berman and Lake, 2019, p. 4.

³¹ Ladwig, 2016, p. 146.

³² See Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, 2017; Shafer, 1988.

A Framework for Understanding Leverage

There are three steps to understanding whether foreign powers, such as the United States, can exercise leverage effectively. First, it is necessary to understand the extent of the divergence of interests between the foreign power and the local partner. The greater the divergence of interests, the greater the leverage that is likely to be necessary.³³ Second, it is necessary to understand the foreign power's strategy and the design of its conditions on its aid. Where a foreign power chooses an influence approach that is poorly aligned with the divergence of interests between the two states, failure is likely to result. Finally, if the foreign power has decided that a leverage strategy is appropriate, several prerequisites must be in place for conditionality to function as intended. This section discusses all three steps and concludes with a summary of key propositions about leverage. The discussion is primarily a synthesis of the existing literature on bargaining leverage and conditionality, although we have expanded on certain points where we believe existing studies have failed to appropriately acknowledge the importance of a factor or have inadequately specified the manner in which these factors influence outcomes.

Interest Alignment and Strategic Design

Debates about leverage and conditionality begin with the premise that there are fundamental misalignments in the interests of key actors. To the extent U.S. interests are aligned with those of its partner, there is no need to exercise leverage; the United States can simply assist the partner in rebuilding its capabilities, much as the United States did in Europe in the aftermath of World War II. In such cases, the United States might use persuasion or inducements to help nudge partners in what it considers to be more-promising directions, but the general trajectory of stabilization efforts is clear and agreed by all major players. This situation is the ideal envisioned by those who embrace local ownership as the key to success in development or military assistance.

³³ Berman and Lake, 2019.

The odds of successful reforms appear highest in such circumstances, especially over the long term.³⁴

Unfortunately, as discussed earlier, many observers of conflict and postconflict environments believe that such conditions are rare. Instead, they believe that the interests of the United States and its partners are usually—or indeed almost universally—misaligned, with local leaders more interested in securing their own political survival through corruption, the creation of praetorian guards, and shoring up a narrow but highly loyal base of support than developing state institutions that are inclusive and governed by the rule of law.³⁵ Consequently, these observers argue that leverage or conditionality will typically be required to obtain at least minimally acceptable outcomes, and the greater the interest misalignment, the greater the conditional rewards and punishments the external power must threaten.³⁶

For conditionality enthusiasts, appropriate schemes of rewards and punishments are easy to design, at least if the misalignment of interests is not too profound. Walter Ladwig, for instance, has asserted that aid should be provided only once the local partner fulfills conditions set out by the donor or intervener. Moreover, such strict, *ex ante* conditionality should be applied from the outset rather than imposed only once the partner repeatedly fails to adopt appropriate reforms. And, he asserts, conditionality should be applied across all forms of aid, and external powers should continue to maintain pressure even once reforms have been made to prevent backsliding. In the cases examined by Ladwig, the use of such aggressive forms of conditionality are associated with high levels of success, while efforts at persuasion and unconditioned inducements routinely fail.³⁷

As the case studies in subsequent chapters will show, things do not appear so simple to many practitioners. If reforms are most likely

³⁴ Besides the broader literature on conditionality reviewed in Mold, 2009, see Berman and Lake, 2019.

³⁵ Ladwig, 2016; Ladwig, 2017; Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, 2017; Blaufarb, 1977; Shafer, 1988.

³⁶ Berman and Lake, 2019.

³⁷ Ladwig, 2016; Ladwig, 2017.

to take root and endure when interests are aligned, diplomats and other U.S. representatives may work hard to persuade their local partners or to identify agents or champions of reform rather than immediately resorting to strict conditionality arrangements that may alienate the leaders necessary for success. U.S. officials may also fear that withholding critical assistance when a partner is particularly vulnerable may lead to the collapse of the partner or place U.S. troops deployed in the country at risk. Indeed, the failures that Ladwig ascribed to poor strategic choices may instead represent a triumph of strategic thinking. When Ladwig found that persuasion and inducements fail while conditionality succeeds, it could be that diplomats and other practitioners are only resorting to conditionality in relatively easier cases, where they have good reason to believe such practices will succeed. The apparent failure of persuasion and inducements may actually reflect, at least in part, more difficult circumstances in which practitioners correctly judged that conditionality would fail and so did not put U.S. prestige on the line by making demands that they knew would be rejected.

Hypothetically, there should not be a large gap between the perspectives of leverage optimists and pessimists. Conditionality arrangements might be built around discrete packages of assistance, for instance, so that withholding aid pending partner compliance in one particular area would not place the partner's broader stability at risk. Moreover, if strong conditionality arrangements really are necessary to overcome fundamental interest misalignments, the United States perhaps should not be afraid of alienating its partners. Even if the partners reject U.S. conditions and if the United States withdraws its support as a result, such a failure is still preferable to the likely alternative—throwing enormous amounts of resources at a partner that refuses to reform and thus prolongs the conditions that feed its instability. Such an alternative—“expensive failure”—would be worse than a rapid U.S. withdrawal.³⁸

³⁸ Stephen Biddle, “Policy Implications for the United States,” in Eli Berman and David A. Lake, eds., *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence Through Local Agents*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2019.

In practice, appropriate conditionality strategies may be much more difficult to design. It may take considerable time to determine whether a partner has a vision for political reform that is largely consonant with U.S. interests but can only be implemented slowly, or if that partner is in fact deliberately slow-rolling or undermining reforms and requires a more coercive approach. Playing hardball in one area may provoke a nationalist backlash that makes cooperation in other areas more difficult. Similarly, a nationalist backlash may result when reforms require a heavy third-party footprint.³⁹ The choice U.S. decisionmakers face may not be between failure and expensive failure, as conditionality proponents suggest. It may be between expensive partial failure (but also partial success) if the United States remains engaged and inexpensive but catastrophic failure if the United States carries through on its threats to withdraw assistance.

Adding to the complexity of the issue, the United States may have interests in the partner country that go beyond setting the conditions for its stability. For instance, the United States may have a parallel interest in sustained military access that allows it to have a platform for military options against a neighboring state or to blunt a regional or extraregional competitor from gaining influence in the partner country. Thus, the United States must consider whether using leverage for one objective (e.g., incentivizing good governance) is worth costs it may incur in another (e.g., loss of military access, aligning with a competitor).

Finally, as U.S. involvement in a postconflict environment persists, the legacy of its original policy choices endures and affects future options. If U.S. officials adopt an initial policy that proves ineffective or inefficient, it will affect the relationship with the partner, including public support for its continued presence and involvement. Any loss of trust or credibility may adversely affect U.S. leverage, making it more challenging to make policy corrections down the road.

³⁹ Kevin Russell and Nicholas Sambanis, "The Occupier's Dilemma: Foreign-Imposed Nation-Building After Ethnic War," unpublished manuscript, June 15, 2018.

The Conditions for Effective Leverage

Interveners and donors potentially have considerable power over the partner states they are helping stabilize. These partners face militant groups that can weaken or potentially overthrow the government or seize control of a portion of the state's territory. External actors can provide critical resources in the form of troop deployments and strikes on militant groups, military assistance and intelligence-sharing, humanitarian and development aid, and so on. But to translate this assistance into leverage, external actors must meet four conditions: (1) They must clearly communicate the desired behavior to their local partners; (2) they must be able to adequately observe and monitor the outcome that they seek to obtain from their partners; (3) the threatened sanction must be stronger than countervailing influences arising from the partner's domestic political situation and other diplomatic relations; and (4) the threat must be credible (i.e., the partner must believe there is at least a reasonably high likelihood that the United States or other outside power will actually withhold assistance if its conditions are not met). As this section shows, these four conditions are often difficult to meet in practice.

Clarity

For the United States or other actors to use leverage effectively to influence its local partners, it must first convey clearly what behavior is that it wants from those partners. Moreover, it must convey the high priority that it places on compliance. While these requirements may seem obvious, it is not uncommon for officials to fail to communicate sufficiently clearly.

Partners may not understand what exactly is being demanded or the urgency of the demand for many reasons. First, neither the United States nor other international actors speak with a single voice. There may be disagreements between Washington and the local embassy or between different agencies, all of which create a cacophony of messages. Military commanders may make demands that diplomats undercut, or vice versa. Where covert operations are a major tool of intervention, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) may have its own agendas. When senior White House officials or the President become engaged directly,

the U.S. message is typically clearer. But there are relatively few issues that rise to the level of direct Presidential intervention.

Second, the United States (or another foreign actor) may pursue multiple goals without clearly prioritizing them. In the case of Iraq since 2014, for instance, the United States sought to destroy ISIS and to limit Iranian influence. U.S. officials typically framed these goals as mutually supporting, arguing that Iranian interventions hardened sectarian differences, which ISIS then exploited. However, this glossed over the fact that Iran was also providing assistance that the Government of Iraq (GoI) viewed as vital to generating the manpower to push back ISIS' advances. So, when the United States made policy decisions, such as denying close air support (CAS) to Iranian-backed popular mobilization units (PMUs), Iraqis could be skeptical that the U.S. motivation was the desire to increase the effectiveness of the defeat-ISIS campaign as opposed to strengthening the U.S. position in Baghdad relative to Iran. In Afghanistan, the U.S. strategy evolved from one that prioritized the pursuit of terrorist threats with minimal focus on governance to one that gradually adopted a more ambitious plan for institutional development without formally reconciling the inherent tensions with ongoing counterterrorist operations.

Third, the United States might shift policy direction rapidly, leaving a partner uncertain about the extent to which the new priority has replaced the old one. An example was the dramatic shift in U.S. policy at the time of the surge in Iraq. For much of the lead-up to that policy decision, GEN George Casey was a key interlocutor with Prime Minister Maliki, and his message was that the United States was willing to speed up the transition of responsibility to Iraqi authorities, but to enable this transition, the GoI needed to show a willingness to rein in Shi'a militias. Then, in late 2006, President Bush personally committed to Maliki that he would surge forces to Iraq, with these American forces taking more responsibility for security. This surge would buy the GoI the time it needed to develop its own capabilities. The offer, however, required that Maliki meet the condition Casey was messaging previously (i.e., reining in Shi'a militias). This amounted to U.S. officials promising the opposite outcome for the same action. As noted

by Rayburn and Sobchak, “[t]his quid pro quo arrangement must have been confusing to Maliki.”⁴⁰

Fourth, messages are subject to misinterpretation, either because U.S. officials are too nuanced in their delivery or because local actors’ cultural frame of reference causes them to interpret words and actions in ways that differ from what the United States had intended. Such miscommunications were most apparent in Afghanistan around the presidential elections of 2009 and 2014, when the intended Afghan recipients misinterpreted even direct messaging from senior U.S. officials, leading to confusion about U.S. intentions.

Observability

For conditionality to work, U.S. officials must be able to observe whether the partner is complying with U.S. demands. The observability of outcomes in such contexts is complicated, however. If a partner fails to achieve a given condition of assistance, it might be because the partner purposefully sought to avoid compliance. But it might also be that the partner tried hard to achieve the goal—and potentially expended considerable political capital to do so—but failed for reasons outside its control. Should the partner be punished for such failures?

For proponents of tough conditionality, the answer is simple: Conditionality should be structured around outcomes, not effort.⁴¹ Implied in this guidance is the assumption that external actors should be able to accurately judge what is within the power of its partners to accomplish and set conditions that produce optimal outputs. But the extent to which this assumption is accurate is not clear. Frequently, basing conditions on outcomes risks punishing a partner for coming up short when the fault lay with foreign officials’ unrealistic expectations. There is also the risk that the United States focuses on setting conditions

⁴⁰ Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak, eds., *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War*, Vol. 2: *Surge and Withdrawal 2007–2011*, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College Press, January 2019b, p. 15.

⁴¹ Eli Berman, David A. Lake, Gerard Padró i Miquel, and Pierre Yared, “Introduction: Principals, Agents, and Indirect Foreign Policies,” in Eli Berman and David A. Lake, eds., *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence Through Local Agents*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2019, p. 14; Ladwig, 2016, pp. 145–146.

around short-term, concrete objectives that are easily observable but that are unrelated to the most important work, such as forging deeper political reforms, which often is difficult to observe and occurs only over long periods.⁴² Thus, many observers are skeptical that outcome-based conditionality is feasible—or, indeed, that any scheme is feasible without a large-scale foreign presence capable of highly intrusive monitoring. In the field of security force assistance, for instance,

partners have many techniques available for using U.S. aid to pursue the partner's interests rather than the provider's, and many such techniques are very hard for a handful of U.S. monitors to detect. Financial and material aid are fungible: even if the nominal assistance goes to professional military purposes, this can displace state funding which can then be redirected to political allies as rents, leaving the host military no more effective militarily than before. Training can be used as a status reward for reliable loyalists, rather than a means of improving technical proficiency. Material aid can be diverted onto the black market. Aid money transferred to the state treasury can be laundered and directed to other purposes. To detect such abuses requires intrusive, labor intensive monitoring of a nominal ally's behavior, and often a sustained presence by enough U.S. personnel to thwart partner concealment. In other settings, principals can often rely on monitoring via independent reporting from the press, from domestic rivals of the agent or from routine overseers such as auditors or oversight agencies; in SFA [security force assistance], by contrast, press freedom in the recipient state is often minimal, domestic rivals are often either repressed or complicit and the only trustworthy auditors would be the U.S. personnel whose presence is supposed to be minimized. The lighter the U.S. footprint, the harder effective monitoring thus becomes.⁴³

If aid works only with stringent conditionality and if the monitoring essential to conditionality is impossible to implement without

⁴² See Stephen Tankel, *With Us and Against Us: How America's Partners Help and Hinder the War on Terror*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2018, pp. 23–24.

⁴³ Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, 2017, p. 13.

a large foreign presence, promoting good governance in the partner is not a substitute for the deployment of large numbers of foreign troops, except perhaps in the very long term.

Sanction Strength

For leverage to be effective, the reward or benefit the external actors offer must be more compelling than the reasons local actors have for *not* implementing the desired reform. This requirement can be challenging. Many leaders hollow out large portions of their militaries, for instance, to reduce the risk of coups or exclude most organized groups from participation in political decisionmaking so that leaders can concentrate resources on their key supporters. Long after the United States or other external actors depart, these leaders will face the risk of coups or of losing the support of key members of their base and being removed from power (and, not infrequently, killed in the process). Thus, to exercise leverage on critical issues, the United States must be able to offer very large rewards or punishments. The effect of a sanction's strength is closely linked to its credibility; the threat of a severe sanction that is unlikely to be applied may be just as effective as a more credible threat of a weaker sanction.

Perhaps the most obvious source of leverage the United States has is its ability to help an embattled regime either terminate a conflict on favorable terms or deter renewed conflict. Thus, U.S. leverage often depends in large part on the extent of the threat its partner faces from armed militants.⁴⁴

The U.S. leverage will also vary depending on whether the partner has alternative sources of revenue or support. Other external actors seeking influence in the partner country can greatly diminish the U.S. ability to influence outcomes.⁴⁵ Similarly, a partner nation with sizable revenues of its own—for instance, from oil and gas rents—can help limit others' leverage. Extraterritorial factors concerning neighboring or regional states that are rivals to the partner and/or undermining

⁴⁴ Tankel, 2018, p. 13.

⁴⁵ See, for instance, Mara E. Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States: Challenges for the United States*, Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018.

U.S. goals may also complicate or place limitations on U.S. leverage. It is nonetheless important to remember that the United States possesses many resources that no other single source can provide. While oil rents can indeed provide revenues, they do not provide the enormous intelligence capabilities of the United States. While other countries can provide weapons and other material support—and often without the same strings as those attached to U.S. assistance—they may lack the same global diplomatic influence or technical capabilities as the United States.

Finally, the extent of U.S. rewards and punishments is likely to decline over time. American decisionmakers find it difficult to sustain high-level attention on any single issue for long periods. Domestic political dynamics tend to reward privileging satisfactory short-term outcomes over superior long-term outcomes.⁴⁶ This tendency has not gone unnoticed; local partners are likely to expect U.S. attention to wane over time and construct their policies accordingly.

Threat Credibility

For a leverage effort to have its intended effect, the target must believe that the United States will make good on its threats if its conditions are not met. Once the United States commits to a military intervention, however, it may find it difficult to withdraw assistance. At that point, U.S. credibility and reputation—and that of the senior decisionmakers who advocated for the intervention—are bound up in the success of the mission. Because decisionmakers (at least in democracies) tend to heavily discount the future, the tendency is to focus on providing the resources needed for short-term success, even if that means that the United States is losing the leverage it requires for long-term reforms in governance practices in the partner. Indeed, some observers have claimed that the larger the U.S. military footprint—and thus the more visible the U.S. commitment to its partner—the less leverage the United States has because of the diminished credibility of the threat to

⁴⁶ See Tankel, 2018, p. 25.

withhold assistance.⁴⁷ These dynamics are not unique to direct military interventions. Other scholars have found that conditionality on development and governance assistance also declines as the relevance of a partner nation to national-security concerns increases.⁴⁸

In principle, practitioners should be able to design discreet packages of credible threats that incentivize behavior on specific issues without placing the survival of the partner regime at stake. To the extent that such clever conditionality design is possible, the threat to withdraw aid should be credible. Columbia University professor Stephen Biddle, for instance, has written that

the choice need not be framed as simple capacity building versus fatally undermining one's ally. If the United States reconceives its aid in more self-consciously political, incentive-oriented terms, then there are ways to enable a more conditional approach with tolerable risks of proxy collapse. Conditional offers of additional assistance, for example, leave the proxy no worse off if withheld. . . .

[C]onditional threats of sanction pose lesser threats to regime survival if directed against nonsecurity targets. Proxy elites, for instance, often value foreign travel for themselves or their families, foreign education for their children, the status benefits of

⁴⁷ See, especially, Shafer, 1988. For an illustration of the domestic political consequences of such failures, see Leslie H. Gelb and Richard K. Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1979. On "audience costs" more generally, see James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 3, September 1994, and Michael Tomz, "Domestic Audience Costs in International Relations: An Experimental Approach," *International Organization*, Vol. 61, No. 4, October 2007.

⁴⁸ See, for instance, Axel Dreher, Jan-Egbert Sturm, and James Raymond Vreeland, "Development Aid and International Politics: Does Membership on the UN Security Council Influence World Bank Decisions?" *Journal of Development Economics*, Vol. 88, No. 1, January 2009a; and Axel Dreher, Jan-Egbert Sturm, and James Raymond Vreeland, "Global Horse Trading: IMF Loans for Votes in the United Nations Security Council," *European Economic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 7, October 2009b; and Desha M. Girod, "Effective Foreign Aid Following Civil War: The Nonstrategic-Desperation Hypothesis," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 56, No. 1, January 2012.

participation in international political forums, or visits from allied heads of state and other dignitaries . . .

Even threats to withhold security assistance per se can be less self-defeating if metered carefully in discrete, divisible packages.⁴⁹

All these suggestions can indeed be used to try to induce partner cooperation on specific issues. But most of these discreet conditional-ity packages involve relatively low-stakes sanctions. As discussed in the previous section, when a desired partner action has major consequences for leaders in the partner country, as nearly all major political or military reforms do, the reward or punishment will typically have to be correspondingly large. U.S. practitioners can thus design conditions that are highly credible because they do not put the partner regime's survival (and thus the success of the U.S. intervention) at stake, but such conditions are likely to secure cooperation on only second- or third-order issues, not on the most critical reforms.

Summary of Propositions on Leverage Effectiveness

The preceding discussion can be summarized in two sets of propositions—one set concerning the likely success or failure of assistance efforts under different conditions and a second set concerning whether the preconditions for leverage success will likely be present. These propositions, derived from previous studies on leverage, will be tested in the remainder of this report.

The preceding discussion leads to five propositions about the effects of U.S. leverage on a partner's activities:

1. **Overall effectiveness:** Overall, external assistance (interventions in the conflict period and military and civil assistance in the postconflict period) should be associated with improved likelihood of achieving the outcomes of interest to the intervening states. For the United States and countries like it, this proposition suggests that external assistance will, on average, be associated with governance practices better than those that

⁴⁹ Biddle, 2019, p. 270.

would have existed without external intervention and levels of conflict that are lower than they otherwise would have been. It also suggests that external assistance is likely to be associated with a lower likelihood of a return to civil war and insurgency. These effects may decline over time, however, as international attention shifts elsewhere.

2. **Effectiveness with aligned interests:** Successful outcomes are most likely when the intervening state (in particular, the United States) and the partner have interests that align (e.g., both prefer inclusive governance and capacity-building consistent with the rule of law).
3. **Effectiveness when all preconditions for leverage are present:** When interests are misaligned, success will be most likely when (1) the United States or other outside actor relies on conditionality mechanisms and (2) all the conditions for successful leverage (readily observable outcomes, sufficiently strong reward or punishment, and credible threat of aid withdrawal in the event of noncompliance) are present.
4. **Effectiveness when one or more preconditions for leverage are absent:** The likelihood of success will be reduced when one or more of the conditions for successful leverage are absent.
5. **Effectiveness with neither aligned interests nor leverage:** External assistance should be unlikely to achieve its goals when interests are misaligned, and the United States or other outside actor fails to exercise any leverage at all.

These propositions, however, demand another question: When will the various determinants of influence success or failure themselves be present? If outcomes are usually observable, external rewards and punishments strong, and threats credible, leverage could be expected to usually succeed. If these conditions are seldom present, leverage efforts are much more likely to fail.

Unfortunately, while there is general agreement about the key elements required for successful influence, there is much less agreement about how frequently these elements are present. Leverage skeptics believe it is rare for all these conditions to exist simultaneously.

Leverage enthusiasts believe the appropriate constellation of preconditions for success is present much more often. Because the skeptics seem to predominate in the policy literature, the propositions that follow represent an amalgamation of the positions of many such skeptics. It would be equally defensible to synthesize a set of propositions from the optimists. In either case, because there is so little agreement within the expert community, it is necessary to rigorously test these propositions:

1. **Strategic design:** Leverage efforts will frequently fail because of failures of strategy:
 - a. The interests of the United States and its partners rarely align.
 - b. Despite this interest misalignment, the United States is reluctant to engage in hard-nosed conditionality. This reluctance may be due to a well-founded appreciation of the challenges involved or to misperceptions of the degree of alignment between U.S. and partner interests or misguided doctrine or guidance that emphasizes local ownership.
2. **Clarity:** The clarity of U.S. and other foreign demands is likely to decline when the foreign actor has multiple, critical national interests at stake and/or competing bureaucracies that are not strictly coordinated. In practice, these conditions are always present to some degree, but the extent of the competing agendas (and the success with which senior decisionmakers manage the agendas) is critical. Partner perception, however, significantly affects clarity and can limit the receptiveness of even a unified U.S. position that is clearly articulated.
3. **Observability:** Outside situations in which the United States or other external actors have deployed a large military force, key outcomes will often be difficult to observe:
 - a. External interveners' capabilities for observing key outcomes vary largely in proportion to the size of their military footprints.
 - b. Because many key outcomes (e.g., political reforms) typically transpire over long periods and are difficult to observe, the United States will often, instead, base cooperation on

- less-important but more easily observed actions, such as more-concrete and immediately visible tactical-level actions.
4. **Sanction strength:** The United States and similar external actors potentially have powerful threats at their disposal but only under certain conditions:
 - a. The primary U.S. rewards and punishments relate to the ability of the United States to help subdue an insurgency or other militant movement. When these movements are strong, the United States has the potential for considerable influence. But as these groups weaken, so does the power of U.S. rewards and punishments.
 - b. The strength of U.S. rewards and punishments is inversely related to the presence of alternative sources of revenues and military support. Where local actors have the support of other major powers or considerable revenues from natural resources (such as oil and gas), potential U.S. leverage declines accordingly.
 - c. Because the United States and most other democracies find it difficult to sustain high-level attention on a problem over the longer term, the power of external rewards and punishments will fade quickly with time.
 5. **Threat credibility:** The credibility of external threats—in particular, the threat to withhold vital assistance—is likely to decline in inverse proportion to the national interests at stake for the intervener. Because the very act of large-scale intervention makes the partner an important national interest, the credibility of the intervener's threats tends to decline as the size of its footprint in the country increases, particularly over major issues in which a concomitantly large amount of aid must be threatened.

Research Design

Testing these propositions is challenging. It is difficult to determine the strategic design of external efforts to influence local actors, the extent to which desired outcomes were observable, and the strength and credibility of the rewards and punishments on offer. With considerable effort, these conditions for successful leverage can be uncovered for specific cases. But to understand when and how gains can be consolidated in fragile states more generally, it is not enough to understand what worked in one or two or even a handful of cases; a much broader base of evidence is needed.

To understand both *how* leverage works and *how frequently* it works, we adopted a mixed-methods design for our research. In Chapters Three and Four, we analyze 18 specific events in Iraq and Afghanistan in which the United States attempted to influence its partners. These case studies are used to understand questions concerning how leverage works, with a synthesis of findings and lessons in Chapter Five. Then, in Chapter Six, we turn to a cross-national statistical analysis to develop a broader understanding of how frequently the means of leverage available to the United States and other external interveners are associated with realizing the interveners' goals of improved governance and conflict reduction.

Qualitative Research Design

Our qualitative research allowed us to focus on specific propositions about how the United States can obtain leverage. Our case studies for this portion of the research focused on Iraq and Afghanistan since the United States began intervening in these countries in 2003 and 2001, respectively. Because so many possible factors vary between these two countries and over time within each, we were able to compare variation in these factors with the outcomes of interest. First, selecting these two countries allowed us to probe the effects of differing levels of development. Iraq is a middle-income country, while Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world; between them, they span nearly the full range of levels of development among conflict-affected states. Second, we could examine the effects of different levels of U.S. troop deploy-

ments and different levels of insurgent strength over time within each case. Finally, the cases provided some variation in the extent to which local actors had access to sources of support other than the United States; varying hydrocarbon prices and levels of local production, for instance, determined the extent to which the Baghdad government had sources of revenue apart from U.S. financial support.

Within each of these countries, we chose nine specific incidents or *influence events* in which the United States attempted to influence the partner nation, for a total of 18 such episodes. An *influence event* is a specific event (or closely interconnected series of events) in which the United States attempted to influence its partners through either persuasion or the conditionality of aid to develop rules, capabilities, or policies consistent with the U.S. vision of what would contribute to stabilization. By examining such discrete events, we were able to evaluate probabilistic arguments through qualitative research.⁵⁰ These 18 events were selected first because of their importance in influencing the trajectories of these two countries. We attempted to select roughly even numbers of events related to efforts to build inclusive politics and efforts to build state capacity governed by the rule of law. We did not, however, select cases based on whether they succeeded or failed or whether the United States and its partners had aligned or misaligned interests. Our goal was to select events that were generally representative of the dynamics between the United States and its partners in important cases. Despite our efforts to choose a sample of cases that could be considered typical, we do not know what the full universe of such cases looks like and, thus, cannot claim that these events constitute a fully representative sample of critical episodes in the conflict and postconflict trajectories of Iraq and Afghanistan. Our sample of cases is likely to be somewhat skewed toward cases of misaligned interests between the United States and its partners because cases of confronta-

⁵⁰ Walter Ladwig traces such influence events in his work on U.S. interventions in the Philippines, Vietnam, and El Salvador; see Ladwig, 2016, and Ladwig, 2017. More generally, breaking single cases into a larger number of discreet episodes is a well-established way of increasing analytic leverage in qualitative research; see Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994.

tion inevitably attract more attention than cases of frictionless cooperation. Our results must be interpreted with these limitations in developing a perfectly representative sample of events in mind. Although we represent our findings in figures throughout this report in terms of specific proportions of influence events, these findings should not be understood as specific probabilities (e.g., of the likelihood of success or failure) but rather as broad indications of frequency or likelihood (such as “almost always,” “usually,” or “never”).

In each of the influence events, we were interested in understanding whether U.S. efforts increased the extent of inclusion or institutionalized governance capacity. *Inclusion* is understood as meaningful opportunities for participation in the formulation of policy (e.g., the ability to participate in free and fair elections, representation in coalition governments) and the execution of policy (e.g., the creation of security forces that are broadly representative of the underlying society, broad-based sharing of access to a country’s wealth and resources). *Institutionalized governance capacity* is understood as the development of governmental capacity to execute its policies consistent with the rule of law and the weakening of personalized rule (in particular, the development of command-and-control systems over security services that are not loyal to specific individuals but to the state as a whole).

Each of the 18 events is summarized in narrative form in the following two chapters. In Chapter Five, the key outcomes and the factors that drove those outcomes are summarized and analyzed systematically to discern broad patterns across the two cases. The factors assessed in each influence event include the following:

- **Outcomes:** The outcomes of each event are categorized as successes, partial successes, or failures. Both inclusion and institutionalized governance capacity can be understood as spectra encompassing a wide range of outcomes. In such contexts as Iraq and Afghanistan, it is unrealistic to expect governance that meets standards similar to those of highly developed, mature democracies. Even in so-called mature democracies, various forms of political exclusion and personalized politics are common. Rather than measuring these outcomes against some ideal, the standard

for success in our qualitative research is more contextualized. If the United States largely achieved its objectives—as defined by U.S. policymakers at the time—in a particular interaction (or interrelated set of interactions) with the partner government, we considered this outcome a success. If the United States achieved some important objectives but not others, we considered the case an instance of partial success. If the United States achieved no more than ephemeral gains on any of its important objectives or if other partner actions undermined the objectives in practice with the intent to undo the reforms the United States desired, we considered the U.S. action a failure. Outcomes were assessed at two points: *short-term success* refers to outcomes within two to three years of the U.S. effort to influence its partners' behavior, while *long-term success* refers to outcomes out to five years.

- **Interest alignment:** For each event, we assessed U.S. partners as having a preference either for inclusive or institutionalized governance or for exclusive or personalized governance. In some cases, we assessed partners as having mixed preference when key factions within the partner government had divergent preferences or when preferences changed over time. Depending on U.S. preferences (which were usually but not uniformly in support of inclusive and institutionalized governance), each event was then categorized as a case of aligned interests or misaligned interests.
- **U.S. leverage strategy:** The U.S. approach to each event is categorized as one of (1) persuasion and/or inducement, (2) *soft* conditionality (in which threats are either largely implicit or at least *ex post*, implemented at some point in the future if partner behavior does not eventually correspond to U.S. demands), or (3) *hard* conditionality (in which threats are explicit and *ex ante*, involving the withholding of assistance until conditions are met).
- **Conditions for leverage success:** For each event, we assessed the conditions for leverage success—clarity of U.S. demands, the ability of the United States to observe the desired outcome satisfactorily, and the strength of the threatened U.S. inducement or punishment—as being mostly present (*high* presence) or mostly absent (*low* presence). The one exception is the credibility of the

U.S. threat. Unfortunately, to judge whether a U.S. threat was credible, we would have needed direct evidence from partner decisionmakers about how they evaluated the likelihood of the United States providing or withdrawing certain types of assistance.

- **Background factors:** Ideally, we would want to understand which factors make it more or less likely that the conditions for leverage success will be present. For instance, is a large U.S. military footprint necessary to observe partner compliance, or is the absence of offers of aid from rival external powers necessary for the United States to threaten sufficiently powerful punishments? Consequently, for each influence event, we have also categorized whether these various background factors were present or absent.

Appendix A provides more detail on how each of these factors was evaluated.

Quantitative Research Design

To what extent are our findings from the Iraq and Afghanistan case studies representative of efforts to consolidate gains in fragile and conflict-affected states more generally? It is difficult to answer this question, because it is extremely difficult to find quantifiable indicators of U.S. leverage attempts across large numbers of countries. Consequently, we were forced to adopt an indirect approach: We attempted to determine to what extent the presence of potential sources of leverage—including conflict-era intervention and postconflict civil and military assistance—was associated with our outcomes of interest, specifically good governance and conflict reduction. We were further limited by the data available for measuring good governance. Although there are various datasets on state capacity, these data sources were not particularly useful for our purposes. They tend not to vary on an annual basis, are subject to high levels of observer bias or reporting bias, rely on proxy measures that have only a very weak relationship to our concepts of interest, or do not have a sufficiently broad scope across countries and time. In contrast, we were able to identify data on political inclusion and conflict recurrence that met all our criteria. Our quantita-

tive analysis thus consisted of two sets of statistical regression models that determined whether *potential* sources of leverage, e.g., conflict-era intervention and postconflict civil and military assistance, are associated with the two outcomes of interest: improved political inclusion of previously warring groups and conflict reduction. These analyses are correlational only; we cannot determine with certainty whether external leverage is driving the relationships we identified.

Despite these limitations of our quantitative analysis, the combination of the statistical regression models with our case studies provides a relatively strong foundation for testing the propositions in the previous section of this chapter. Our qualitative analysis gives us reason to believe that influence efforts work under certain relatively predictable circumstances, and our quantitative analysis gives us reason to believe that these effects are not limited to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Conclusion

As the following chapters will show, the findings from this research design do not prove any of the various camps right or wrong. Instead, the findings are useful for bounding the claims of these different perspectives, showing the conditions under which one perspective is more accurate than the other. Proponents of local ownership, such as many members of the development community, are too optimistic about the likelihood of interest alignment in these contexts. On the other hand, proponents of aggressive conditionality are too pessimistic about the chances of building on shared interests and are too sanguine about the risks of repeatedly coercing U.S. partners to obtain the desired U.S. goals. Many proponents of leverage are overly optimistic about the U.S. ability to craft a Goldilocks strategy, in which the United States (or other external actors) can threaten just enough harm to induce change in its partners without putting at risk the regime or U.S. forces deployed in the field. Leverage strategies are indeed frequently necessary, and practitioners should likely make considerably more and better use of these tools than they do. But observers and practitioners should

be sober about just how much can be accomplished through such leverage and about the risks involved.

Iraq: U.S. Efforts at Influence in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Inherent Resolve

This chapter analyzes nine episodes in which the United States attempted to influence the GoI's position on the issues of political inclusion and institutional development. These nine influence events span both OIF and OIR. The influence events are presented chronologically,¹ with the first six influence events pertaining to OIF, and the last three influence events occurring during OIR.²

The influence events presented here are intended to parallel the influence events presented in the Afghanistan case (Chapter Four). Together, these two chapters provide the empirical basis for our analysis of the circumstances under which U.S. leverage can be successfully employed and the duration of the effect. Chapters Three and Four are purely empirical; a systematic analysis of all 18 influence events is deferred until Chapter Five.

¹ Our treatment of the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) spans the entire period of the two U.S. interventions in Iraq (OIF and OIR), so we used the starting point of U.S. training CTS to slot the influence event, even though the overall episode encompasses a later period than influence events that began subsequently.

² Because U.S. troop presence varied dramatically in OIF and OIR, our inclusion of both operations provides us an opportunity to answer the question of how the size of the U.S. military footprint affects U.S. leverage with the host government.

Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2003–2011

OIF lasted the better part of nine years and represents the largest deployment of U.S. forces for an overseas contingency since the 1990–1991 Gulf War and, prior to that, since Vietnam. After the removal of the Saddam Hussein regime, a high-intensity insurgency followed that targeted both the U.S.-led coalition and the post-Saddam political order. Suppressing that insurgency became the focus of coalition activities, with the goal to stabilize Iraq so that it would neither serve as a sanctuary for terrorist organizations nor develop into a threat to its neighbors.

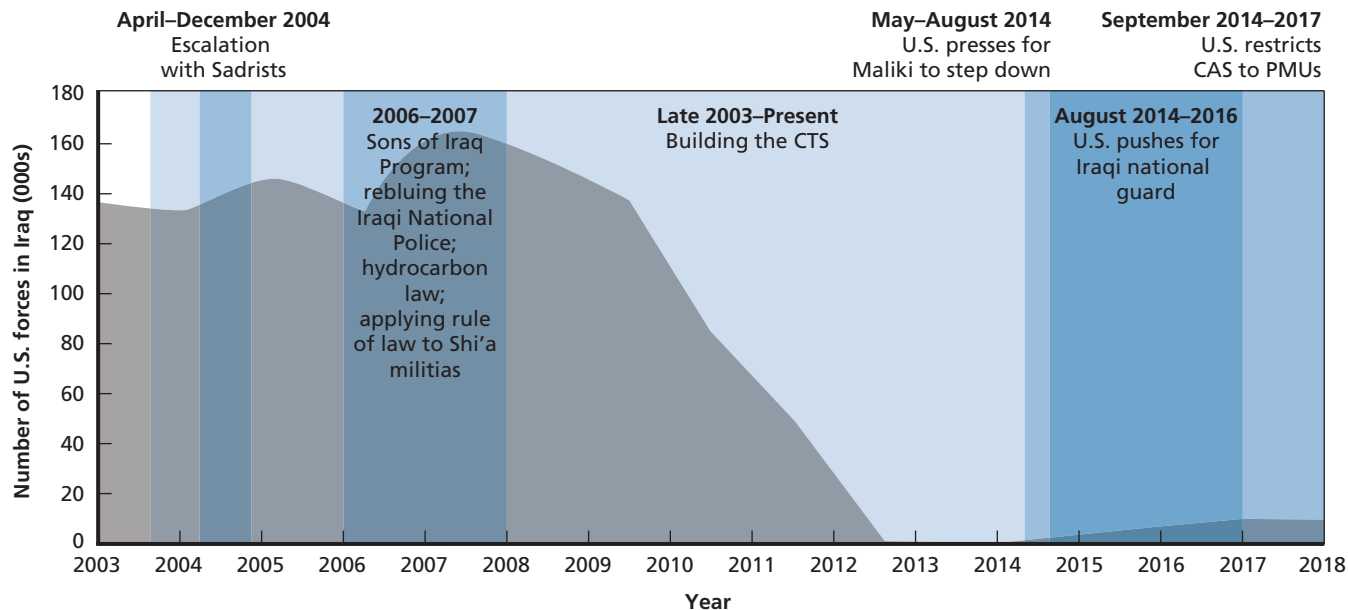
Complicating this mission was the fact that the nature of the insurgency changed considerably over time. Those still loyal to the previous regime appeared to be the dominant strand in the early phase of the insurgency (late 2003 and 2004). Thereafter, a local al-Qa'ida affiliate determined to sow sectarian division played an outsized role (2005–2007), although antioccupation Shi'a nationalists (e.g., Jaysh al-Mahdi) opened a second front in the insurgency. In the latter period of U.S. involvement (2008–2011), there was an uptick in attacks from Iranian-supported “special groups” that attempted to compel a complete U.S. withdrawal from Iraq by conducting attacks against U.S. personnel in country and rallying others around the removal of U.S. military presence in the country.

As Figure 3.1 shows, U.S. troop presence in Iraq remained high over the entirety of OIF but dropped precipitously in 2011 as the United States ended the war in Iraq and transitioned residual activities to a Department of State–led mission.³ In addition to depicting U.S. force levels, Figure 3.1 also situates the influence events that are the focus of the subsequent analysis.

The two issue areas we explore in the influence events are political inclusion and institutionalized capacity building. To be clear, the

³ Rick Brennan, Jr., Charles P. Ries, Larry Hanauer, Ben Connable, Terrence Kelly, Michael J. McNerney, Stephanie Young, Jason H. Campbell, and K. Scott McMahon, *Ending the U.S. War in Iraq: The Final Transition, Operational Maneuver, and Disestablishment of United States Forces–Iraq*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-232-USFI, 2013.

Figure 3.1
U.S. Troops in Iraq and Influence Events



SOURCES: The troop numbers for 2003–2006 are calculated as a yearly average of the monthly numbers reported in the Brookings Institution's Iraq Index, summarized in Michael E. O'Hanlon, and Ian Livingston, *Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Iraq*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, July 2013. The 2007 to 2018 figures are taken from Heidi M. Peters and Sofia Plagakis, *Department of Defense Contractor and Troop Levels in Afghanistan and Iraq: 2007–2018*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, R44116, May 10, 2019. The Congressional Research Service reports troop levels quarterly for 2008–2011, and the numbers in this figure are an average of these four points in time. That report provides only the fourth quarter number for 2007, which is the number reflected in this figure.

United States did not always privilege these two principles throughout 2003–2011, although they became integral to U.S. strategy in Iraq from at least 2005 onward. In the early period of OIF, there were times when the United States government appeared to prioritize purging former regime elements over building Sunni-Arab support for state building. De-Ba’athification and pushing forward the constitutional process without significant support among the Sunni-Arab community are two obvious examples in which early American effort diverged from best practices in conflict reduction.⁴

That said, building support among Sunni-Arabs and supporting institutions in Iraq that equally applied the rule of law regardless of ethnosectarian identity became central premises of U.S. efforts once American officials recognized the scope of the insurgency and the role early U.S. policies played in fanning support for it. Former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, who is often associated with the recognition of the need to reach accommodations with Iraq’s Sunni-Arab community, summarized the U.S. position in 2005 as

We are obviously urging [the Iraqis] . . . to get more support from the Sunni community. It’s a political necessity; it’s a military necessity; and it’s good for the stability of Iraq. . . .

And there is a need for a national compact about the future of Iraq between these three communities. And every effort has to be made to reach as broad an agreement by as many of the people of Iraq from all of these communities as possible.⁵

That these principles were also embedded in policy is evident in our review of the influence events that follow. Four of the five influence events in the following sections profile U.S. initiatives (“Support to CTS,” “Sons of Iraq Program,” “Rebuilding of the Iraqi National Police

⁴ For a candid appraisal of Sunni-Arab marginalization in the early stages of the constitutional drafting process, see Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak, eds., *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War*, Vol. 1: *Invasion, Insurgency, Civil War 2003–2006*, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College Press, January 2019a, pp. 485–486.

⁵ Zalmay Khalilzad, “U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad,” interview with Gwen Ifill, *PBS News Hour*, August 23, 2005.

[INP],” “Benchmarks for Sadrists,” and the “Hydrocarbon Law”) that embody these principles.

Influence Event 1: The U.S. Approach to the Sadrists in the Early Occupation

This influence event addresses the initial interactions in 2003 and 2004 between the U.S. government and Iraqi leaders involving their willingness to accept Sadrist participation in governing post-Saddam Iraq. This was an extremely challenging test case for political inclusion because the Sadrists were engaging in violence and took confrontational positions toward both the United States and the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). With some partial exceptions, both the U.S. government and the IGC were aligned in not wanting to bring the Sadrists into governing arrangements and were also wary of full-scale military conflict with the movement. The main U.S. demand of its Iraqi counterparts was to refrain from legitimizing the Sadrists as political actors absent fundamental changes in the movement’s orientation and, later, to assist U.S. forces in confronting the Sadrists when the situation escalated in the summer of 2004. Iraq had yet to establish *de facto* sovereignty in this period,⁶ and Iraqi leaders were generally aligned with the U.S. position, so the United States had to exercise very little leverage to keep its Iraqi counterparts aligned with Washington. Washington found that the use of persuasion and inducements sufficed, without resorting to conditionality. But while the United States was successful in implementing part of its strategy—not legitimizing the movement through its political participation—Washington could not avoid a direct military confrontation. Over time, the Sadrists were able to gain a foothold in politics without genuinely dissolving their armed wing.

Context

The Sadrist family and, in particular, Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr and Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr had an enormous impact on Iraqi Shi’a identity and political activism under the Saddam Hussein regime.

⁶ The Iraqi Interim Government was granted *de jure* sovereignty after the departure of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in 2004.

Both of those scions were killed by the former regime, inspiring adherents but without a clear successor to lead those who identified as Sadrists.⁷ Muqtada al-Sadr would emerge as the symbol of the movement, although he was only 29 at the time the United States invaded Iraq. In 2003 and 2004, the Sadrists lacked the organizational structure of more-established actors in the Shi'a community, most notably the Da'wa Party and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq,⁸ which developed in exile and were a part of the Iraqi community advising U.S. officials in the run-up to the war and the early period of U.S. administration of Iraq under the CPA. In the post-2003 period, the Sadrists operated in a gray area, at times participating in formal politics but at other times engaging in violence against the central government, U.S. forces, and against Sunni-Arabs more generally.

The following narrative focuses on the U.S. approach to the Sadrists as both a political movement and as a militia involved in sectarian conflict. In 2003, the CPA attempted to govern Iraq directly, with only advisory input from Iraqi leaders. The vision was to gradually build Iraqi governing capacity prior to transferring sovereignty back to an Iraqi government.⁹ The CPA's guiding principle during this period was to put Iraq on a democratic trajectory, with the inclusion of all major ethnosectarian groups being one of the primary metrics for achieving this goal.¹⁰

While the United States was committed to broad representation, the CPA's means of advancing this vision were controversial. First, the CPA worked through an appointed Iraqi council to elicit local input.

⁷ It is a common misperception that the mantle of the Sadrist movement has been passed from father to son, which is not the case. Muhammed Sadiq al-Sadr, who became the symbol of the movement after the regime assassinated Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr, was Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr's cousin. Muqtada al-Sadr is the son of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr and son-in-law of Muhammed Baqr al-Sadr but was only a child when Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr was killed.

⁸ Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr was the founder of al-Da'wa, but the party is better understood as a political competitor to the Sadrists in the present period.

⁹ L. Paul Bremer III, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*, New York: Simon and Shuster, 2006.

¹⁰ Interview with former U.S. government official, Washington, D.C., April 8, 2019.

Second, the CPA understood *inclusion* to mean only that the council would represent the different sects and ethnic groups proportionally and made no allowances for proportional representation of different political movements, with the U.S. government instead making itself the arbiter of which individuals spoke for “the Kurds” or “the Shi’a.” And third, the U.S. government did not have a vision for co-opting armed groups that rejected this approach. Rather, DDR was interpreted as applying narrowly to the militias the United States was most comfortable with (e.g., Badr and the peshmerga).¹¹

The Sadrists emerged as one of the movements that exposed the limits of this approach. The movement commanded a large following among Iraqi Shi’a but was not among those in this identity group selected for inclusion in the initial IGC. The United States also did not engage the Sadrists in a DDR process because that would have entailed legitimizing the movement and integrating its members into the institutions of the new political order. Absent a clear vision for how to deal with the movement, 2003 and 2004 were marked by military escalation between the Sadrists and coalition forces culminating in pitched battles in Iraq’s southern shrine cities.

U.S. Position and Approach

The early U.S. position toward the Sadrists was one of neither confrontation nor serious solicitation of their input in transitional security or governing arrangements. The U.S. coolness toward the Sadrists was mirrored by the movement’s antipathy toward Washington. The Sadrists were invited to an early consultation with Jay Garner but refused to attend and positioned themselves—through street protests and clashes with Iraqi political rivals and U.S. forces—as the antioccupation faction within the Shi’a bloc.¹² Muqtada al-Sadr was not included in the

¹¹ Interview with former U.S. government official, Washington, D.C., April 12, 2019. See also Ali Allawi, who wrote: “The Mahdi Army was decidedly not on [Terrence] Kelly’s approved militia list for DDR treatment” (Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press: 2007, p. 319).

¹² Jay Garner was the Director of the Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance for Iraq, the short-lived predecessor to the CPA; Juan Cole, “The United States and

CPA-selected initial Iraqi advisory body, the IGC,¹³ and the Sadrists were not part of the interim government, headed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, that was established at the end of the tenures of the CPA and IGC as a bridge to the January 2015 election.¹⁴ Furthermore, the CPA issued an order closing the Sadrists' newspaper based on its incitement against U.S. forces and arrested several of Sadr's key deputies.¹⁵

In this early period, U.S. officials typically justified the exclusion of the Sadrists from governing by citing two considerations that prevented their entry into formal politics. The first was Sadr and his followers' involvement in the murder of a prominent cleric in Najaf who enjoyed U.S. support, Abd al-Majid Khoei. The second was Sadr's unwillingness to subordinate the Mahdi Army to government control. For example, when asked about Sadr's political future in the days before the CPA was to hand over authority to the interim Iraqi government of Allawi, a CPA senior advisor noted:

there is an Iraqi arrest warrant issued against Muqtada al-Sadr that ties him to a brutal murder, and I don't see how he would be eligible for political office before that matter is resolved.

Secondly, the coalition is working right now, in consultation with the prime minister's office, to establish a political parties law before June 30th Based on early drafts, it also precludes political parties from participating in the process that are associated with illegal militias. In fact, the exact language I have seen is no political entity may have or be associated with an armed force, militia or residual element, as defined in CPA Order Number 91,

Shi'ite Religious Factions in Post-Ba'athist Iraq," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 4, Autumn 2003.

¹³ The description of the IGC as a government should not be taken to imply Iraqi sovereignty. Sovereignty was not transferred to the Iraqis until June 2014, when the UN and the CPA, with input from the IGC, established an interim government with sovereignty.

¹⁴ Bremer, 2006.

¹⁵ International Crisis Group, *Iraq's Muqtada al-Sadr: Spoiler or Stabiliser?* Brussels, July 11, 2006; Donald P. Wright and Timothy R. Reese, *On Point II: Transition to the New Campaign*, Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008; Nir Rosen, *In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq*, New York: Free Press, 2006, p. 127.

which is the regulation of armed forces and militias within Iraq that Prime Minister Allawi recently announced.

So unless those issues are resolved, I just don't see how Muqtada al-Sadr can plan for a political life.¹⁶

Although the CPA did not adopt a strategy to co-opt Muqtada al-Sadr and his followers into the political process, that position must be understood in the context that Sadr was mobilizing his followers against the U.S. presence in Iraq. al-Sadr refused to recognize the authority of the CPA or the IGC (indeed, he denounced the IGC members as “infidels”), his followers took over government buildings in Sadr City (eastern Baghdad) and areas in the south where it possessed a constituency, Sadr urged on and coordinated militant activities with Sunni-Arab insurgents to open up a second front against the coalition, and his followers engaged in sporadic attacks against U.S. forces and then, in the summer of 2004, waged pitched battles in Najaf and Karbala against both Iraqi and U.S. forces attempting to expel the Mahdi Army from religious shrines. Whether the escalation that led to the military standoff could have been avoided is unknowable, but by January 2004, CPA officials were advocating for a tougher line against Sadr.¹⁷

Former senior policymakers interviewed for this report noted that, while not creating a path for Sadr to enter the political process in this early period, the United States did consciously chose a strategy of restraint in an attempt to avoid provoking a Shi'a insurgency. Specifically, the United States did not initiate an operation to capture Sadr, despite outstanding warrants for his arrest.¹⁸ And, as we will discuss later, Sadr and his followers were allowed safe passage out of Najaf in

¹⁶ Mark Kimmitt and Dan Senor, “Coalition Provisional Authority Briefing with Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, Deputy Director for Coalition Operations, and Dan Senor, Senior Adviser, CPA,” Baghdad, June 15, 2004.

¹⁷ Headquarters, Coalition Provisional Authority, “The Last Straw: Muqtada Sadr’s Supporters Make a Grab for Holiest Shia Shrine,” memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and National Security Council, January 20, 2004, declassified May 2015.

¹⁸ Interview with former U.S. government official, Washington, D.C., April 8, 2019.

2004 in return for withdrawing their forces from the city. Perhaps the strongest sign of U.S. sensitivity on the issue of provoking the Sadrists is that the U.S. Secretary of Defense at the time, Donald Rumsfeld, had to personally approve any decisions by U.S. commanders to move against Sadr's inner circle.¹⁹

During this early period in the occupation, there was little Iraqi capacity the United States could draw on as a partner to implement Washington's preferred approach. In the political sphere, what Washington was asking for was implicit: for the IGC to support its desire to keep the Sadrists outside the country's political transition. Then, as military conflict between the coalition and the Sadrists escalated, the United States leaned on its Iraqi partners to provide a local face to operations designed to expel the group from Iraq's southern shrine cities. The United States was seeking "Iraqi security forces collaborating with coalition advisers in the military domain [and] supportive Iraqi Government leaders providing political top cover to legitimize coalition combat operations."²⁰

Government of Iraq Position and Approach

As the United States formulated its position toward the Sadrists in 2003 and 2004, it had no sovereign Iraqi counterpart with which to negotiate its policies. The first Iraqi "government," the IGC, operated only in an advisory capacity to the CPA. What little leverage the IGC had was derived from the threat that individual members would resign when they disagreed with the CPA's approach. This did occur several times, including what appears to be one resignation specifically in reaction to the CPA's approach toward the Sadrists.²¹ As Ambassador Bremer makes clear in his memoir, individual council members did advocate for what they described as more-peaceful approaches to deal-

¹⁹ Rayburn and Sobchak, 2019a, p. 284.

²⁰ Rayburn and Sobchak, 2019a, p. 340.

²¹ "Wasaf Bremer bi annhu Mutatarraf ba'd Rafdihi al-Ittifaq ma' al-Sadr [He Described Bremer as an 'Extremist' After He Refused the Agreement with Sadr]," *al-Hayat*, June 19, 2004.

ing with the young cleric.²² However, there was no consensus opinion in the council on dealing with Sadr, and the council possessed neither significant authority nor legitimacy among the Iraqi public.

In the midst of the crisis, as confrontation grew between coalition forces and Sadr's Mahdi Army, sovereignty was transferred to a so-called Iraqi Interim Government led by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. Ali Allawi, the Iraqi Defense Minister in the lead-up to the 2004 confrontation with Sadr's Mahdi Army, has observed that the Interim Government's general inclination was to make an example out of the Sadrist to deter other militia groups with religious backing from challenging the state:

By focusing on the Sadrists as a dangerous and undisciplined rabble, the Interim Government could peel them away from the mass of Islamists. It would then be able to 'domesticate' or marginalize [the others] far more easily.²³

More influential than the IGC members or the subsequent Interim Government was Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who enjoyed the broadest religious following among Iraqi Shi'a and whose tacit support U.S. officials believed they needed to execute a successful political transition in Iraq. Sistani had already demonstrated his weight when he issued a fatwa in 2003 stressing the need for an elected Iraqi government rather than an appointed advisory body, putting pressure on Washington to accelerate the timetable toward self-rule.

On the issue of Muqtada al-Sadr's uprising, U.S. officials interpreted Sistani's position as desiring that the U.S.-led coalition and the IGC take a tough line with Sadr. However, it should be acknowledged that U.S. officials did not have face-to-face engagement with Sistani, who refused to receive American officials as visitors. Rather, Sistani traded letters with senior officials. That engagement was supplemented by discussions between Sistani's office and intermediaries, although, at times, U.S. officials were not certain whether the intermediary was

²² Bremer, 2006.

²³ Allawi, 2007, p. 321.

faithfully relaying the Ayatollah's position or presenting it in a way that supported their equities in the matter.²⁴ The United States also interpreted signals—such as the Ayatollah taking leaves of absence from his office in Najaf—as indicative of his position on a policy decision.²⁵

In general, U.S. officials believed they enjoyed Sistani's tacit support for confronting the threat the Sadrists posed. During the main military confrontations with the Sadrists in June and August of 2004, the officials received letters from Sistani stating his wish for the United States to increase pressure on Sadr. In one such letter, Sistani purportedly wrote:

We do not know the reason for, or the utility of, negotiating with [Muqtada al-Sadr]. First, he does not want to dissolve the Mahdi Army. Second, he does not want to come before the judicial authorities. Third, these negotiations will make a hero out of him, inflate his importance, and prolong the tragedy that the holy cities are living. . . . We do not know exactly what you want. Over and over, we have seen the American forces advance and the Mahdi Army withdraw and even flee. But you do not complete your work. You withdraw before you complete or finish purging the cities of them.²⁶

If this was indeed Sistani's position,²⁷ it evolved during the course of the 2004 confrontation. In August 2004, Sistani returned to Iraq to negotiate a cease-fire, which granted Muqtada al-Sadr safe passage

²⁴ Interview with former U.S. government official, Washington, D.C., April 8, 2019.

²⁵ Mathew J. Godwin, "Political Inclusion in Unstable Contexts: Muqtada al-Sadr and Iraq's Sadrist Movement," *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 3, July 2012; Phil Williams and Dan Bisbee, "Jaish al-Mahdi in Iraq," in Michelle Hughes and Michael Miklaucic, eds., *Impunity: Countering Illicit Power in War and Transition*, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 2016.

²⁶ As quoted in Rayburn and Sobchak, 2019a, p. 297

²⁷ We did not have access to the full text of the letters cited in the Rayburn study, which LTG Ricardo Sanchez supplied to the authors. Without reviewing the letters, it is difficult to discern whether these were actually Sistani's words, which would appear out of character with the way the Ayatollah typically communicated, or were Mowaffaq Rubaie's summary of what he believed to be Sistani's position, since it was Rubaie who served as the emissary.

out of Najaf in return for vacating the shrines he and his forces were occupying. For its part, the Iraqi Interim Government gave conflicting accounts of its position on the matter. In an interview with BBC Arabic, Prime Minister Iyad Allawi noted that, if Sadr and his followers stopped their armed activities and transitioned to a civilian organization working within the political process, his government would announce a cease-fire. He also confirmed “the door was open” to the Sadrist to participate in politics.²⁸ U.S. military accounts, however, suggest that Allawi was actually advocating for an assault on the shrines the Sadrists were occupying rather than the path of Sistani’s negotiated withdrawal, but that Allawi had been rebuffed by General Casey.²⁹ In public statements, Sadr refused the prospect of ending his revolt or serving in any political position so long as Iraq remained under American occupation.³⁰

Outcome: Open Confrontation Without a Clear End Point

This influence event illustrates the ambiguity surrounding opportunities for political inclusion and ambiguity in the positions of both the U.S. and the partner governments in exploring the co-optation of reconcilable factions. With the benefit of historical hindsight, it is clear that Muqtada al-Sadr was ultimately reconcilable in that the Sadrists have since joined the political process, with his electoral bloc emerging as the leading vote-winner in the 2018 parliamentary election. However, it is unclear whether Sadr was open to reconciling in the 2003–2004 period, when he was building the antioccupation credentials that have served him so well in Iraq’s recent politics.

Just as it is not possible to determine whether U.S. and Iraqi authorities’ taking a different strategy might have brought Sadr into the political process sooner, it is not apparent that the U.S. government, or the IGC followed by the Iraqi Interim Government, had unified

²⁸ “Jaysh al-Mahdi Musamim Muwasalat al-Qital [The Mahdi Army Is Determined to Continue Its Fight],” BBC Arabic, August 11, 2004.

²⁹ Rayburn and Sobchak, 2019a, p. 338.

³⁰ “Inhiyar Mufawadat al-Najaf wa al-Hukuma al-‘Iraqiya Tatawa’d bil Hasm al-‘Askari [Collapse of the Najaf Negotiations and the Iraqi Government Pledges to Settle It Militarily],” *Asharq al-Awsat*, August 15, 2004.

positions on receptivity to Sadr's participation in politics. The general thrust of the U.S. position was an initial avoidance of confrontation but without any serious outreach to explore whether the Sadrists could be convinced to engage in politics. That said, within these broad policy contours, there was serious debate among the CPA and the interagency in Washington, as well as between different members of the uniformed U.S. military command, over how much pressure the United States should bring to bear on Sadr's militant activities. The same debates were mirrored among Iraqi leaders. Ayatollah Sistani's position on Sadr appeared to evolve considerably over the course of the 2004 military confrontation.

This influence event also illustrates the unique context of the United States exercising influence immediately after regime change. During this crucial early period after Saddam Hussein's removal, when Iraqi political movements and armed groups were interpreting signals about who would lead the new political order and whether that leadership was receptive to their participation, the United States lacked an empowered local partner to share in the decisionmaking and implementation. This made the exercise of U.S. influence relatively simple, in that Iraqi interlocutors—with the exception of Ayatollah Sistani—lacked the wherewithal to challenge the U.S. approach. But this fact also meant the United States lacked a partner able to reduce the costs of implementation or dissuade the United States from misguided policies that risked inflaming the insurgency.

Summary

As outlined in Table 3.1, the approaches of the United States and its Iraqi counterparts—the IGC followed by the Interim Iraqi Government of Iyad Allawi—to the Sadrist movement generally aligned. Neither the United States nor the Iraqi government was keen on incorporating the Sadrists into the political process, although voices on both the American and Iraqi side pressed for avoiding an open military confrontation with the movement. The United States used persuasion to maintain this alignment, although even that approach was necessary only for the Iraqi dissenting voices that advocated for integrating the Sadrists into the state. When the United States ultimately

Table 3.1
Summary Coding of Influence Event 1:
Initial Approach to Sadrists

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Aligned
Influence strategy	Inducements, persuasion
Strength of inducement or sanction	High
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	Low
Short-term outcome	Failure
Long-term outcome	Partial success

did offer something tangible to its Iraqi counterparts, it was military force and enablers to prosecute operations against the Sadrists in the shrine cities. The United States could easily monitor how the IGC and then the interim government addressed the Sadrists' issue, but the clarity of what the United States was asking for was muddled by the fact that Washington adopted a Goldilocks approach—no integration, no confrontation—only to eventually adopt a military response as necessary. The result was a short-term failure as the Sadrists did not disarm but still were allowed to run in the subsequent elections, winning seats in the parliament. The long-term outcome was a partial success because the Sadrists have gradually evolved into a more normal political actor, albeit one that retains some independent military capability.

Influence Event 2: The United States Builds the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service

This influence event addresses both issue areas considered in this report: inclusion and institutionalized capacity building. The U.S. position was that the Iraqi CTS should be representative of Iraq's various ethnosectarian identity groups, so the United States pressed for inclusion of Iraqi minority groups in the establishment of the force. The influence event also addresses institutionalized capacity-

building because the American vision for CTS was that it would operate as a professional, meritocratic force, in contrast with other Iraqi security forces (ISF) that were hollowed out by politicization, particularly with regard to the promotion of officers and command-and-control arrangements. In the early period, when the United States was working to build CTS, it had a highly receptive local partner, and the United States was able to make headway in both areas. Given this alignment of interests, Washington sufficed with inducements in the form of training and equipping, while pursuing its vision of making CTS an integrated, professional force.

Later, under Prime Minister Maliki, the GoI took steps to increase the Shi'a majority composition of the force and to subordinate it to a politicized chain of command. Since Maliki's maneuver coincided with U.S. efforts to decrease its involvement in Iraq, Washington was unable to protect the service from some erosion of the values it was intended to embody. Although interests diverged, the United States refrained from adopting conditionality as a means of changing Maliki's behavior. That said, despite some regression during Maliki's second premiership, CTS has emerged as arguably the most professional of the ISF.

Context

Unlike some of the shorter-duration capacity-building efforts discussed in this report, the U.S. military's effort to build CTS spans nearly the entire period of U.S. involvement in post-2003 Iraq.³¹ The bulk of the effort was led by U.S. Special Forces (USSF), which played a training and advisory role and, from 2004 to 2011,³² an accompanying role in CTS' operations. It was also the USSF that had the lead in 2014 after ISIS' emergence to evaluate what remained of broader ISF capabilities, of which CTS is one component. After the completion of that assess-

³¹ We refer to CTS as a whole rather than referencing its different components. In reality, CTS is made up of Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF). Those report to the Counterterrorism Command (CTC), which is more closely linked to the Iraqi Ministry of Defense (MoD) than CTS is. As for CTS, its role is to advise the prime minister on counterterrorism and draft the overall counterterrorism strategy. In addition, part of the ISOF is frequently referred to as the *Golden Division*.

³² From 2009–2011, the role was mentoring.

ment, which found CTS remained one of Iraq's most professional and capable forces, it was typically other American forces (e.g., Navy SEALs and marines) who advised CTS during its counter-ISIS missions. CTS gained notoriety in this period for being one of the most effective and oft-used liberation forces,³³ a role that also came with great sacrifice in terms of the casualties CTS suffered in western and northern Iraq—Fallujah, Ramadi, Tikrit, Mosul, and Bayji, in particular.

U.S. Position and Approach

This analysis focuses on Washington's efforts to shape the development of CTS in two ways. First, the United States attempted to establish a nonsectarian force loyal to the state rather than an individual or political interest. Second, given Iraq's history of coups and coup-proofing, the United States sought to avoid the risk that Iraqi political leaders would hijack CTS's capabilities to insulate themselves from political challengers or check other security forces. Because these goals cannot be divorced from the objective of building a competent fighting force and because, arguably, the various goals introduced trade-offs between them, this section focuses on the military competence of CTS. But the primary outcome of interest for this analysis is Washington's efforts to avoid CTS's becoming an instrument of Shi'a majoritarianism or a praetorian guard for Iraqi political leadership.³⁴

In overseeing recruitment and training for CTS, USSF was cognizant that establishing a nonsectarian force would require recruiting personnel reflecting Iraq's underlying demographics. Several mechanisms were adopted to achieve this goal. The first was deliberate recruitment across ethnosectarian lines. The initial unit that would become part of CTS, the 36th Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, "was formed from the various ethnic and major political parties in Iraq to ensure

³³ Michael Knights and Alex Mello, "The Best Thing America Built in Iraq: Iraq's Counter-Terrorism Service and the Long War Against Militancy," War on the Rocks website, July 19, 2017.

³⁴ For a treatment of CTS operational effectiveness, see Austin Long, Todd C. Helmus, S. Rebecca Zimmerman, Christopher M. Schnaubelt, and Peter Chalk, *Building Special Operations Partnerships in Afghanistan and Beyond: Challenges and Best Practices from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Colombia*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-713-OSD, 2015.

it would be capable of conducting operations on a nonsectarian and nonpolitical basis.”³⁵ These efforts were reinforced by a merit-based qualification system that mitigated against the inclusion of loyalists from one sect who lacked the capacity to pass the rigorous training requirements. The introduction of training requirements (e.g., fitness, marksmanship) based on USSF’s own standards led to high attrition rates among recruits,³⁶ which fostered a culture of merit as opposed to political loyalty.

In addition, CTS recruits were vetted for their membership in political parties and militias. In the post-2014 period, members of the PMUs were excluded from the pool of eligible recruits.³⁷ A final mechanism for ensuring broad representation in the force was the cultivation of military leaders from minority groups who were symbols of their communities’ inclusion in CTS. The most prominent of these individuals was Fadhel al-Barwari, a Kurd who commanded the 1st ISOF Brigade and was a former *peshmerga* fighter. In terms of Sunni-Arab participation, a prominent figure was ‘Irfan al-Hayali, a Sunni from Haditha (al-Anbar Province) who joined the Iraqi military in the late 1970s under the former regime,³⁸ was the head of training for CTS, and went on to be appointed Minister of Defense in 2017 by Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi.³⁹ That the goal of building a representative

³⁵ David Witty, *The Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2015, p. 6.

³⁶ Witty, 2015, p. 13, states that

USSF advisors continued to apply training standards similar to what they themselves had passed to become Green Berets, and advisors were embedded in the Academia to ensure that standards were maintained. In May 2008, only 855 candidates graduated out of the 2,000 who started the Assessment and Selection Course.

³⁷ David Witty, *Iraq’s Post-2014 Counter Terrorism Service*, Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute, October 2018, p. 47.

³⁸ “Min Huwa ‘Irfan al-Hayali Wazir al-Difa’a al-‘Iraqi al-Jadid: Sira Dhatiya [Who Is al-Hayali, the New Iraqi Defense Minister: A Biography],” *Al Badeeliraq*, January 31, 2017.

³⁹ Note that Hayali’s background (i.e., Sunni-Arab from al-Anbar) does not necessarily mean he enjoys broad backing from this community. al-Iraqiyya, a political coalition with some of Iraq’s most prominent Sunni-Arab leaders, opposed Hayali’s nomination as defense minister, in part because of their negative perceptions of CTS.

security service continues to this day is clear from U.S. Department of Defense budget documents, which explicitly describe CTS as a “non-sectarian force.”⁴⁰

As for the goal of building a force that would be resilient to political leaders’ efforts to hijack it to reinforce personal positions, the U.S. desire to achieve this outcome was clear, but the strategy to achieve it was less developed. As noted earlier, recruits were vetted for loyalties, although, in the 2003–2011 period, the main consideration appeared to be avoiding insurgent penetration of the group rather than excluding individuals that had served in progovernment militias. Training sought to instill a culture of professionalization, which would mitigate the risk of the force submitting to a role as a political instrument. However, complicated calculations around the appropriate place for CTS to sit in the national security apparatus led the United States to initially advocate for the partial separation of CTS from the MoD chain of command. Ultimately, Prime Minister Maliki issued executive orders that placed CTS under his authority by having the service report directly to General Farouk al-A’raji, Director of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (OCINC).⁴¹ This should not be interpreted to imply that Washington sought for CTS to become beholden to the whims of the prime minister, which it most certainly did not. Indeed, after Maliki’s executive orders, U.S. military leaders and the U.S. diplomatic mission in Baghdad pressed the GoI for CTS’s linkage to the MoD to be stronger than its linkage to the prime minister’s office.⁴²

A related issue is that U.S. concerns over the place of the organization have been closely tied to Washington’s perceptions of the

⁴⁰ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2018: Justification for FY 2018 Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) Train and Equip Fund (CTEF)*, May 2017.

⁴¹ Brennan et al., 2013, p. 186.

⁴² Brennan et al., 2013, pp. 145–146, says that,

[i]n the period leading up to and following the U.S. military withdrawal, U.S. embassy officials regularly urged their Iraqi interlocutors to return Iraqi counterterrorism forces to the MOD to ensure their independence and to facilitate their integration with other Iraqi military units; however, the embassy had no more success than the military did in achieving this objective.

prime minister's intent. In the late 2000s, when Maliki was viewed as increasingly sectarian and authoritarian in approach, the issue of CTS reporting directly to Maliki's office was a matter of considerable concern. After the replacement of Maliki by Abadi (whom Washington regarded as being more inclusive-minded, albeit hemmed in by intra-Shi'a politics, which constrained his freedom of maneuver), the issue faded somewhat. Abadi helped allay concerns when he removed A'raji, who was widely perceived as a Maliki partisan, from his position as part of a broader reshuffling within the military command given the ISF's poor performance during ISIS's advance.⁴³ Moreover, the U.S. ability to influence where CTS slotted within the national security architecture was greatly constrained after the Iraqi Council of Representatives passed legislation in 2016 formalizing the service's place within the broader apparatus, which kept CTS separate from the MoD and reporting directly to the prime minister.

Government of Iraq Position and Approach

At the inception of the effort to build CTS, Iraq lacked strong national leadership that could thwart U.S. efforts to build an ethnosectarian balanced force capable of executing counterterrorism missions in a nonpoliticized manner. The United States established the precursor units that would become part of CTS—the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, and the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Force—under the CPA, before sovereignty was transferred back to Iraq. This allowed the United States to integrate ethnic (e.g., Kurdish) and sectarian (Sunni) minorities without pushback from Baghdad.

The composition of the force and its lines of command became much more contested under Prime Minister Maliki, who sought to control the force through OCINC. In addition, Maliki oversaw a stacking of the force with Shi'a members, skewing the sectarian balance the United States sought. During this period Maliki was likely exploiting the waning U.S. commitment to the Iraq intervention to consolidate power. And his gamble was "correct" in that the United States did not

⁴³ "Al-'Abadi Yuhil Dhabitan 'Askariyan Jadidan ila al-Taqa'ud [Al-Abadi Retires New Military Officers]," *al-Hayat*, September 25, 2014

punish him, for example, by withdrawing security assistance, for these actions. Even after Maliki was removed as prime minister, his legacy on the force remained as the Iraqi parliament passed legislation reinforcing the separation of the body from the MoD.

Outcome: Partial Success with Longer-Term Risk

In 2008, the ethnosectarian composition of the largest component of CTS—the 1st ISOF Brigade—was 61 percent Shi’a, 24 percent Sunni, and 12 percent Kurdish, with the remainder made up of other minorities, such as the Iraqi Turkoman population.⁴⁴ While these numbers suggest some shortfall in Kurdish representation in CTS, they broadly reflect Iraq’s demographics. However, it appears that the force became increasingly Shi’a as the United States transitioned responsibilities to the GoI and prepared for a withdrawal. Joint Forces Special Operations Component Command J3 estimated that, of the graduates from the eight selection classes prior to November 2011, 85 percent were Shi’a, 13 percent Sunni, and only 2 percent Kurd.⁴⁵ If both numbers (i.e., the 2008 and end of 2011 estimates) are accurate and comparable,⁴⁶ that would suggest a significant concentration of Shi’a recruits in the final years of the U.S. intervention. For its part, CTS leaders stress that “applications are open to all” and that, given that interest in joining exceeds the service’s ability to absorb new recruits, “a lottery is held that accounts for balances, Iraq’s [identity] communities, and proportions across provinces, and this ensures diversity and the inclusion of all Iraqi identities.”⁴⁷ Thus, on the goal of establishing a force reflecting Iraq’s ethnosectarian composition, the United States appears to have been

⁴⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, Washington, D.C., December 2008, p. 54

⁴⁵ Brennan et al., 2013, p. 188.

⁴⁶ The 2008 figure was restricted to the ISOF 1st Brigade, while the second figure pertains to CTS as a whole. That said, the 1st Brigade was the largest component of CTS in 2008. Because total CTS end strength was only 5,725 in 2010, the 2008 figure pertained to the overwhelming majority of the service.

⁴⁷ “Qa’id Quwāt Mukafahat al-Irhab: li Nas: Hadhahi Haqiqat Musharakat al-Jihaz fi ‘Amaliyat Dakhil Suriya [Commander of CTS to ‘Al-Nas’: This Is the Truth of the Service’s Participation in Operations Inside Syria],” *Nasnews*, January 24, 2019.

initially successful, followed by considerable backsliding that occurred in parallel with the U.S. transfer of responsibilities to the partner government and the decrease in U.S. military footprint in country.

More important than the precise breakdown of ethnosectarian identities in the force, however, was whether CTS operated on a non-sectarian basis. In an ideal situation, CTS would reflect Iraq's diversity *and* act to protect all its communities equally, but a force with unequal representation that operated in a nonsectarian manner would still be a good outcome. On this measure, CTS appears to be more reliably non-sectarian and more precise in its use of force than other Iraqi security services but, in some instances, has been perceived as a tool of the Shi'a majority. CTS is alleged to have been involved in a series of politically motivated arrests of Sunni political leaders, first at the provincial level in Diyala in 2008 and 2009,⁴⁸ then escalating to the national level in 2011 and 2012.⁴⁹

What cannot be disputed about these episodes was Prime Minister Maliki's abuse of his authority to target political opponents, in particular, Sunni-Arab politicians from the rival al-Iraqiyya faction. However, the role of CTS in these abuses remains controversial, and even some of the accounts that draw on these examples from 2008–2012 to point out the problematic nature of CTS refer to parallel security organizations (e.g., the so called "Baghdad Brigade" and the Federal Police) as implementing some of Maliki's better known attacks on Sunni-Arab opponents, such as those on former Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi and Finance Minister Raf'a al-Issawi.⁵⁰ But even if CTS was not as involved in these crackdowns as some assert, there was also a popular perception that they were, which undermined their reputation as a protector of all Iraqis. In addition to these high-profile events that became

⁴⁸ International Crisis Group, *Loose Ends: Iraq's Security Forces Between U.S. Drawdown and Withdrawal*, Brussels, October 26, 2010.

⁴⁹ International Crisis Group, 2010; Roy Gutman, Sahar Issa, and Laith Hammoudi, "Iraq's Maliki Accused of Detaining Hundreds of Political Opponents," *McClatchy*, January 19, 2012.

⁵⁰ Marisa Sullivan, *Maliki's Authoritarian Regime*, Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, April 2013.

public disputes, ordinary Iraqis often logged complaints about CTS detention practices (the service has the authority to detain suspects for 48 hours but not to incarcerate for prolonged periods).⁵¹

As for rooting CTS in the principle of placing the rule of law above political loyalties, results appear mixed. On the one hand, CTS emerged as Iraq's most capable force in the mid-2000s;⁵² since then, Iraq has had several peaceful transfers of power. In 2014 and 2018, the incumbent was replaced, and CTS did not use or threaten to use force to prevent the outcome. That said, the transfer of power in both cases was to a closely aligned political leader who enjoyed broad backing among Iraqi Shi'a factions and significant support among minority communities. So CTS has not been tested under a more trying circumstance of the basic political order being overturned by the outcome of Iraqi elections.⁵³ But if the worst fear is that CTS would provide an incumbent the means to remain in power by extralegal means, that has not occurred.⁵⁴

⁵¹ The UN Assistance Mission in Iraq

continued to receive frequent reports from current and former detainees . . . alleging incidents of arbitrary arrest, particularly in connection with the Anti-Terrorism Law, and subsequent denial of due process, as well as abuse, including torture Nearly all such allegations concerned pre-trial detainees held in detention facilities under the authority of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) or the Counterterrorism Directorate. (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Human Rights Office, "Report on Human Rights in Iraq: July–December 2012," Baghdad: Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, June 2013, p. 7)

⁵² James L. Jones, John Abrams, Martin R. Berndt, Charles G. Boyd, Dwight J. Brown, Terrance Gainter, John J. Hamre, Michael Heidingsfield, Gregory G. Johnson, George Joulwan, James C. King, Duncan McCausland, Gary S. McKissock, Alford Mc Michael, Richard Potter, Arnold L. Punaro, Charles H. Ramsey, John F. Timoney, John A. Van Alstyne, and Charles Wilhelm, *The Report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq*, September 6, 2007, p. 17.

⁵³ The March 2010 elections were close to providing this test. Had al-Iraqiyya, a cross-sectarian alliance that included significant backing from Iraq's Sunni-Arab community, formed a government after having narrowly won the most seats in the election, CTS would have been tested as to whether it would have stood by as Maliki was replaced at the end of his first term by a different political coalition.

⁵⁴ This observation is made in Witty, 2018.

CTS's position within the Iraqi national security bureaucracy continues to raise concerns because the body reports to the prime minister rather than the Minister of Defense. This dynamic is somewhat offset by the fact that CTC is directly linked to the MoD, and the CTS brigades' reliance on the MoD for key enablers means that, in practice, it must coordinate closely with the MoD or risk losing its operational effectiveness. Moreover, while the command-and-control structure is not ideal from a civil-military relations standpoint, the 2016 legislation did reinforce the nonpolitical nature of the body. Specifically, Section 6, Article 19 of that legislation stipulates that, "Members of the service are prohibited from belonging to any political party or organization or engaging in any political activity."

Although CTS has avoided the worst-case scenario of thwarting the legitimate transfer of power—and this is the most literal test of whether it operates as a praetorian guard—CTS has been involved in instances of domestic repression and carrying out the arrest of rival political leaders, as mentioned earlier,⁵⁵ which suggest some risk that the force could be deployed by future leaders to beat back challengers. CTS involvement in operations against irreconcilables within the Shi'a community, which began with the Charge of the Knights operation but continued through Maliki's consolidation of power in the 2008–2014 period, suggests that the risk of CTS becoming a praetorian guard may be higher than that of CTS becoming a purely sectarian instrument. This means that, because CTS has been willing to use force against Shi'a extremists, the more acute risk of abuse appears less tied to sectarian impulses than to CTS becoming the tool of an authoritarian determined to use the pretext of terrorism to contain any challenger.

A close observer of CTS has argued that, of all U.S. training efforts with the ISF, CTS "had the most continuous U.S. attention of any unit in Iraq."⁵⁶ But while this may well be true, that level of atten-

⁵⁵ For an example of Maliki using security forces to break up and intimidate protestors, see Stephanie McCrummen, "Protestors Say Maliki Is Using Special Security Forces to Shut Down Demonstrations in Iraq," *Washington Post*, March 3, 2011.

⁵⁶ Witty, 2015, p. 7.

tion and access was curtailed significantly after 2011. For instance, the same observer concedes that

[b]efore the [2011] withdrawal, there were over 100 advisors working at CTS headquarters, CTC, and Academia, the CTS training institution. In addition, USSF operational units were paired with the ISOF brigades. Following the withdrawal between January and June 2012, there was only one U.S. advisor assigned to the entire CTS organization.⁵⁷

The number of advisors was subsequently increased but never approached its pre-2011 level.

Likely not coincidentally, this also appears to be the period in which Maliki was able to undermine some aspects of CTS's nonsectarian, nonpolitical orientation, although that process began prior to the official end of the U.S. military mission. The United States increased connectivity with CTS during the counter-ISIS campaign and, based on its confidence in the force, granted it privileges not afforded other components of the ISF, such as directly calling in air strikes in support of its operations. U.S. advisors also assisted CTS with operational planning, although, unlike in the 2003–2011 period, this would typically occur from a secure operations center removed from the front lines.

The U.S. ability to sustain the CTS commitment to the rule of law largely endured over the course of CTS's evolution, with some notable exceptions that include the 2008–2012 abuses mentioned earlier and allegations of some battlefield excesses during its operations to take territory from ISIS in 2014–2017. But, overall, the counter-ISIS campaign appears to have improved the public's perceptions of the group, and allegations are also offset by examples of minority groups commending its conduct or taking steps (e.g., populations in conflict zones moving to the CTS area of operations) that signaled preferring it over other components of the ISF.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Witty, 2015, p. 24.

⁵⁸ Witty, 2018, p. 34.

Summary

As outlined in Table 3.2, the United States and the GoI were initially aligned in their preferred approach to building CTS as a representative, professional force. The United States provided high-quality training and equipment to develop the force, and this inducement was highly sought after given the technical proficiency CTS was able to build via U.S. investment. During this period, the U.S. approach of sufficing with inducements made sense because the United States faced a cooperative Iraqi counterpart as it pertained to this initiative.

This alignment endured until 2008, when Prime Minister Maliki began stacking the force in favor of his cosectarians and attempted to politicize CTS command and control. As Maliki asserted personal control over security forces including CTS, the United States was tracking the risk and identifying the OCINC as having a particularly negative impact on CTS professionalism. While the U.S. preference for a nonsectarian, professional force was clear, Washington’s preference for the CTS reporting structure was ambiguous because it simultaneously sought to free CTS from the bureaucratic constraints of the MoD and to avoid a scenario in which CTS operated as a praetorian

Table 3.2
Summary Coding of Influence Event 2:
Support to Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Aligned, then misaligned
Influence strategy	Inducements, persuasion
Strength of inducement or sanction	High
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	Low
Short-term outcome	Success
Long-term outcome	Partial success

guard. Maliki exploited that ambiguity, maneuvering to temporarily pull CTS under his personal control. The United States also refrained from employing conditionality to try to change Maliki's behavior.

Overall, the U.S. effort to build CTS was a short-term success because the service emerged as the most representative and professional force in Iraq. In the long term, the effort must still be judged as a partial success in that CTS retained these basic principles despite some regression during the later period of Maliki's premiership.

Influence Event 3: The United States Establishes Irregular Forces to Increase Sunni-Arab Representation in Security Forces

This influence event focuses on the Sons of Iraq as an initiative to make the ISF more representative of the local populations where they operated. The issue area is thus inclusion, albeit within the ISF rather than at the political level. The U.S. position was that the main identity group participating in the insurgency in Western and Northern Iraq at the time—Sunni Arabs—could be co-opted and, indeed, employed as part of counterinsurgency efforts, if given incentives to do so. Washington was seeking Baghdad's acquiescence to building an irregular force of Sunni Arabs for this purpose. When facing resistance from the central government, the United States persuaded Baghdad to accept the plan by acknowledging Iraqi concerns and revising the initial concept to partially address them. In addition, Washington would be the bill-payer for the force, which served as an additional inducement. The Sons of Iraq was one of the most successful initiatives in tamping down the insurgency, but the GoI lacked a long-term commitment to the spirit of the program, eventually renegeing on commitments to these fighters and likely contributing to the conditions that led to a reversal of the security gains made in the mid- and late 2000s.

Context

One of the bloodiest years in the initial Iraq insurgency, as measured by fatalities, was 2006. It was also one of the most fraught in terms of sectarian relations. Two events, in particular, stand out: the execution of former President Saddam Hussein on the most important Islamic holiday (ʿEid al-Adha) and al-Qaʿida in Iraq's (AQI's) bomb-

ing of a Samarra mosque that set off a wave of retributive violence by Shi'a militias against Sunnis.⁵⁹ In addition, leadership turnover within the GoI called into question whether Baghdad had the capacity to be an effective partner in the counterinsurgency campaign. Then–Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari lasted in office less than one year before he was forced out in May of 2006, with President Bush repudiating his leadership.⁶⁰

As the intensity of the insurgency rose, pressure was also growing in Washington for a change in U.S. strategy. A key issue in the 2006 midterm congressional elections was the Iraq war, and many interpreted the outcome as a rebuke of the administration's approach. On the eve of the election, American voters cited the Iraq war as the top election issue; less than 30 percent approved of the President's handling of the war; and majorities of both Democrats and Republicans wanted a change in approach.⁶¹

U.S. Position and Approach

In 2006, the United States was beginning to pilot elements of a new strategy in Iraq that was based on three main pillars: a push to co-opt members of the Sunni-Arab community as security partners, a surge in U.S. forces to signal American commitment and deploy the manpower to implement a more population-centric approach to security, and increasing the throughput of ISF training in the hopes of developing a more effective partner.⁶² Efforts to cultivate local Sunni-Arab security partners began in Anbar Province, where an “awakening” occurred among tribal leaders, who requested U.S. military support to defeat AQI in their areas. The U.S. military command then sought to scale

⁵⁹ Nazim Nawaf Ibrahim, *al-'Unf al-Siyasi fi al-'Iraq al-Mu'asir [Political Violence in Contemporary Iraq]*, Baghdad: Al Rafidain Publishing, 2015.

⁶⁰ “US Envoy ‘Calls for New Iraqi PM,’” BBC News, March 28, 2006.

⁶¹ Adam Nagourney and Megan Thee, “With Election Driven by Iraq, Voters Want New Approach,” *New York Times*, November 2, 2006.

⁶² Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), *Sons of Iraq Program: Results Are Uncertain and Financial Controls Were Weak*, Arlington, Va., 2011.

up the initiative into a larger effort that became known as the Sons of Iraq, sometimes referred to as Concerned Local Citizens engagement.

The Sons of Iraq program encompassed nine provinces and grew to include U.S. support to more than 100,000 Iraqi irregular forces at the height of the initiative. The United States did not equip these forces. Rather, the United States paid their salaries, steered reconstruction projects through their leaders, and coordinated U.S. and Iraqi military support to them when they faced insurgent attacks.⁶³ To receive this assistance, the irregulars needed to meet several conditions, with pledging loyalty to the counterinsurgency being the most critical.

Government of Iraq Position and Approach

The Shi'a-dominated GoI was a reluctant partner in the initiative, fearing that the United States was emboldening a community that posed a security threat to it.⁶⁴ There were particular fears that the Sons of Iraq would turn on the government, seek confrontation with Shi'a irregulars, or demand recognition as a third force, outside the Iraqi military and Federal Police, thus fragmenting Iraq's formal security sector.⁶⁵ The Deputy National Security Advisor to Maliki in charge of the file, Safa al-Hussein, summarized the GoI's fear that "Many people believe that the situation will lead to the rise of tens of thousands of armed individuals who are mostly Sunni, and that will incentivize the Shia militias to increase, leading in the end to a civil war."⁶⁶

That said, it is important to understand that the GoI's approach was not outright opposition and that GoI positions did not break out cleanly along sectarian lines. Some Shi'a leaders within the GoI supported the Anbar Awakening as a way to weaken Sunni-Arab elites (i.e., al-Tawafuq coalition, and the Iraqi Islamic Party, which was a key

⁶³ SIGIR, 2011.

⁶⁴ Priyanka Boghani, "David Petraeus: ISIS's Rise in Iraq Isn't a Surprise," *Frontline*, July 29, 2014.

⁶⁵ "Intifadat al-'Asha'ir [The Uprising of the Tribes]," *Asharq al-Awsat*, December 28, 2007.

⁶⁶ "Quwat al-Sahwa 'Khar Asha'iri' A'ad al-Hadu' lil Manatiq al-Sunniya wa Yuthir Qalq Hukumat al-Maliki [Awakening Forces Are a 'Tribal Option' That Returned Calm to Sunni Areas and Spark the Concern of the Maliki Government]," *Asharq Al Awsat*, December 24, 2007.

component of the coalition) by introducing Sunni-Arab tribal competitors into the political space.⁶⁷ Other Sunni-Arab elites were some of the actors most opposed to the initiative, despite the U.S. intent to co-opt that broader community as a security partner. The Sunni-Arab Defense Minister at the time, ‘Abd al-Qader al-‘Ubaidi, was one of those in the GoI concerned about the Sons of Iraq as a competitor to formal institutions.⁶⁸

U.S. military commanders were aware of the GoI’s only partial acceptance of the program, and the fact that its enthusiasm or opposition depended greatly on the sectarian composition of the area where tribal forces were introduced. General David Petraeus summarized Baghdad’s perspective this way:

If we were to ask the Maliki government if they support Sunni tribal engagement and reconciliation, they would answer “yes.” In Sunni provinces like Anbar and Salah ad Din, they would likely mean “yes.” Closer to Baghdad, they might say “yes,” but would act to slow roll any movement. In places like Diyala, they might say “yes,” but would be very unsure of how to proceed. The appetite of the Shi’a leadership for Sunni tribal engagement lessens significantly as the issue gets closer to Shi’a towns and neighborhoods.⁶⁹

To overcome the GoI’s reluctance, U.S. commanders had to build the case that engagement with the Sons of Iraq would promote Iraqi security. Then-BG John Campbell became the key interlocutor with the Iraqi commander of Baghdad Operations, and General Petraeus pressed Prime Minister Maliki to accede.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Najim Abed al-Jabouri and Sterling Jensen, “The Iraqi and AQI Roles in the Sunni Awakening,” *Prism*, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 2010.

⁶⁸ “Intifadat al-‘Asha’ir,” 2007.

⁶⁹ As quoted in Rayburn and Sobchak, 2019b, p. 177.

⁷⁰ Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*, New York: Perseus Books, 2008, pp. 254–260.

Outcome: Short-Term Gain, Long-Term Backsliding

The broader U.S. strategy, piloted in 2006 and officially adopted in January 2007, coincided with an eventual decrease in the strength of the insurgency, as measured by fatalities. In 2006 and 2007, violence spiked, with fatalities (battle-related and civilian) reaching nearly 5,000 in each of these years. By 2008, fatalities had dropped to roughly 3,000 and fell below 2,000 in 2009 before tapering off further. Indeed, that downward trendline was sustained until 2013, when ISIS emerged as the leader of the next phase of the insurgency.

Careful studies of the insurgency do not attribute these gains solely to the Sons of Iraq.⁷¹ As previously mentioned, the program coincided with other major initiatives, including a surge in U.S. forces, advancements in how insurgent networks in Iraq were targeted, and a ramping up of capacity-building with the ISF. The Iraqis also embarked on initiatives that included bringing the Sadrists into the political system and, arguably for better and for worse, sustaining continuity in national leadership in the form of Prime Minister Maliki's eight-year rule. Notwithstanding these caveats, the Sons of Iraq were likely one important factor in an impressive turnaround.

At face value, the United States had enormous leverage to push through the Sons of Iraq program and other elements of the strategy. With the surge, the United States commanded 165,000 forces on the ground, making the United States the dominant security actor. As General Petraeus described, the most relevant actors in Sunni-Arab areas of Iraq were local populations and U.S. forces, not the GoI or ISF. Petraeus notes,

Keep in mind that in Anbar Province and . . . these other very tough towns up and down the Euphrates River Valley, there were very, very few Iraqi security forces and relatively modest Iraqi authorities

⁷¹ Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey A. Friedman, and Jacob N. Shapiro, "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?" *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Summer 2012; Austin Long, "The Anbar Awakening," *Survival*, Vol. 50, No. 2, April–May 2008.

So [the local tribes] were really reconciling with what some folks termed the biggest tribe, which was our forces.⁷²

In addition, the 2006 U.S. election cast a shadow over the sustainability of a large U.S. footprint in country, making the scenario of a draw-down and eventual withdrawal more credible. On the other hand, the United States had enormous reputational exposure, and the administration's then four-year investment in Iraq mitigated against any abrupt departure without securing some security and political gains.

In contrast to some of the influence events considered in this case study, the United States did not need to use conditionality to secure GoI acquiescence to the Sons of Iraq program. Rather, persuasion and inducements were sufficient to bring the GoI along as a reluctant partner. Those inducements took the form of the roughly \$400 million the United States invested in the Sons of Iraq via the Commanders Emergency Response Program funds and the United States accepting some GoI priorities in the management of the program—in particular, broadening the Sons of Iraq to include Shi'a irregulars in mixed areas and acknowledging that members' pledges of loyalty were not always upheld, thereby validating the GoI's concern that the program contained some security risk that required mitigation.⁷³

The Achilles' heel of the program was the ability of the United States to enforce the GoI's long-term commitment to the Sons of Iraq, particularly during the U.S. withdrawal from cities in 2009 and the eventual ending of the military mission in Iraq in 2011. Even before the United States turned primary security responsibility over to the GoI, Prime Minister Maliki was embarking on a parallel tribal engagement strategy designed to cultivate tribes as bases of personal support. This was a particular focus of Maliki in the lead-up to the 2009 provincial elections, which Maliki's Rule of Law coalition dominated. In 2008, Maliki established his own tribal support councils [*majalis al-isnad al-'asha'iriya*] designed to create reservoirs of tribal support and

⁷² Boghani, 2014.

⁷³ SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, March 2013; Mark Wilbanks and Efraim Karsh, "How the 'Sons of Iraq' Stabilized Iraq," *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 4, Fall 2010.

build irregular forces loyal to him as a check against the power of Shi'a rivals—the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) in particular—he was attempting to increase his independence from.⁷⁴

As for continuing the U.S. initiative, the GoI's commitment to providing support to Sons of Iraq members in the form of a DDR program was checkered at best. The GoI failed to meet targets—modest as they were—on both the integration of members into Iraq's formal security services or the provision of other public-sector jobs.⁷⁵ Some allege the treatment of Sons of Iraq members was even more antagonistic, with the GoI targeting them for arrest, although the level of repression meted out to these individuals is disputed.⁷⁶ But once the United States committed to handing the Sons of Iraq portfolio over to the GoI, including the biometric data collected on individuals, and committed to a withdrawal from the cities and eventual end of the military mission in Iraq, Washington had very little leverage with the GoI over its management of the Sons of Iraq.

Summary

As outlined in Table 3.3, the United States and the GoI were misaligned on the issue of recruiting a Sunni-Arab irregular force to combat the insurgency. The GoI was a reluctant partner in applying the concept to Western Iraq but feared that extending the program—to include the capital and provinces with a mixed Sunni-Shi'a composition—would create an armed challenger to the central government. The United States was able to work through these reservations by revising the design of the force to allay Baghdad's concerns and by footing the costs associated with recruiting and then sustaining these irregular units.

⁷⁴ "Majlis al-R'asa Yarud 'ala Intiqadat a bi al-Tashkik fi Qanuniatiha [The Presidential Council Responds to Maliki's Criticisms by Questioning the Legality of the Tribal Support Councils]," *al-Hayat*, November 23, 2008; "Majalis al-Isnad al-'Asha'iriya: Qadiya Ukhra Tufarriq al-'Iraqiyyin [Tribal Support Councils: Another Issue Dividing Iraqis]," *Al Jazeera*, November 14, 2008.

⁷⁵ SIGIR, 2012.

⁷⁶ Myriam Benraad, "Iraq's Tribal 'Sahwa': Its Rise and Fall," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Spring 2011.

Table 3.3
Summary Coding of Influence Event 3:
Sons of Iraq Program

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned
Influence strategy	Inducements, persuasion
Strength of inducement or sanction	Low
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	High
Short-term outcome	Success
Long-term outcome	Failure

Over time, Prime Minister Maliki reneged on several commitments associated with the initiative, including weak implementation of a DDR program that was intended to transition fighters into the state’s formal security structures or alternative employment. This is likely because the U.S. inducements (salary payments) and persuasion were insufficient to override the political stakes of the prime minister, who saw Sunni irregulars as a threat to his rule. The Sons of Iraq can be judged a short-term success in that Washington was able to prevail on the GoI to allow the program. However, it is a long-term failure in that Maliki’s poor treatment of the fighters likely contributed to Sunni-Arab concerns over the central government’s commitment to political inclusion, a factor that almost certainly contributed to the onset of the 2014 conflict.

Influence Event 4: Rebluing the Iraqi National Police

This influence event treats the issue of institutionalized capacity-building within the INP.⁷⁷ The U.S. position was to reduce Shi’a sec-

⁷⁷ Subsequently renamed the Iraqi Federal Police and often referred to by the shorthand “Fed-Pol.”

tarianism within the force by retraining units in human rights and respect for the rule of law. The additional training also coincided with relieving problematic elements within the INP from duty with the aim of reducing the force's involvement in reprisal violence against Sunnis. In this initiative, the United States was partnered with a reform-minded minister of interior, although a number of power centers within the GoI continued to treat the MoI forces as the preserve of Shi'a militias. The United States applied strong forms of leverage, including conditionality, by withholding assistance to units, disbanding the most notorious units, overseeing an overhaul of commanders, and pulling units off the streets to receive training. Despite these well-intentioned efforts, the Federal Police and broader MoI forces continued to be a problematic component of the ISF in both the short and long terms.

Context

By 2006 and 2007, the development and conduct of Iraqi police forces was coming under increased scrutiny. The final report from the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq—led by Gen James Jones (U.S. Marine Corps, ret.)—was withering in its critique of the Iraqi MoI, referring to it as “dysfunctional and sectarian, and suffer[ing] from ineffective leadership.”⁷⁸ The Iraqi military, while still facing significant challenges, was viewed by the U.S. Multinational Transitional Security Command–Iraq as a more representative force—in terms of its sectarian composition—more committed to its mission as a national defense force, and on a better trajectory than the forces that reported to the MoI.⁷⁹ To rectify the slow development of the Iraqi

⁷⁸ Jones et al., 2007, p. 92.

⁷⁹ Then-LTG Martin Dempsey testified that the Iraq “army sees itself as an institution of national unity, and the leaders of Iraq see the army as an institution of national unity and are not inclined to use it for sectarian purposes” (Martin Dempsey, “Statement of Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey, Commander, Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq, U.S. Army,” testimony, “The Development of the Iraqi Security Forces,” hearing before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, 110th Cong., 1st Sess., Washington, D.C., June 12, 2007, p. 32). Juxtaposed against that what he had said earlier about the police: “[W]e have had some real challenges with the [Iraqi] national police . . . it is the single organization in Iraq with the most sectarian influence and sectarian problems” (Dempsey, 2007, p. 21).

police, the U.S. military command in Iraq, which led both the training of MoD and MoI forces,⁸⁰ designated 2006 the “Year of the Police.” The Department of Defense noted the focus was on “creating a force loyal to the people of Iraq and its Constitution and committed to guaranteeing human rights and the rule of law.”⁸¹

By all accounts, Iraqi police forces were performing poorly in regard to these metrics (i.e., guaranteeing human rights and upholding the rule of law). Particularly alarming were the operations of the “Wolf Brigade,” a special Iraqi police unit that the U.S. military had discovered, in summer 2005, was running secret detention facilities.⁸² U.S. concerns with the Iraqi MoI forces became more generalized when MoI units participated in retributive violence against Sunni-Arabs after the February 2006 Samarra mosque bombing that touched off the height of sectarian bloodletting in Iraq.

U.S. Position and Approach

In 2006, the U.S. Civilian Police Assistance Training Team undertook a reform program with Iraqi MoI forces. A major part of that reform program focused on the 28 battalions that made up the INP.⁸³ The team commander overseeing the reform acknowledged that the INP “had some units that had operated in a sectarian way and had participated in operations that clearly were not law enforcement, that were clearly pursuant of a sectarian agenda.”⁸⁴ To address this concern, INP

⁸⁰ According to Cordesman, the Department of Defense officially took on the training of Iraqi internal security forces in October 2005 (Anthony Cordesman, “Iraqi Force Development: Conditions for Success, Consequences of Failure,” Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 2007, p. 134). According to Perito, the transition occurred in May 2004 (Robert M. Perito, “The Iraq Federal Police: U.S. Police Building Under Fire,” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, October 2011, p. 6).

⁸¹ As quoted in Cordesman, 2007, p. 134.

⁸² Perito, p. 6.

⁸³ Iraq has both local and national police forces, the latter of which are akin to a gendarmerie force. This report refers to these forces as Iraqi National Police, which was the term used at the time, although these forces were later rebranded as the Iraqi Federal Police.

⁸⁴ Michael D. Jones, interview with Kim Kagan, transcript, Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, July 28, 2008.

units were subjected to an inspection program, jointly implemented by the Iraqi MoI's inspector general office and U.S. trainers deployed as INP training teams. The inspections were designed to identify shortcomings in the training, readiness, and command and control of INP units, which, in turn, informed prioritization of their entry into a process the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team termed *rebluing* (i.e., transforming the police from an auxiliary combat force—a so-called “green” role, because of the color of camouflaged uniforms—into a civilian police or “blue” service). Rebluing amounted to removing INP units from the field for three to four weeks of additional training and vetting, which was conducted at a training facility in Numaniyah (southeast Iraq).⁸⁵ In addition to technical competencies for units that were effectively equipped as light infantry, the training included modules on human rights and the rule of law.⁸⁶ During this process, significant portions of the force were relieved from duty. Some INP units lost as much as 40 percent of their force to eliminate those who could not meet training requirements or were deemed “undesirables.”⁸⁷

Government of Iraq Position and Approach

During this period, when the United States was pushing a reform program for INP, Iraq had a Minister of Interior, Jawad Bolani, who was generally aligned with the U.S. approach and undertook complementary efforts that supported the initiative. Specifically, Minister Bolani empowered the Internal Affairs and Security Directorate within the MoI to root out corruption and sectarian activities.⁸⁸ Under Minister Bolani's watch, 17 battalion commanders—or more than one-half of the battalions' top leadership—were removed for cause.⁸⁹ And, as

⁸⁵ Some Iraqi police units never received coalition training; for some units, it would be more accurate to say rebluing kick-started their initial training.

⁸⁶ Jones, 2008.

⁸⁷ D. J. Elliott, “Training the Iraqi National Police,” *FDD's Long War Journal*, July 3, 2007.

⁸⁸ “Tard al-Alaf min ‘Anasir al-Shurta al-‘Iraqiya li Irtibatihim bi Milishiat wa Tawarruthim bi al-Fasad [Thousands of Members of the Iraqi Police Are Expelled for Their Links to Militias and Involvement in Corruption],” *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, December 11, 2007.

⁸⁹ Jones, 2008.

noted previously, the ministry worked with U.S. advisors to inspect all INP units to better facilitate their rebluing at Numaniyah. It is difficult to discern to what degree Minister Bolani was motivated by the same principles as the United States—as opposed to potential alternative motivations, such as consolidating his personal control over the ministry—but the attacks Minister Bolani faced from sectarian actors in Iraq would seem to validate the appraisal that he was a reform-minded minister seeking to root out the worst offenders in what was a dysfunctional service.⁹⁰

If Minister Bolani is taken as representative of the GoI, an analyst could argue that the United States and the GoI were aligned on this reform initiative. That said, Minister Bolani's predecessor, Bayan Jabr, is almost universally regarded as having managed the ministry in a highly sectarian manner that was a major contributor to the problems the U.S. military command and Minister Bolani were attempting to address. As Robert Perito wrote, "[d]uring Jabr's one-year tenure . . . members of the IPS [Iraqi Police Service] and Special Police Commando units acted as death squads, kidnapping, imprisoning, torturing and killing Sunnis."⁹¹ While Jabr's removal in 2006 in favor of Bolani was a positive signal for reform, Jabr remained in the Maliki government as minister of finance—which gave him the responsibility of overseeing payments of salaries to MoI personnel.⁹² This was also the period when Prime Minister Maliki was relying on his highly sectarian Office of the Commander in Chief to manage security forces, and that office was actively working against police reform efforts to include the goal of introducing sectarian balance into Iraqi police forces, which General Dempsey, head of the Multinational Transitional Security Command–Iraq, estimated as 85 percent Shi'a at this time.

On balance, it is most accurate to describe the Iraqi government position at the time as resistant to professionalizing MoI forces. Some reform-minded elements, led by Minister Bolani and INP commander Lieutenant General Hussein al-Awadi, appeared genuinely motivated

⁹⁰ Dodge, 2012, p. 125.

⁹¹ Perito, 2011, p. 6.

⁹² Perito, 2011, p. 7.

to address sectarian behavior, corruption, absenteeism, and other challenges.⁹³ However, other senior Iraqi officials appeared equally determined to stymie those efforts to avoid compromising their personal control, to appease important constituencies within the Shi'a bloc (i.e., the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution In Iraq and the Sadrists), or to press forward with what one Iraqi analyst has termed Shi'a-centric state building.⁹⁴

Outcome: Long-Term Failure

It is difficult to judge the precise effect rebuilding had in terms of improving the professionalism of INP. The American general who led the police training effort in 2007 has cited specific instances when he believed INP exhibited behavior that showed greater commitment to rule of law within the units.⁹⁵ These instances include the INP's contribution to the Baghdad Security Plan and the Charge of the Knights, as well their performance in a Mosul operation. The first two were cited to demonstrate the willingness of the INP to apply the rule of law to their Shi'a cosectarians in Sadr City and Basra, and the third operation was flagged to show the INP's ability to operate with public support in a majority Sunni-Arab area. That said, there is no systematic reporting of INP operations that would allow us to confirm these instances were the norm. Moreover, rebuilding occurred during a period when INP numbered 25,000, complicating whether the performance of certain units can be generalized across the force.

Over the long term, the outcome is easier to judge and would appear to be a clear failure. Components of the force, the Emergency Response Division in particular, have been implicated in gross human rights violations. In 2011, the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force suspended its training to the Emergency Response Division over concerns about its sectarian behavior.⁹⁶ And in 2015, the division failed

⁹³ Rayburn and Sobchak, 2019b, p. 285.

⁹⁴ Fanar Haddad, "Shia-Centric State Building and Sunni Rejection in Post-2003 Iraq," Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 7, 2016.

⁹⁵ Jones, 2008.

⁹⁶ Rayburn and Sobchak, 2019b, p. 546.

Leahy vetting, making it ineligible to receive U.S. training or equipment. The Federal Police—as the INP were renamed in 2009—were also implicated in some of the worst sectarian conduct and civilian casualty incidents in the liberation of Mosul in 2017.⁹⁷ This should not be read to suggest rebluing was the cause of this behavior. At the time of the Mosul operation, the Federal Police had expanded to more than 80,000 personnel, a more than threefold increase since the police reform effort described in this influence event was implemented. Rather, the point is that U.S. efforts to instill professionalism in the force did not take root or endure to the extent that the force exhibited a strong professional ethos during the campaign to defeat ISIS. Rebluing and other U.S. efforts to instill this ethos were insufficient to achieve the intended effect.

The long-term failure was likely due to several factors. First, the police reform effort was relatively modest. It did encompass multiple stages that included an initial assessment; retraining at Numaniyah; and, for some Iraqi units, additional training from the Italian Carabinieri at Camp Dublin in Baghdad. But the retraining at Numaniyah was only a three-week program. Moreover, coalition forces in Iraq did not embed with INP units. There were coalition-manned INP training teams that engaged with these units, but because coalition military forces were not trained as police forces and because the embed requirement was already large for MoD forces, INP operated without embedded coalition personnel.⁹⁸ This means that efforts to socialize the INP in a professional ethos were limited, likely contributing to why the units regressed so far in the ensuing years.

Second, Iraqi political leaders had strong incentives to accommodate the parts of the Shi'a bloc that commanded militias, with these militias present within MoI forces. Since the Iraqi Interim Government of 2004, every Iraqi prime minister has been Shi'a. Particularly since the 2005 elections, each prime minister has needed broad sup-

⁹⁷ Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Loveday Morris, "Iraq Investigating Elite Unit Accused of Human Rights Violations in Mosul Campaign," *Washington Post*, May 25, 2017; Witty, 2018.

⁹⁸ Jones, 2008.

port within the Shi'a bloc to hold off challengers. This consideration translates to outsized influence for such groups as ISCI, the Sadrists, and Fatah, none of which has yet held the premiership, but all of which have played important roles in government formation and exercised influence over the premier. This means that U.S. police reform initiatives would have had to come with a substantial enough inducement or sanction to alter the calculus of national political leadership, to the extent that reining in these factions was preferable to co-opting them by offering control over key portfolios within the MoI. The United States did not threaten such sanctions, limiting its leverage over such a high-stakes issue. For these reasons, we judge the strength of the U.S. sanctions to be low.

Summary

As outlined in Table 3.4, rebalancing was Washington's attempt to address the very different visions it and Baghdad had for the development of the INP. While both sought a gendarme-like light infantry force that could contribute to counterterrorism missions, Washington preferred the INP to work within the rule of law, and the Shi'a-led government in Baghdad gave the INP a wide berth to suppress Sunni-Arab opposition and create the conditions for demographic consolidation. This was particularly the case in Baghdad, where the INP contributed to the bloodletting that "cleansed" neighborhoods of Sunni-Arab residents. To address the issue, Washington exercised hard conditionality, suspending support to the INP until units underwent additional training and problematic elements of the INP were relieved of duty. However, the program failed to reform the underlying culture of the INP, and segments of the force soon reverted to a sectarian approach. The problems in the force persist to this day, with elements of the Federal Police performing poorly during the defeat-ISIS operations of 2014–2017.

Influence Event 5: U.S. Approach to the Sadrists During the Surge

This influence event focuses on the GoI's willingness to equally apply the rule of law to Shi'a militias. Specifically, the United States was pressing the GoI to depoliticize the Iraqi military chain of command, stopping the practice of Iraqi political leaders intervening to head off

Table 3.4
Summary Coding of Influence Event 4:
Rebluing of the Iraqi National Police

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned
Influence strategy	Hard conditionality
Strength of inducement or sanction	Low
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	High
Short-term outcome	Failure
Long-term outcome	Failure

U.S.-Iraqi joint operations against Shi‘a militia groups, most notably Jaysh al-Mahdi in Sadr City. The United States identified progress in this area as one of the benchmarks jointly agreed to with the GoI prior to surging additional forces to the theatre. That said, because these benchmarks did not carry an “or else” ultimatum, they are best described as a form of soft conditionality. In the short term, the United States nudged some limited Iraqi cooperation to rein in Jaysh al-Mahdi, but U.S. military access to Sadr City remained limited and the militia continued to operate in relative sanctuary. In the longer term, the prime minister did show a willingness to use force against Sadr’s militia but in a different region of Iraq and likely motivated by a desire to consolidate personal power rather than by the principle that rule of law extended equally, regardless of sect.

Context

In 2006, the Sadrists were still operating in a gray space. U.S. intelligence reporting characterized Sadr as an Iraqi “rejectionist” actor “who will continue to play both ends by mobilizing militants privately while

publicly calling for restraint.”⁹⁹ The militia was believed to be involved in some of the worst sectarian reprisals against Sunni-Arabs,¹⁰⁰ particularly in Baghdad, where violence was leading Sunni members of communities to flee mixed neighborhoods. But what had changed since 2003–2004 was that Sadr’s followers were now represented in parliament, having won seats in the 2005 elections.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, the Sadrists were partially aligned with Prime Minister Maliki; indeed their participation in government formation provided Maliki the support he needed for his premiership, leading some observers to see the Sadrists as kingmakers and exercising outsized influence on the political order.¹⁰² At the same time, the United States was prioritizing the improvement of security in Baghdad and harbored suspicions that Maliki was slow-rolling the attempts to rein in Shi’a militias—including the Mahdi Army—necessary to stabilize the capital.

U.S. Position and Approach in 2006–2007

Late 2006 was the crossroads of a U.S. debate over the future of its Iraq strategy. Democrats in Congress were pressing for a timetable for withdrawal, while the Bush administration was split on the way forward. One part of the uniformed command—represented by General Casey (then Commander of Multi-National Forces–Iraq) and GEN John Abizaid (then U.S. Central Command commander)—was advocating for pressing the Iraqi government on what they termed “reconciliation” while speeding up the transfer of responsibility for security from the coalition to the GoI.¹⁰³ Another part of the uniformed command—represented by General Petraeus, then-LTG Raymond Odierno (commander of III Corps), and prominent individuals outside government, such as retired GEN Jack Keane—was advocating for an

⁹⁹ Headquarters, Multi National Corps Iraq, “Annex B to MNC-I Operations Order 05-03,” Baghdad, November 20, 2005, declassified May 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Godwin, 2012.

¹⁰¹ Sadrists participated in both the December and January 2005 elections.

¹⁰² International Crisis Group, 2006, p. 14.

¹⁰³ General George Casey, declassified email to GEN Peter Pace and GEN John Abizaid, December 7, 2006.

increase in U.S. forces to buy time for the Iraqi government to make political progress.¹⁰⁴ Although the two camps differed on the size of U.S. troop deployments, they agreed that inclusion was essential to tamping down the insurgency.

President Bush ultimately chose the surge strategy but carried over some of the initiatives already developed in relation to General Casey's approach to link U.S. assistance to Iraq to a series of benchmarks. The United States and the GoI agreed to these benchmarks—there would ultimately be 18. The United States requested that Iraqi leaders cite these benchmarks in public speeches,¹⁰⁵ thereby tying the leaders to the content. The benchmarks were designed to signal to ordinary Iraqis the government's commitment to an inclusive and nonsectarian future. Congress also used the benchmarks to monitor progress in Iraq. Indeed, Congress conditioned a fiscal year 2007 supplemental appropriation of \$1.5 billion in economic support funds to Iraq on progress in Iraqi implementation of the benchmarks but with a waiver provision that allowed the administration to essentially bypass the condition in the event of noncompliance.¹⁰⁶ Congress also required the administration to submit detailed reports on Iraqi compliance and commissioned an independent review through the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO).

Several of these benchmarks were related to the GoI's approach toward militias; at least two were specifically written with an eye toward changing what Washington saw as the GoI's overly accommodative approach toward the Mahdi Army. The relevant benchmarks were:

Providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this plan [i.e., the Baghdad security plan] and to make tactical and operational decisions, in consultation with U.S. commanders,

¹⁰⁴Rayburn and Sobchak, 2019b, p. 311.

¹⁰⁵Interview with former senior U.S. official, Washington, D.C., April 8, 2019.

¹⁰⁶Kenneth Katzman, *Iraq: Politics, Elections, and Benchmarks*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, RS21968, October 21, 2009.

without political intervention, to include the authority to pursue all extremists, including Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias.¹⁰⁷

Ensuring that, according to President Bush, Prime Minister Maliki said “the Baghdad security plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation.”¹⁰⁸

Washington’s requests were delivered in clear terms and tied to concrete actions, such as executing the Baghdad Security Plan. For this reason, we judge the clarity of the U.S request as high.

The focus on the Mahdi Army in Sadr City [East Baghdad] was a reflection of U.S. frustration with Prime Minister Maliki not staffing earlier versions of the Baghdad Security Plan, demanding the U.S. military remove checkpoints that controlled movements around Sadr City in what American commanders believed was bowing to the political pressure the Sadrists could bring on his government, and general unease that Sadr had entered formal politics without having to subordinate his forces to state control. Summarizing the unease, COL Peter Mansoor, the executive officer for General Petraeus noted,

I really believe that in 2004 when Jaish al-Mahdi rose in in the spring, that we had the military capability to defeat them. . . . The problem was that we had very little Iraqi political support, and the mantra among the politicians was, “Just let Muqtada al-Sadr and his advisors into the political process and all will be well.” . . . Well what happened was that they let them into the system, but the Jaish al-Mahdi never dissolved their militia.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷GAO, *Securing, Stabilizing, and Rebuilding Iraq: Iraqi Government Has Not Met Most Legislative, Security, and Economic Benchmarks*, Washington, D.C., GAO-07-1195, September 4, 2007, p. 42.

¹⁰⁸GAO, 2007, p. 46. The reference within the quote is to President Bush’s “The New Way Forward in Iraq” speech (George W. Bush, “President’s Address to the Nation,” Washington, D.C.: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, January 10, 2007).

¹⁰⁹COL Peter Mansoor interview with Multi-National Force–Iraq Historian, May 1, 2008, Declassified May 2015.

Government of Iraq Position and Approach

Demonstrating that the U.S. government at least had the leverage to wrest verbal commitments from the GoI on the benchmarks, Prime Minister Maliki and President Jalal Talabani both agreed to the measures in 2006.¹¹⁰ The earliest public endorsement was Maliki's June 2006 "reconciliation and national dialogue" speech, which put forward 24 principles for overcoming Iraq's political differences that largely overlapped with the 18 benchmarks ultimately agreed to.¹¹¹ The U.S. government was particularly concerned about Maliki's willingness to assist U.S. forces in cracking down on Shi'a militias, including the Mahdi Army in Sadr City, and so President Bush refused to announce the surge decision until Maliki publicly stated his intent to go after unauthorized armed groups irrespective of their sectarian affiliation.¹¹² Maliki complied, endorsing that principle in his January 6, 2007, Army Day remarks, just days ahead of President Bush's surge announcement. Maliki complied with the letter of the U.S. initial demand, stating that

Arms should be in the hands of the armed forces only. We will not allow any of the militias, or anyone else from among those different allegiances that tamper with the security of Iraq's citizens, to become an alternative to the state.¹¹³

Noting its application to Baghdad, he continued, "[t]he Baghdad security plan will not provide sanctuary to any law breakers regardless of their sectarian or political affiliation."¹¹⁴ What needs to be underscored, however, is that, even if Maliki delivered the promised address, it came

¹¹⁰ Ambassador Khalilzad and General Casey discussed the benchmarks with an emphasis on taking measures against the Mahdi Army in an October 24, 2006, press conference. They also noted President Talabani's commitment to them.

¹¹¹ Nouri al-Maliki, "Mashru' al-Musalaha wa al-Hiwar al-Watani [The Reconciliation and National Dialogue Project]," June 25, 2006.

¹¹² Interview with former U.S. government official, Washington, DC, April 8, 2019.

¹¹³ Nouri al-Maliki, untitled speech, January 6, 2007.

¹¹⁴ Nouri al-Maliki, untitled speech, January 6, 2007.

just over a week after he ordered the execution of Saddam Hussein on Islam's most important holiday, likely drowning out any potential benefit it signaled of a more evenhanded approach to security.

How the Maliki government viewed the relative strength of the U.S. sanction is open to some debate. On the one hand, Washington implied that its deployment of forces necessary to get a full-blown civil war under control depended on Baghdad making progress in these areas. And by President Bush delaying the surge announcement until he received an Iraqi commitment, he increased the credibility he would follow through on the threat.

On the other hand, Maliki viewed the presence of U.S. forces as one driver of the insurgency, and so did not necessarily subscribe to the same logic that an increase in U.S. forces would lead to a decrease in violence. Moreover, reigning in the Shi'a militias risked provoking defections from within the governing coalition, which posed a serious threat to his premiership. Rayburn et al. noted that

[t]he fact that Maliki's political survival relied on an accommodation with the Sadrists explained his reluctance to confront [Jaysh Al Mahdi] in Baghdad and allow the Americans to conduct raids into the militia's Sadr City sanctuary.¹¹⁵

We judge that, on balance, the strength of the sanction was high but acknowledge that Maliki's political calculations may have reduced the value of the sanction more than outside observers would intuit.

Outcome: Partial Compliance

Of course, more important than the GoI's verbal commitments was whether it followed through in action. The GAO report, written a year after the GoI's initial commitment to the benchmarks, judged that Iraq had *not* met its obligation to abstain from injecting political and sectarian considerations in the prosecution of the Baghdad security plan. Among the factors leading to this judgment, GAO noted that "some army units sent to Baghdad have mixed loyalties, and some have had ties to Shi'a militias, making it difficult to target Shi'a extremist

¹¹⁵ Rayburn and Sobchak, 2019b, p. 20.

networks.”¹¹⁶ On denying outlawed groups of all sectarian backgrounds sanctuary, the GAO judged the GoI to be in partial compliance. GAO observed, “Although MNF-I [Multi-National Force–Iraq] conducts operations in Sadr City, MNF-I and Iraqi security forces maintain only one Joint Security Station on the border of Sadr City, with none within the city itself.”¹¹⁷

The overall impact of the experience may have been diluted by the Bush administration’s unease with strict application of conditionality, effectively turning what was portrayed as hard conditionality into a much softer form. When pressed on the meaning of the benchmarks in 2006, given Maliki’s rejection of foreign interference in Iraqi decisions, President Bush noted,

Listen, this is a sovereign government. It was elected by the people of Iraq. What we’re asking them to do is to say, when do you think you’re going to get this done, when can you get this done, so the people themselves in Iraq can see that the Government is moving forward with a reconciliation plan and plans necessary to unify this government. . . .

[If Maliki’s] point is, is that those benchmarks, or the way forward, can’t be imposed upon Iraq by an outside force, he’s right. This is a sovereign government.¹¹⁸

Multiple interviewees for this report confirmed that the administration’s inclination was to demonstrate U.S. commitment to help the Iraqi leader make tough decisions, not to threaten the withdrawal of American support absent immediate progress.¹¹⁹

With more than 160,000 forces on the ground and the United States participating in partnered operations with ISF, the U.S. gov-

¹¹⁶ GAO, 2007, p. 42.

¹¹⁷ GAO, 2007, p. 46.

¹¹⁸ George W. Bush, press conference, Washington, D.C., October 25, 2006, as recorded in *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, Administration of George W. Bush*, Washington, D.C.: Office of the Federal Register, 2006, pp. 1882–1883.

¹¹⁹ Interviews with former U.S. government official, Washington, D.C., March 26, 2019, and April 8, 2019.

ernment had considerable access to information on how the GoI was approaching Shi'a militias, in general, and Sadr's Mahdi Army, in particular. However, as noted in the GAO report, the U.S. military limited its presence inside Sadr City—in the form of Joint Security Stations—to avoid provoking a confrontation with Sadr's followers, although U.S. forces did conduct frequent operations against security threats in the sector. And just as in the 2003–2004 period, the United States had no direct contact with Muqtada al-Sadr, relying on intermediaries for any communication with him.¹²⁰ This imposed some limitations on U.S. monitoring of the situation in Sadr City, although that was partially offset by U.S. access to national leaders whose approach toward the Sadrists U.S. policy was attempting to change.

U.S. diplomats and military commanders also had daily access to Prime Minister Maliki, giving them the opportunity to judge his receptivity over time to operations against the Mahdi Army. While acknowledging the prime minister's obstruction in the past, some came away convinced Maliki had evolved in his policy toward the militants. For instance, General Odierno noted,

In the past, [Prime Minister Maliki] had not allowed Pete Chiarelli and V Corps to [go after the Shi'a extremist inside Sadr City] We showed what was happening. We showed him the damage to Sadr City . . . what [impact] it was having on security, stability. [Al Maliki] then allowed us through coordination with him to conduct a significant amount of operations.¹²¹

At an operational level, U.S. battalion commanders were pressing to rein in the Shi'a militias, irrespective of GoI support and sometimes in the face of GoI recalcitrance. Operation Seventh Veil, in which an infantry battalion from the 82nd Airborne Division attempted to expose Iraqi duplicity in providing sanctuary and abetting Shi'a sec-

¹²⁰Zalmay Khalilzad and George Casey, "Ambassador Khalilzad and General Casey Hold a News Conference," transcript, Baghdad, October 24, 2006.

¹²¹Ray Odierno, "Interview of Lieutenant General Ray Odierno, Commanding General, Multi-National Corps–Iraq, by U.S. Army Center of Military History," transcript, Baghdad, February 13, 2008.

tarians within the ISF, is one notable example.¹²² That these measures were required demonstrates the depth of the challenge in disentangling the GoI from Shi'a militias. However, roughly a year and a half after the United States began its initiative to press the GoI, Prime Minister Maliki did ultimately relent and authorized joint U.S.-Iraqi operations against Jaysh al-Mahdi in Sadr City in March 2008.¹²³ Shortly after that, the prime minister extended the operation to southern Iraq.

Open to interpretation is whether the straining of relations that occurred between Maliki's government and the Sadrist movement in 2007 and then evolved into military confrontation in 2008 was due to Maliki acceding to the U.S. demand to rein in the Mahdi Army, or if a different political calculus brought the movement and Maliki government into tension, leading Maliki to become more receptive to the U.S. demand that his government end sanctuary for militias. The distinction is important as the former would imply the United States had the influence to change the policy approach of the partner government, whereas the latter would imply that the partner government only adopted the U.S. demand when it was politically advantageous to do so.

Irrespective of the true motivation, relations between Sadr and the GoI regressed considerably throughout 2007. Several members of the Sadrist movement resigned their cabinet posts in Maliki's government, citing the prime minister's unwillingness to push for a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign forces as the reason for the move. Sadr himself left Iraq, spending most of the next four years in Iran studying to bolster his religious credentials.

On balance, this event can be characterized as a partial success in both the short and long terms. The U.S. objective, which was to get the GoI to apply the rule of law to Shi'a militias, was advanced but without full implementation. In Sadr City, the Maliki government initially

¹²²David E. Johnson, Agnes Gereben Schaefer, Brenna Allen, Raphael S. Cohen, Gian Gentile, James Hoobler, Michael Schwille, Jerry M. Sollinger, and Sean M. Zeigler, *The U.S. Army and the Battle for Baghdad: Lessons Learned—and Still to Be Learned*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-3076-A, 2019, p. 138; Robinson, 2008, p. 262.

¹²³Johnson et al., 2019, p. 138.

pressed for a reduced U.S. presence to avoid provoking a confrontation and weakening the Shi'a bloc and continued to staff operations in that area with units unwilling to equally apply the rule of law to Shi'a militias. On the other hand, Maliki ultimately decided to mount a military operation against Shi'a militias in Sadr City and the south. However, even in this case of confronting Shi'a militias with military force, Maliki's motivation was likely as much about personal consolidation of power than a genuine commitment to equal application of the rule of law.

Summary

As outlined in Table 3.5, the United States and the GoI disagreed on how to approach Shi'a militias in the lead up to the surge decision. Washington attempted to coerce the GoI into cracking down on these groups—with a particular emphasis on the Sadrists in eastern Baghdad—by conditioning the surge on a commitment from Prime Minister Maliki to rein in these actors. The United States administration then closely monitored Iraqi compliance, which was reported to the U.S. Congress at intervals. The efforts were partially rewarded in that the GoI did reduce its protection of these militias in 2007 and 2008, both by allowing greater U.S. access to Sadr City to prosecute

Table 3.5
Summary Coding of Influence Event 5:
Benchmarks for Sadrists

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned
Influence strategy	Hard conditionality
Strength of inducement or sanction	High
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	High
Short-term outcome	Partial success
Long-term outcome	Partial success

operations against Jaysh al-Mahdi and, later, by launching GoI-led operations against Shi'a militias in the south of the country. However, despite this progress, elements of the GoI continued to stymie the equal application of the rule of law to these groups; even in instances in which Baghdad appeared to comply with U.S. preferences, it was likely motivated by a quest to consolidate power rather than a genuine commitment to a more inclusive Iraq.

Influence Event 6: Enacting a Hydrocarbon Law

This influence event addresses the issue of inclusion as expressed through the distribution of oil revenues across Iraq's ethnosectarian groups. The U.S. position was to press Iraq to agree to a hydrocarbon law that would formalize the division of oil rents across regions, thus defusing one source of conflict by signaling the central government's commitment to equitable revenue-sharing. As with the previous influence event, the U.S. demand of the GoI was formalized as a benchmark, requiring regular reporting to Congress on implementation. But because there was no binding threat to withhold assistance if Iraq failed to comply, we coded this as a case of soft conditionality. The initiative was both a short- and a long-term failure, with the GoI never able to reach an agreement on this particular legislation or to settle outstanding issues in the implementation of federalism that oil revenue-sharing is connected to.

Context

Iraq is highly dependent on oil exports, which, during the period of the 2003–2011 U.S. intervention, at times accounted for more than 90 percent of Iraqi government revenues.¹²⁴ From soon after the invasion, U.S. officials focused on Baghdad's management of oil resources as a signal of the central government's commitment to create security and prosperity for all Iraqis. The Transitional Administrative Law, promulgated during the CPA period, called for the "[distribution] of the revenues resulting from their sale [i.e., the sale of hydrocarbons]

¹²⁴Christopher M. Blanchard, *Iraq: Oil and Gas Legislation, Revenue Sharing, and U.S. Policy*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, RL34064, November 3, 2009, p. 1.

through the national budget in an equitable manner proportional to the distribution of population throughout the country.”¹²⁵ After sovereignty was transferred to the Iraqis, the United States had a long-standing interest in Iraq passing a hydrocarbon law that would eliminate a potential source of conflict between Baghdad and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and provide an economic dividend to Sunni Arabs whose place in the Iraqi state was diminished by the removal of the Saddam Hussein regime.

U.S. Position and Approach

The strongest U.S. push for Iraq to formalize a resource-sharing framework was arguably during the 2006–2008 period. Passage of an oil law was one of the 18 benchmarks that the U.S. government and GoI jointly agreed to in 2006. The U.S. military was also tracking hydrocarbon legislation as an indicator of its third line of operation, that the “GoI [is] perceived as representative and legitimate, pursuing national rather than sectarian goals.”¹²⁶ Under that line of operation, the oil law was identified as one of ten indicators that Iraq was moving toward establishing the conditions for near-term stability.¹²⁷ In addition, the U.S. Congress was pressing Iraq to make headway on the issue. A draft bill (then-Senator Hillary Clinton was a cosponsor) raised the prospect that a portion of U.S. assistance would be conditioned on the Department of State’s outlining the options for Iraq to adopt an oil trust. The creation of an oil trust was the senators’ preferred mechanism for “ensuring that individual Iraqis benefit directly from hydrocarbon revenues,” which was deemed “critical to promoting reconciliation and facilitating sustainable stability in Iraq.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵See Article 25 of the Transitional Administrative Law (Coalition Provisional Authority, *Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period*, March 8, 2004).

¹²⁶Headquarters, Multi-National Corps–Iraq, “MNC-I Operations Order 07-01,” Baghdad, June 1, 2007, p. 30.

¹²⁷Headquarters, Multi-National Corps–Iraq, 2007.

¹²⁸S. 3470, Support for Iraq Oil Trust Act of 2008, 110th Cong., 2nd Sess., introduced September 11, 2008.

In addition to the benchmarks and congressional action, there was significant U.S. senior leader engagement with Iraqi counterparts to press for progress on the file. Perhaps the most notable was then–Vice President Dick Cheney’s visit to Iraq in late March on the fifth anniversary of the invasion, for which a major objective was pushing the GoI to establish a framework for sharing oil resources.¹²⁹ To that end, the Vice President took a trip to Erbil, where he met with Massoud Barzani, then President of the KRI, to discuss the issue.¹³⁰ During the Iraqi deliberations over the draft legislation put forward in 2007, U.S. officials were meeting with the political parties to steer them toward a resolution.¹³¹ It does not appear that the United States resorted to a coercive approach, but, during this period, there was consistent prodding and what might be termed soft conditionality stemming from the threat of congressional action to limit war funding (via the benchmarks) or other sources of assistance (economic support funds, via the Senate bill) if Iraq failed to enact an oil law.

Government of Iraq Position and Approach

The GoI did take up the issue during this period of heightened U.S. concern (2006–2008). Specifically, the content of the hydrocarbon law was debated by the Iraqi Council of Representatives; by the Council of Ministers, which is a critical node in enacting legislation; and by Iraqi Kurdish leaders, who had a major stake in the outcome of any legislation. But the flurry of activity did not produce an agreed way forward so much as highlighted the different interests of Iraq’s strongest political forces. The central government, with its center of gravity resting with the Shi’a bloc,¹³² had a strong interest in Baghdad controlling

¹²⁹Richard A. Oppel Jr., “Cheney, Visiting Iraq, Will Push Access for Oil Firms,” *New York Times*, March 17, 2008.

¹³⁰Tabassum Zakaria, “Cheney Says U.S. Will Complete Mission in Iraq,” Reuters, March 18, 2008.

¹³¹Raad Alkadiri, “Oil and the Question of Federalism in Iraq,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 6, November 2010, p. 1320.

¹³²Iraqi Shi’a parties were generally opposed to Kurdish efforts to retain independence in the management of natural resources in their federal region. However, Shi’a parties differed among themselves in the extent of central control they sought. The Da’wa party of Prime

key aspects of oil production and export, such as the signing of oil exploration and production contracts with international oil companies (IOCs), while the KRI preferred to retain discretion in these matters. The central government promised flexibility in the ultimate distribution of revenues but was reticent to give up levers of control before the revenues had been generated.

For its part, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) was intent on creating “facts on the ground.” Among the precedents they appeared intent on was signing oil exploration and production agreements with IOCs and avoiding concessions on Kirkuk,¹³³ an oil-rich area in territory that the KRG lays claim to as part of its federal region but that Baghdad insists is outside the KRI’s boundaries. And when the federal hydrocarbon legislation stalled, the KRG passed its own legislation in the summer of 2007, regulating oil and gas management in the KRI.

Outcome: No Resolution, Leaving a Potential Source of Future Conflict

The GoI did attempt to draft a hydrocarbon law in 2007, with multiple drafts working their way through a legislative process. However, the law consistently failed to win support in the Council of Representatives. Adding to the thorny issues of resource management and allocation of revenues are political sensitivities in which some Iraqi political factions perceive the law as an attempt by corrupt political leaders to hand over Iraq’s natural resources to Western interests. These concerns were exacerbated by a lack of transparency, in that the full text of the hydrocarbon law that the Council of Ministers approved in 2007 for vote in the Council of Representatives was not released to the public.¹³⁴

The strongest opposition to the bill in the Council of Representatives came from the Sadrists and the Iraqi National Accord headed

Minister Maliki and Ibrahim al-Ja’fari preferred strong central government control, while ISCI was more solicitous of federalism and decentralization.

¹³³ Yaniv Voller, “Kurdish Oil Politics in Iraq: Contested Sovereignty and Unilateralism,” *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Spring 2013; Alkadiri, 2010, pp. 1318–1319.

¹³⁴ “Mashru’ Qanun al-Naft wa al-Ghaz al-‘Iraqi al-Jadid [The New Iraqi Oil and Gas Bill],” *Al Jazeera*, July 12, 2007.

by Iyad Allawi,¹³⁵ the latter of which possessed significant Sunni-Arab support. One of the most contentious issues was the mechanism for reviewing the oil production and exploration agreements entered into by the KRG. Critics of the bill tended to see the mechanism written into the bill as too weak, effectively grandfathering in the Kurdish contracts.¹³⁶ On the other hand, Kurdish parties were opposed to the extent of central government control over the oil industry that the law would have established. All sides that opposed the bill could use the pretext of American occupation as a reason to defer settling the question.¹³⁷ As a result, the Council of Representatives abstained from passing the legislation, and no Iraqi government since has succeeded in enacting this legislation.

Absent a hydrocarbon law, the central government and the Iraqi Kurds have attempted to use what leverage each possesses to advance their particular interests. The main thrust of the Kurdish approach has been to reach agreements on exploration and production with IOCs, using the influence of the IOCs and the countries in which they are based to pressure the central government to accept the deals reached. As for the central government, its main source of leverage is control over the oil pipelines the Kurds need to bring oil to market and Kurdish dependency of the central government for its budget.¹³⁸ This leaves the central government two strong mechanisms—cutting off pipeline access and withholding the Kurdish share of the federal government’s budget allocations—to pressure the Kurds to acquiesce.¹³⁹ Since the failure to pass legislation in 2007, the pattern has been for each side to play its points of leverage, with the outcome swinging between short-term deals and impasses in which each side presses ahead unilaterally.

¹³⁵The Iraqi National Accord issued a release explaining its opposition to the bill.

¹³⁶“Mashru‘ Qanun al-Naft wa al-Ghaz al-‘Iraqi al-Jadid,” 2007.

¹³⁷“Jabhat Rafd Qanun al-Naft al-‘Iraqi Tatasa’ wa Tadammm al-Sadriyin [The Rejection Front of the Iraqi Oil Law Expands and Includes the Sadrists],” *Al Bayan*, July 6, 2007.

¹³⁸International Crisis Group, *Oil for Soil: Toward a Grand Bargain on Iraq and the Kurds*, Brussels, October 28, 2008.

¹³⁹Joost R. Hiltermann, “Revenge of the Kurds: Breaking Away from Baghdad,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 91, No. 6, November–December 2012.

The situation is made more combustible by the fact that the hydrocarbon legislation is intertwined with broader disputes over unsettled aspects of Iraqi federalism. The steps each side takes are often treated within a broader basket of issues that include government revenue sharing, the status of Kirkuk, and the territorial boundaries of the KRI. And the stakes are high enough that the principal actors have often escalated in a tit-for-tat manner. For example, in the late 2000s, the KRG courted Turkey as a trading partner to mitigate Baghdad's ability to use pipeline access to blunt Kurdish control over natural resources. For its part, Baghdad has locked IOCs out of bidding on production-sharing agreements in its oil fields if the IOCs had previously negotiated contracts with the KRG despite Baghdad's opposition. The result is an escalatory cycle, which has several times threatened to manifest itself in armed conflict along the "green line" separating the KRI from the rest of Iraq and at border outposts that provide the KRI access to foreign markets.

Summary

As outlined in Table 3.6, the United States used soft conditionality in an attempt to nudge the GoI to pass a hydrocarbon law that would signal the state's commitment to an equitable sharing of its natural resources. We cannot code the extent of Washington and Baghdad's interest alignment because different elements of the GoI were split on their desire to move forward with this initiative. The GoI never succeeded in passing hydrocarbon legislation, the United States has not articulated a credible threat that would compel the GoI to do so. Thus, the event is coded as both a short- and a long-term failure.

Operation Inherent Resolve, 2014–Present

In 2014, the United States was once again in the position of needing to consider a military intervention in Iraq. A group the United States believed it had previously defeated, AQI, had reemerged under a new banner and begun to accumulate significant territory both in Iraq and eastern Syria.

Table 3.6
Summary Coding of Influence Event 6:
Hydrocarbon Law

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	
Influence strategy	Soft conditionality
Strength of inducement or sanction	Low
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	High
Short-term outcome	Failure
Long-term outcome	Failure

The initial advance of ISIS in western Iraq coincided with Russia’s annexation of Crimea, likely diverting American policymakers’ attention from the crisis.¹⁴⁰ However, when ISIS overran Iraq’s second most populous city (Mosul) in April 2014, seizing American military equipment in the process, U.S. decisionmakers faced a decision to return U.S. troops to Iraq. Before making the decision, President Barack Obama’s administration took several initial steps. The first was to use U.S. airpower to support the Kurdish *peshmerga* in northern Iraq, which was deemed necessary to mitigate the threat ISIS posed to U.S. government personnel based at the U.S. consulate in Erbil (in the KRI). The second step was to deploy a USSF-led team to evaluate what remained of ISF capabilities, given that, in the preceding days, many units had deserted in response to ISIS’ assault.

However, beyond these measures, the United States did not immediately commit itself to intervene more broadly on behalf of the GoI. That decision was deferred until the U.S. government was able to use its leverage to press Iraq for a change in national political leadership (see Influence Event 7). And when the United States did ultimately broaden its intervention, it operated in a much different fashion than

¹⁴⁰Interview with former U.S. government officials, Washington D.C., November 23, 2018.

it had in the 2003–2011 war. First, Washington eschewed the use of U.S. ground forces, although it ultimately introduced surface fires (e.g., artillery) in support of Iraqi units. Second, the United States did not press the GoI to accelerate its campaign to liberate territory from ISIS' control; just the opposite, in the early phase of the campaign, Washington often advocated for a slower advance so that the conditions and campaign plan hedged against the risk of future reversals. Third, the United States opted against a heavy footprint, instead deploying several thousand U.S. forces who served primarily in an advisory capacity.

Another difference from the 2003–2011 period is that, from the start of the 2014 intervention, the United States put political inclusion at the forefront of its strategy to stabilize Iraq. This time there was no delay in reaching an understanding that Sunni-Arab buy-in was the crucial element for weakening ISIS. Indeed, the signature initiatives the United States pushed forward—removing Prime Minister Maliki and pressing for decentralization—were focused on reassuring Iraq's Sunni-Arab community. When President Obama announced the start of coalition operations against ISIS, he noted, “we cannot do for the Iraqis what they must do for themselves And that's why I've insisted that additional U.S. action depended on Iraqis forming an inclusive government.”¹⁴¹

Although the United States consistently employed the principles of inclusion and institutionalized capacity-building that this report focuses on, the United States was also pursuing other, more-parochial interests. Specifically, the United States was clearly competing with Iran for influence in Iraq and designed its intervention in ways that would bolster the U.S. position. Although Washington was genuine in adopting inclusion as a means of reducing conflict, the principle also fit well with the parallel U.S. objective of reducing Iranian influence because inclusion ran against the Shi'a majoritarianism that strengthened Iran's hand. Under the administration of President Donald Trump, in particular, the goal of using Iraq as a forward operating base to contain Iranian influence was pushed even more prominently, with

¹⁴¹ Barack Obama, “Statement by the President on ISIL,” Washington, D.C.: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, September 10, 2014b.

the President referring to Iraq as enabling the United States to better monitor Iran.¹⁴²

Influence Event 7: U.S. Conditions Military Intervention on Removal of Maliki

This influence event centers on political inclusion at a time of renewed conflict in Iraq. It treats the U.S. decision to withhold military assistance to the GoI unless the prime minister-elect was removed in favor of a more inclusive-minded alternative. The United States used hard conditionality—withholding crucial support during a security crisis—to coerce Iraqi compliance with the demand. Washington's objective was realized, with Iraqi political leaders ultimately abandoning Prime Minister Maliki in favor of a compromise candidate. Although Maliki is still a relevant political actor in Iraq, and indeed retained a post as Vice President, he was much diminished by the U.S. demand, and the impact has endured in the five years since his removal.

Context

ISIS militants captured Mosul in June 2014, adding Iraq's second most populous city to its control, which already included towns in Anbar and Salah al-Din provinces. The capture of Mosul was grisly; ISIS executed more than 1,000 ISF personnel that fleeing units had left behind. The shock of Mosul was compounded when ISIS continued its territorial expansion and perpetrated an even larger mass killing of Iraqi cadets in Tikrit later that same week.¹⁴³ In response to the growing threat, the United States increased its equipping of the Iraqi military and sent a small advisor presence to assess the threat but did not launch air strikes—with the exception being to protect American

¹⁴²Jane Arraf, "Trump Wants to Use Iraqi Base to Watch Iran. Now Iraqi Parties Want U.S. Forces Out," National Public Radio, February 15, 2019.

¹⁴³Loveday Morris and Mustafa Salim, "ISIS Dumped Bodies in a Desert Sink Hole. It May Be Years Before We Know the Full Scale of the Killings," *Washington Post*, March 2, 2017.

personnel in the KRI—or deploy ground forces to enable Iraqi military operations.¹⁴⁴

As American political and military leadership deliberated how and whether to intervene, Iraq was mired in its typical slow government formation process. Then-sitting Prime Minister Maliki's electoral coalition won a plurality of seats in the April election, and Maliki was negotiating to form a government for what would have been his third term (2006, 2010, and 2014). However, as ISIS continued to advance, many saw Maliki's sectarian impulses as a key driver of the current conflict, and a number of constituencies began to push for a more inclusive-minded alternative. Of particular importance within Iraq, Ayatollah Sistani, the country's leading Shi'a clerical authority, issued messages urging Iraqis to avoid the mistakes of the past and choose a leader of national unity.¹⁴⁵

U.S. Position and Approach

At this time, the Obama administration was reluctant to get dragged back into Iraq, and its reticence was amplified by the prospect that U.S. intervention on behalf of the GoI would be supporting the same Iraqi leaders who were unable to prevent the onset of the security crisis and played a precipitating role in it via their sectarian governance. Lest Maliki rally his supporters around foreign powers dictating Iraqi politics, U.S. officials opted to signal their opposition to Maliki by (a) referring to the principles of inclusion and need for compromise and (b) withholding any endorsement of Maliki despite the fact that his party (State of Law) won a plurality of seats in the Council of Representatives.

President Obama stressed that Iraqis had “to make accommodations to hold the country together.”¹⁴⁶ White House spokesman Jay Earnest noted that “There’s no question that not enough has been done

¹⁴⁴Kenneth Katzman, *Iraq: Politics, Governance, and Human Rights*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, RS21968, July 2, 2014.

¹⁴⁵“Hizb al-Da’wa Yukshif ‘an Risala min al-Sayyid al-Sistani Yadaw’u fiha li Taghrir Ra’is al-Wuzara [The Dawa Party Reveals a Letter from Sayyid al-Sistani That Calls for Changing the Prime Minister],” *AlMasala.com*, August 14, 2014.

¹⁴⁶Thomas L. Friedman, “Obama on the World,” *New York Times*, August 8, 2014.

by the government, including the prime minister, to govern inclusively, and that that has contributed to the situation and the crisis that we have today in Iraq.” Earnest continued with the policy implication: “[W]e will aggressively attempt to impress upon that leader the absolute necessity of rejecting sectarian governance.”¹⁴⁷ U.S. congressional leaders were more direct, with Senator Dianne Feinstein noting that Maliki “has got to go if you want any reconciliation.”¹⁴⁸ That the Iraqi leadership understood the U.S. condition for expanded military assistance to be Maliki’s removal was apparent in that Maliki’s spokesman publicly demanded it be dropped.¹⁴⁹

The U.S. position is best described as *ex ante* conditionality, in that the United States was withholding key contributions, most notably air strikes, until the Iraqis reached a political compromise that would coincide with Maliki’s exit. The policy was premised on Washington’s diagnosis that the conflict could not be sustainably addressed without a more conducive context for Sunni-Arab participation in the state. The United States held to this position despite pressure to address the security crisis before it deteriorated further. For example, while the United States was abstaining from increasing its involvement, ISIS continued to make territorial gains, such as its capture of the Baiji refinery—giving ISIS access to another large revenue source. But even as ISIS captured territory and headlines, the United States remained largely on the sidelines.

The Obama administration ultimately did increase its involvement in the conflict, launching air strikes and increasing the scope of its advisory mission when ISIS threatened the U.S. consulate in Erbil in August of the same year.¹⁵⁰ However, by that time, the negotiations to remove Maliki were nearing an end. He publicly stepped aside in favor of Abadi just one week after President Obama announced the

¹⁴⁷ Jay Solomon and Carol E. Lee, “U.S. Signals Iraq’s Maliki Should Go,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 19, 2014.

¹⁴⁸ Solomon and Lee, 2014.

¹⁴⁹ Martin Chulov and Spencer Ackerman, “Iraq’s Maliki: I Won’t Quit as Condition of U.S. Strikes Against Isis Militants,” *The Guardian*, June 19, 2014.

¹⁵⁰ See Obama, 2014a.

U.S. air campaign.¹⁵¹ In a face-saving measure, Maliki became a vice president in the new government. Thus, the United States stuck to the spirit, if not the precise letter, of its conditionality.

Government of Iraq Position and Approach

Despite U.S. pressure, Nouri Maliki and his supporters were determined to gain a third term for the incumbent. The 2014 Iraqi national elections, which were held months after ISIS' offensive in al-Anbar province but before the group took Mosul, confirmed significant support for the embattled prime minister. Indeed, Maliki's State of Law coalition was the leading vote getter, with no single competitor winning even half as many seats as his party. However, given the significant deterioration of the security situation, some Iraqi political leaders began to argue for a national unity government that would transcend the divisive politics of Maliki. The sitting prime minister flatly rejected these calls in a May 2014 address, arguing that the principles of democracy and Iraq's constitution both argued that the coalition with majority support should lead the government.¹⁵² As demands for change persisted, Maliki became more aggressive in his denunciations, referring to the initiative to form a national unity government "an attempt by rebels against the constitution to end Iraq's democratic experience" and a "coup against the constitution."¹⁵³

However, Maliki's position eroded significantly when two leading members of the Shi'a bloc—the Sadrists and ISCI—announced that they had definitively split with Maliki and would not support him to lead the next government.¹⁵⁴ Because the Shi'a bloc had won a majority of seats in the Council of Representatives, these defections from rival

¹⁵¹ Maliki's announcement can be viewed here. It is notable that not once does he mention the U.S. policy of conditionality. Rather he uses the announcement to present his contributions over his nine years as prime minister, at the top of which was ending U.S. military presence in Iraq in 2011.

¹⁵² Nouri al-Maliki, weekly address, May 7, 2014.

¹⁵³ Nouri al-Maliki, address, June 25, 2014.

¹⁵⁴ "Al-'Iraq: al-It'ilaf al-Shi'i Yahasim Mawqifihi bi Sha'n Badil lil Maliki [Iraq: The Shia Coalition Settles Its Position Regarding the Alternative to Maliki]," Erem News, July 30, 2014.

Shi'a parties were the most important factor in denying Maliki the third term he was seeking.

Outcome: Conditionality Succeeded in Generating Leverage

In the end, the U.S. condition was met; Maliki stepped aside in favor of a compromise candidate, Abadi, who shared Maliki's sect (Shi'a) and party affiliation (al-Da'wa Party) but was seen as more committed to inclusive governance. The United States was able to generate sufficient leverage to realize its demand for several reasons.

First, U.S. leverage was amplified by the fact that other actors with their own leverage supported similar steps. The U.S. position broadly coincided with the positions of Najaf (i.e., Ayatollah Sistani) and Iran, the other two actors with, arguably, the most influence on Shi'a politics in Iraq. For the U.S. condition to be met, the broader Shi'a bloc needed to pressure Maliki to step aside, so support from Iran and Najaf was crucial. Potential veto players to U.S. conditionality, such as the Sadrists and ISCI, also tacitly accepted the U.S. demand. This may be explained by political opportunism in that they saw a path to fill the vacuum left by Maliki, who was increasingly personalistic in his rule. In the run-up to his removal, Maliki's coup-proofing strategies had diminished the state's military effectiveness while simultaneously insulating him from challengers.¹⁵⁵

Second, the United States was credible in threatening to withhold the military support Iraq needed. This credibility was greatly enhanced by the fact that the United States withdrew from Iraq only three years previously; that the Obama administration had a well-known view of the 2003–2011 intervention as a policy mistake to be avoided; and that, even as ISIS took additional territory and appeared to pose a threat to the capital, the administration waited for its demand to be met. Of course, the United States has an interest in regional stability and defeating terrorist threats. Moreover, Washington has significant reputational considerations in Iraq, given the effort expended to stabilize the country in the 2000s. But Iraqis could not safely bet that

¹⁵⁵ Former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad noted Maliki's preoccupation with the threat of a coup. See Sarah Childress, "Zalmay Khalilzad: Maliki and the 'Unmaking of Iraq,'" *Frontline*, July 29, 2014.

their political survival was so important they could ignore Washington's requests and still expect Washington to intervene on their behalf.

Third, the scope of the insurgent threat in Iraq incentivized compliance. In the summer of 2014, the GoI had effectively lost its sovereignty in that it could not control large swaths of its territory. This territory included mixed ethnic areas and strategic infrastructure that could not be dismissed as Sunni-Arab hinterland. And just as the 2005–2006 insurgency reached Baghdad, it was possible that ISIS might infiltrate the capital a decade later. Iraqi leaders were also the subject of domestic criticism over the collapse of ISF.¹⁵⁶ Iraqi leaders thus faced a decision: retain their independence from outside pressure or risk losing further control of the state to the insurgency or to other aspiring leaders who promised better results.

Fourth, the United States brought critical capabilities that no other actor could satisfy. Iran could help with manpower, as it eventually did by mobilizing Shi'a militias and providing Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps embeds to advise and improve militia effectiveness. But Iran could not generate the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) or strike sorties necessary to prosecute a sustained air campaign against ISIS. Moreover, the United States had recent experience operating at scale in the country, giving it an experience advantage over other capable militaries (Russia, North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] partners) that theoretically could have carried out the required operations.

Fifth, given U.S. reluctance to reenter Iraq, Iraqi leaders could reasonably have confidence that acceding to the U.S. condition would not be a slippery slope leading to repeated U.S. intervention in Iraqi affairs. This confidence was further enhanced by the fact that the United States was entering the conflict in a limited capacity that did not include ground forces.

One of the advantages of the U.S. demand was the straightforward nature of monitoring Iraqi compliance. Once Maliki stepped

¹⁵⁶Munqith Dagher, "Iraqi Public Opinion on the Rise, Fall, and Future of ISIS," discussion with the Burke Chair in Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., October 30, 2017.

down, the main monitoring requirement was to ensure that Maliki was not operating as a shadow prime minister who was effectively managing Abadi from behind the scenes. During the transition to Abadi, the United States had rightful concerns about Maliki's ambitions, and the concerns continue to this day. But it became clear early on that Maliki was more of a political competitor than an advisor to Abadi, and the United States was generally satisfied with the quality of the latter's leadership, albeit granting him wide latitude because managing difficult wing politics within the broader Shi'a bloc was a challenge.

However, Abadi's accountability was lessened by the somewhat ambiguous nature of what qualified as inclusive governing. When asked what metrics the United States should track, then-Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter commented:

I would begin by noting the words used by Prime Minister Abadi when he was here. I think he used the word "decentralized Iraq." . . . [A] government in Baghdad that allows the different parties there a degree of self-determination to maintain security within their own territory and to govern themselves, [and to] share in things like the oil wealth of the country.¹⁵⁷

As for the duration of the effect, the U.S. condition held for the entire four-year parliamentary cycle. Maliki remains a relevant political actor in Iraq, but his standing is quite diminished. In the 2018 elections, his State of Law party won 25 seats, a steep decline from the 97 claimed in 2014. Moreover, one of the strongest rallying cries in the election was "neither Maliki or Abadi." This was emblematic of a strong anti-incumbent sentiment among the Iraqi electorate, with perceived corruption appearing to drive voter antipathy toward traditional political leaders.

This episode is an important counterpoint to pessimists who suggest the United States lacks the leverage to change partner positions. As the narrative goes, the United States did not achieve its desired

¹⁵⁷ Ashton Carter, "Secretary of Defense Testimony: Statement on Counter-ISIL Before the Senate Armed Services Committee," Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, July 7, 2015.

result without significant outside help. The U.S. position on the issue coincided with the Iranian position and that of the most influential member of the Iraqi Shi'a clerical establishment. But the U.S. role, when combined with the complementary efforts of these other actors, proved decisive in denying Maliki a third term. Moreover, the United States achieved this result on, arguably, the most important political matter for a sovereignty-sensitive Baghdad. Thus, the episode demonstrates that, under the right conditions, the United States can not only achieve its desired result but do so even on matters of the highest importance to the local partner.

Summary

As outlined in Table 3.7, the United States conditioned military support to Iraq on the replacement of Maliki as Iraq's prime minister. This was a case of misaligned interests at the outset, in that Maliki was the incumbent seeking a third term and had won a plurality of the seats in the preceding elections. However, after Iraq formed a government headed by Abadi, the GoI and Washington moved into a phase of interest alignment. To incentivize Iraqi political factions to move on from Maliki, the United States was prepared to withhold crucial air support necessary to stem the advance of ISIS. The United States exercise of leverage was a success in both the short and the long terms because it led to the ouster of Maliki, and this success endured through a second election cycle (i.e., 2018).

Influence Event 8: U.S. Encourages GoI to Build a National Guard for Sunni-Arabs

This influence event addresses U.S. efforts to press the GoI to stand up a Sunni-Arab force that would be representative of the local communities under ISIS' control. Reminiscent of the Sons of Iraq program (see Influence Event 3), the initiative was about applying the principle of inclusion to the ISF. To advance its position, the United States government relied on persuasion and the inducement of offering to provide equipment to these forces. That approach failed, with the GoI tolerating Sunni-Arab participation in the liberation of ISIS-controlled cities but opting not to formalize their status as a national guard. The GoI's

Table 3.7
Summary Coding of Influence Event 7:
Maliki Ouster

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned, then aligned
Influence strategy	Hard conditionality
Strength of inducement or sanction	High
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	High
Short-term outcome	Success
Long-term outcome	Success

general thrust was in the opposite direction: to rely on PMUs, which, while varying in ethnosectarian composition, are better understood as a tool of the Shi‘a majority. In this instance, U.S. leverage strategies failed in both the short and long terms.

Context

As the United States ramped up its involvement to counter ISIS in 2014, U.S. policymakers recognized the need to better integrate Sunni-Arab forces into the counterinsurgency effort. By this time the Sons of Iraq had ceased to exist as a program, and once again the insurgency was thriving in provinces—Anbar, Salah Ad-Din, Ninewa—where Sunni-Arabs predominate. When Prime Minister Abadi assumed leadership and articulated decentralization as a mechanism for power sharing under his administration, Washington sought to link that reform to the creation of a national guard force. As a concept, the national guard had been considered; indeed, some steps had been taken to establish such a force prior to 2014. But Washington increased the priority of the effort with the ISIS advance in 2014.

The U.S. enthusiasm for the national guard was part of a strategy to limit ISIS’ recruitment pool by co-opting Sunni leaders, who would

be offered support (i.e., training and equipment) to mobilize Sunni rank and file to fight against, rather than with, ISIS. In addition, the concept was to develop hold forces that could consolidate territorial gains against ISIS without provoking sectarian backlash. Thus, Washington saw a largely Sunni-Arab national guard as an attractive model to hedge against reversals in which a local community would be “liberated” from ISIS, only to turn against the hold force because of the perception of sectarian discrimination.

U.S. Position and Approach

During the 2006–2009 period, the United States possessed a large military footprint in Iraq and directly engaged in train-and-equip programs with irregular forces. During the 2014–present intervention, however, the United States has committed to channel its assistance to nonfederal forces (e.g., Kurdish *peshmerga*, Sunni-Arab tribal elements) through the central government in Baghdad. The objective was to strengthen Iraqi unity and avoid undermining Baghdad at a time when its sovereignty was already weakened by the loss of territory to ISIS. In 2015, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Martin Dempsey noted, “It’s our policy to do that [i.e., engage and arm Sunni tribes] through the central government, not directly, because our policy is a unified Iraq.”¹⁵⁸

Although the United States pledged to work through Baghdad in its advise-and-assist mission, it did press Prime Minister Abadi to translate his vision of decentralization into the security sector. In announcing an expansion of the U.S. mission in Iraq in September 2014, President Obama noted, “We’ll also support Iraq’s efforts to stand up National Guard Units to help Sunni communities secure their own freedom from ISIL’s control.”¹⁵⁹ Specifically, Washington requested that Abadi establish a National Guard that would be made

¹⁵⁸ See Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Martin Dempsey’s testimony (Martin C. Dempsey, “U.S. Strategy Against ISIS,” testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, video, July 7, 2015, minute 45).

¹⁵⁹ See Obama, 2014b.

up of local security forces in front-line provinces.¹⁶⁰ It was further suggested that those forces participate in the operations to liberate ISIS-held territory, and then serve as the primary hold force thereafter. In testimony to the Senate in July 2014, then–Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iraq Brett McGurk stated five principles that drove U.S. strategy. The first two were that “local citizens must be in the lead in securing local areas” and that “local citizens defending their communities must be provided state benefits and resources (modeled along the lines of a National Guard type force structure).”¹⁶¹ These principles were part of an overall approach the United States characterized as “functioning federalism.”

Government of Iraq Position and Approach

In the first several months after Prime Minister Abadi took office, the U.S.-backed national guard proposal appeared to be a priority of the country’s new premier. Not only did Abadi endorse the proposal, but the early contours of the initiative were for national guard units to be controlled at the provincial level while being paid by Baghdad,¹⁶² which would amount to a significant step toward the decentralization Washington was seeking and that Abadi used as his primary talking point to describe his planned reform. However, as early as October 2014, the national guard initiative was stalling. Not only were Shi’a lawmakers lining up against the proposal, but so were Kurdish leaders and elements of the Sunni-Arab community. And the prime minister’s office itself began to temper expectations. An advisor to Abadi noted, “The idea of the national guard is far away from being implemented because of the current security situation. It is a time bomb if it gets misused.”¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰Frederic Wehrey and Ariel I. Ahram, “The National Guard in Iraq: A Risky Strategy to Combat the Islamic State,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace website, September 23, 2014.

¹⁶¹McGurk’s written statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, July 24, 2014 (as recorded in McGurk, 2015).

¹⁶²Kareem Fahim, Azam Ahmed, and Kirk Semple, “Sunnis in Iraq Often See Their Government as the Bigger Threat,” *New York Times*, September 10, 2014.

¹⁶³Tamer El-Ghobashy, “U.S.-Backed Plan for Iraqi National Guard Falts” *Wall Street Journal*, October 16, 2014.

Outcome: Iraqi Foot-Dragging

The GoI was unable to establish a legal basis for the introduction of a national guard.¹⁶⁴ Whereas the Shi'a-majority PMUs were stood up almost immediately after ISIS's 2014 offensive, including the creation of a government commission to oversee their affairs,¹⁶⁵ the national guard languished in proposal form. Sunni-Arab factions in the Council of Representatives drafted legislation in 2015 that would have paved the way for the creation of the force, but prominent Shi'a factions within parliament had reservations with the bill. Two of the more controversial aspects of the proposal were that the national guard forces would report to provincial governors and that members of the guard could only be drawn from the residents of that particular province.¹⁶⁶ Abbas al-Kha'zi, a representative in the Council of Representatives from Maliki's State of Law party, warned that the bill would "reinforce sectarianism, create governments inside the Federal government, and create armed forces outside the organized army."¹⁶⁷ Proponents of the bill attempted to co-opt non-Sunni-Arab constituencies by stipulating the force would be of mixed ethnosectarian composition in provinces with Shi'a Arab Turkoman and Kurdish populations, going as far as to establish demographic weights of the prospective force for Baghdad and Kirkuk provinces.¹⁶⁸ However, the proviso failed to win over opponents.

With some in the U.S. Congress growing impatient, an early version of the fiscal year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act set aside a portion of the Iraq train-and-equip fund to provide for the

¹⁶⁴El-Ghobashy, 2014.

¹⁶⁵Renad Mansour and Faleh A. Jaber, "The Popular Mobilization Forces and Iraq's Future," Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 28, 2017, p. 6.

¹⁶⁶Al-Furat Center, "Qira'a Siyasia Qanunia fi Nass Mashru' Qanun al-Haras al-Watani fi al-Iraq [A Political-Legal Reading of the Text of the National Guard in Iraq Draft Bill]," December 6, 2015.

¹⁶⁷"Qanun al-Haras al-Watani [The National Guard Law]," National Iraqi News Agency, September 7, 2015.

¹⁶⁸Al-Furat Center, 2015.

direct arming of Sunni-Arab forces and the Kurdish *peshmerga*.¹⁶⁹ The proposal inflamed Iraqi Shi'a factions, particularly those with a strongly nationalist bent. Muqtada al-Sadr's "Peace Brigades" marched in Kufa, with a leader in the Sadrist movement threatening that "if the American Congress insists on the decision to divide Iraq, at that time we will use all military and non-military force to reject the project."¹⁷⁰ Even among Shi'a leaders generally supportive of American assistance, the proposal was seen as an affront to Iraqi sovereignty. Prime Minister Abadi issued a statement clarifying,

We assure everyone that engagement with the Iraqi government has and continues to be clear in respecting Iraqi sovereignty. . . . Any arming will not occur except via the Iraqi government according to the military plans it puts in place. . . . We reject the proposed legislation from the Foreign Relations committee of the American Congress; it would lead to more divisions in the region and we call not to move forward with it.¹⁷¹

The U.S. approach to the unfavorable reaction of the GoI was twofold. Within Iraq, emissaries, including then-Ambassador Stuart Jones, underscored that the U.S. desire to train and equip local security forces was not intended to undermine a unified Iraq but rather to ensure broad participation in stabilizing the country.¹⁷² In Washington,

¹⁶⁹Jim Zanotti, Carla E. Humud, Christopher M. Blanchard, and Rhoda Margesson, *Kurds in Iraq and Syria: U.S. Partners Against the Islamic State*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, R44513, December 28, 2016.

¹⁷⁰"Saraya al-Salam Tasta'rad fi Wasit wa al-Najaf wa Tuhadid bi Istihadaf Masalih Washington fi al-'Iraq [The Peace Brigades Parade in Wasit and Najaf and Threaten to Target Washington's Interests in Iraq]," *AlMada Press*, May 3, 2015.

¹⁷¹"Mashru' Qanun Lajnat al-'Alaqa al-Kharijiya al-Amirikiya Marfud wa Yu'adi ila Mazid min al-Inqisamat fi al-Mintaqa wa Nada'wu ila 'Adm al-Mada bihi [We Reject the Draft Bill of the American Foreign Relations Committee; It Would Lead to More Divisions in the Region and We Call Not to Move Forward with It]," *al-Forat News*, April 29, 2015.

¹⁷²"Washington: al-Huras al-Watani Su'amaq Wahdat al-'Iraq wa Kibar al-Qada al-'Iraqiyun Multazimun bi Islah al-Amn [Washington: The National Guard Will Strengthen Iraqi Unity and Iraq's Top Leadership Is Committed to Security Reform]," *al-Sumaria News*, September 6, 2015.

U.S. officials shifted talking points to focus on a phased approach to the initiative, framing train-and-equip efforts with local security forces outside the rubric of the national guard as an initial step to standing up the new force. In a special briefing to the press, an anonymous senior Department of State official characterized the process this way:

The tribal mobilization, which is kind of the bridge to the national guard, is designed to collect the—what will be the foundation of a national guard. So the Iraqis have already allocated resources, and there's a list of weapons that are approved for about 8,000 of the tribal fighters in Anbar, which will be ultimately the national guard. But that will take some time to get in place.¹⁷³

With the Council of Representatives unable to move forward on the legislation, Sunni-Arab irregulars ultimately turned to the PMUs as a vehicle to formalize their status and receive state support. Sunni-Arab forces branded themselves the Tribal Mobilization [*al-hashd al-asha'iri*] to receive government salaries and equipment. When Prime Minister Abadi passed executive order 91 in 2016, which further cemented the PMU's status, the largest holdouts among Sunni-Arab forces operating independently—tribal forces in Ninewa organized by Athil al-Nujayfi—turned to the PMU to be eligible for state support.¹⁷⁴ This effectively ended remaining hope that a national guard would be established as a construct for local security.

Summary

As outlined in Table 3.8, the U.S. preference for establishing a national guard in Iraq was misaligned with the GoI's interests. The United States attempted to compensate for this by offering inducements—weapons and training—to stand up a Sunni-Arab force that Washington judged would be best positioned to retake ISIS-held territory without alienating the local population. The offer was insuf-

¹⁷³ U.S. Department of State, "Background Briefing on Iraq," Washington, D.C.: Office of the Spokesperson, May 20, 2015.

¹⁷⁴ Mansour and Jaber, 2017.

Table 3.8
Summary Coding of Influence Event 8:
National Guard

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned
Influence strategy	Inducements, persuasion
Strength of inducement or sanction	Low
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	High
Short-term outcome	Failure
Long-term outcome	Failure

ficient to change the position of the GoI, whose main power centers worked against this proposal and ultimately defeated it.

Influence Event 9: U.S. Withholds Close Air Support to Popular Mobilization Units

This influence event focuses on the initial U.S. efforts to marginalize the PMUs’ role in the liberation of ISIS-held territory. The issue area was inclusion in that Washington preferred that more representative security forces would serve as the liberation and hold forces in these largely Sunni-Arab areas. To advance its position, Washington threatened to withhold CAS to PMUs but ultimately softened this policy based on a revised understanding of the PMUs and deference to the reality that the PMUs were a primary source of manpower for the GoI. This attempt at leverage was a short-term partial success in that the GoI did make some changes in its military operations, reducing the PMUs’ role relative to the Iraqi Army and CTS, to be eligible for American air support. The long-term outcome is not applicable in this case because the U.S. policy was really designed around a relatively short period—roughly three years—in which ISIS territory was liberated. However, it

is worth noting that the PMUs emerged from their role in the military campaign to defeat ISIS as emboldened and important political actors.

Context

While the United States military was pressuring ISIS through air strikes and establishing an advise-and-assist mission in the first year of the campaign, the GoI and Iran were engaged in their own parallel initiatives to address the threat ISIS posed. Because Iraq's formal military fared poorly in the early stages of the ISIS assault on northern and western Iraq, there was a need to generate new forces with a stronger commitment to the counterinsurgency campaign. The Popular Mobilization [*al-hashd al-sha'bi*], a volunteer force made up of more than 100,000 fighters parsed out into dozens of units, was the main initiative to fill that gap. The phenomenon began with a call to arms from Ayatollah Sistani, to which both established militias and new recruits responded. Some these PMUs were supported by Iran, which had experience working through irregular forces and viewed these militias as potential conduits of their interests.¹⁷⁵ As for the GoI, it attempted to harness the PMUs but has struggled to bring these units fully under its writ.

U.S. Position and Approach

At the start of the campaign to liberate territory from ISIS's control, which began in earnest in 2015, Washington took the position that the liberation of a community should be done in a manner that mitigated against the risk of reversals. The idea was that the conditions for the community's liberation should be ripe, that the method of liberation should increase the confidence of the community in its security and future in Iraq, and that stabilization should flow to these areas to reduce the risk ISIS would reemerge. A particular point of emphasis for the United States was that the local community should not see the liberation force as a Shi'a sectarian militia. With that as background, the

¹⁷⁵ Hamdi Malik, "The Future of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace website, September 21, 2017.

United States adopted the policy of withholding CAS to PMUs seen as Shi'a sectarian or beholden to Iran.¹⁷⁶

The Special Envoy for the Counter-ISIS campaign explained the intent of the policy:

We think most of these popular mobilization forces [PMF; the term is used interchangeably with PMU] do operate under the control of the Iraqi state, but about 15 to 20 percent of them actually do not and those groups are a fundamental problem.

The number one thing we do is make sure they stay out of Sunni-populated areas

We have a principle when we support Iraqi forces in the military campaign, we will only support forces operating strictly under Iraqi command and control. That means going from the ground up an Iraqi chain of command into a joint operations center where we are working with Iraqi commanders. If there is a unit not operating under that structure, it does not get any support from us.¹⁷⁷

The U.S. approach can thus be described as hard, or *ex ante*, conditionality in that only operations in which ISF units were in the lead were granted CAS.

Government of Iraq Position and Approach

The Abadi government was often unwilling or unable to assert command over PMUs, leaving the PMUs in de facto command of operations to liberate territory from ISIS' control. For example, one of the first cities Iraqi forces liberated from ISIS was Tikrit, a Sunni-Arab area in Salah Ad-Din province that was Saddam Hussein's birthplace.

¹⁷⁶The PMUs include Shi'a-dominant groups and Sunni-Arab, Turkoman, and Christian groups. Even among Shi'a-dominant PMUs, the strength of ties to Iran and espousal of a sectarian agenda varies across groups.

¹⁷⁷Brett McGurk, "Statement of Brett McGurk, Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, U.S. Department of State," in *Global Efforts to Defeat ISIS*, hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 114th Cong., 2nd Sess., June 28, 2016, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2018, p. 17.

Shi'a PMUs, including fighters from the Badr Brigade and 'Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq, were the principal forces in the operation, with PMUs estimated as making up to two-thirds of the total force.¹⁷⁸ As American planners feared, these militias and the local tribal forces with which they allied are believed to have perpetrated abuses in Tikrit, including looting, mass detentions, and extrajudicial killings.¹⁷⁹ U.S. officials noted that Iraq did not ask for U.S. support at the start of the Tikrit offensive, and no air support was provided, given the leading role of the PMUs and absence of an Iraqi request.¹⁸⁰

Several weeks into the operation, Prime Minister Abadi called for a pause in the offensive to put into place a chain of command reporting through formal ISFs.¹⁸¹ This measure was sufficient to gain U.S. CAS, although observers noted the predominant role the PMUs played in the liberation of the city.¹⁸² Tikrit exemplifies a larger pattern in which the GoI asserted its nominal control over military operations but appeared dependent on the PMUs for manpower, with PMU units at times appearing to exercise operational control.

Outcome: Slippage Over Time

The PMUs were at the heart of U.S. efforts to disentangle its counter-ISIS campaign from Iranian-supported efforts. There were both policy and legal reasons to do so. From a policy standpoint, the early U.S. understanding of the PMUs as Shi'a sectarian militias supported by a foreign power highlighted the risk that the PMUs' participation in the

¹⁷⁸Caleb Weiss, "Iranian General at the Forefront of the Tikrit Offensive," *Threat Matrix* blog, March 5, 2015.

¹⁷⁹Erica Gaston and András Derzsi-Horváth, "Iraq After ISIL: Sub-State Actors, Local Forces, and the Micro-Politics of Control," *Global Public Policy Institute*, March 21, 2018, pp. 45–47.

¹⁸⁰Julian Barnes, "U.S. Steers Clear of Tikrit, Cites Iran Role in Support of Iraqis," *Wall Street Journal*, March 2, 2015.

¹⁸¹"Al-Hashd al-Sha'bi fi al-'Iraq: Basij 'Iraqi Tajawwaz Fatawa al-Jihad al-Kifa'i [The Popular Mobilization in Iraq: An Iraqi Basij Passes the Fatwas of Jihad as a Collective Obligation]," *al-Hayat*, April 4, 2015; Ned Parker, "Special Report: After Iraqi Forces Take Tikrit, a Wave of Looting and Lynching," Reuters, April 3, 2015.

¹⁸²Gaston and Derzsi-Horváth, 2018; Parker, 2015.

campaign would be counterproductive, leading to a further sectarianization of the conflict. Moreover, the perception that these units are beholden to an Iranian agenda raised the possibility that U.S. support or legitimization of this actor would strengthen Tehran's hand at the expense of Washington's. The legal consideration is that one of the units that is part of the PMUs, Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH), is a designated foreign terrorist organization, and the leader of a second, 'Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq, is a specially designated global terrorist. These designations stem from violence they perpetrated against U.S. forces during an earlier phase of the insurgency. This makes any material support to KH strictly prohibited under U.S. law. And the issue has arisen based on reports that U.S. equipment—including armor—has been diverted to KH.¹⁸³ If the GoI did so knowingly, this would amount to end-use violations.

A strongly negative view of the PMUs prevailed in Washington in 2014 and 2015 and was reflected in the U.S. approach toward these militias during this time frame. The liberation of Ramadi was the most visible early test of U.S. policy, with Washington urging the Abadi government to sideline PMUs in favor of working through CTS, a multiethnic and cross-sectarian unit seen as a model for the development of Iraq's security sector.¹⁸⁴ That the United States was willing to endure delays to proceed with its preferred strategy was evident when the United States pressed the Iraqis to hold off on attempting to liberate Ramadi until a plan could be developed for the stabilization phase of the operation, thus hedging against future reversals.¹⁸⁵

But as OIR wore on, the U.S. disposition toward the PMUs evolved. This evolution was reflected in such statements as those of Special Envoy McGurk, quoted earlier, which sought to differentiate between two basic types of PMUs—those that deferred to ISF command, and were thus eligible for indirect U.S. assistance, and those

¹⁸³Caleb Weiss, "Iraqi Shia Militias Show US-Made Equipment on Road to Samarra," *Threat Matrix* blog, March 4, 2016.

¹⁸⁴Paul McLeary, "Winning Hearts and Minds in Ramadi," *Foreign Policy*, December 28, 2015.

¹⁸⁵See Dempsey, 2015, minute 1:19.

that operated independent of the state, and therefore represented a challenge to the U.S. vision of a unified Iraq committed to the rule of law—and which could not be beneficiaries of American support. Indeed, over time, the United States began to appreciate PMUs playing a secondary role of augmenting the ISF's manpower. Michael Knights described this evolution in thinking as a new formula, noting that

Iraq's security forces and the coalition have learned that the PMF are pretty good at clearing and occupying the rural zones around contested cities and preventing ISIL reinforcements from arriving, which is a necessary part of any effort to liberate a city. The Iraqi government has learned that excluding the PMF entirely, as in Ramadi, can cause resentment.¹⁸⁶

Beyond the PMUs' military contribution, their strong domestic position, including high approval ratings among Iraq's Shi'a majority, may also have played a factor in convincing the United States to adopt a more neutral position toward some of the PMUs.¹⁸⁷

The Abadi government also charted a path for normalization of the PMUs and tied the U.S. priority of Sunni-Arab engagement back to the PMUs as a vehicle for incorporation of local security forces, making it much harder for the United States to isolate these militia forces. In November 2016, the Iraq parliament passed a law that amounted to recognition of the PMUs as an independent security force (i.e., not embedded within an existing service) that reported to the commander of the Iraqi armed forces. The bill also laid out the GoI's considerable obligations toward the PMUs, including the provision of material support and providing for PMU members injured or killed in combat.¹⁸⁸ Since then, the GoI has included the PMUs in the budgetary process, allocating U.S. \$1.63 billion to the government commission representing the units in 2018. In December 2015, Prime Minister

¹⁸⁶Michael Knights, "A New Formula in the Battle for Fallujah," Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute, May 25, 2016.

¹⁸⁷Fanar Haddad, "Understanding Iraq's Hashd al-Sha'bi: State and Power in Post-2014 Iraq," New York: Century Foundation, March 5, 2018.

¹⁸⁸The full Arabic text of the bill is available online.

Abadi approved the addition of 40,000 Sunni fighters to the PMUs, undermining Washington's initial framing that the PMU's were a sectarian instrument.

As a result, by the end of the campaign to seize ISIS-controlled territory, the United States characterization of its support began to evolve. The first change was acknowledgment of the difficulty of drawing sharp distinctions between different Iraqi forces. For example, in 2017 the Deputy Commander of Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) for OIR conceded that,

[b]y 'support' I mean if you conduct an airstrike or a ground artillery fires in support of the federal police, and the PMF are operating on that same axis, they are going to get incremental support from it. Because without it, the Iraqi police can't advance, nor can the PMF. . . . It's always impossible to make a complete distinction in a congested battle space.¹⁸⁹

The second was to highlight that strikes to support the PMUs were indeed allowed if the PMUs were embedded in an Iraqi military led chain of command. This was the intent of an CJTF-OIR spokesman's clarification in the days ahead of the Mosul liberation operation:

We have conducted strikes all over Iraq and we continue to target the enemy anywhere that they can be found In many cases the Popular Mobilization Forces are partnered with the Iraqi security forces, the army and the police, and in these incidents we can provide support directly to those forces and all of these strikes help with advance.¹⁹⁰

Given the American presence in provincial-level operations centers (e.g., Anbar Operations Center, Ninewa Operations Center) and control of ISR assets in country, it was straightforward for the United

¹⁸⁹Maj. Gen. Rupert Jones, as quoted in Barbara Opall-Rome, "Commander: US-Led Assault in Iraq 'Incidentally' Benefits Iran-Backed Militias," *Defense News*, August 25, 2017.

¹⁹⁰John Dorrian, as quoted in "US-Led Coalition Can Give Air Support to Shiite Hashd Forces in Iraq," Rudaw, August 12, 2016. The Rudaw website includes the complete video of the CJTF-OIR spokesman's statement and answers to reporters' questions.

States to monitor the presence of PMUs in the battlespace. Connectivity in the operations rooms also provided the United States a means to discuss roles and responsibilities in a given operation with their Iraqi counterparts. The only potential ambiguities in monitoring were any side agreements the Iraqi military forces may have made with the PMUs privately in advance of the operations, which were not communicated to the U.S. military. But even in such instances, major actions (such as the laydown of forces on the battlefield) would be observable in real time.

The bigger challenge from the U.S. perspective was whether U.S. policy decisions on the provision of CAS reinforced the broader objective—genuine subordination of the PMUs to the GoI—or led to short-term work-arounds without addressing the risk that militias, some with a distinctly sectarian orientation and influenced by Iran, would undermine the development of professional security forces capable of securing Iraq, including Sunni-Arab areas that could be inflamed by the presence of such actors. On that metric, the U.S. approach appears to have had less effect than policymakers in Washington would have hoped.

On the positive side, the GoI took measures to incorporate PMUs into legal structures, and Washington's pressure—most tangibly in the withholding of CAS—likely helped incentivize this measure. Equally important, the Abadi government took measures to include Sunni-Arab contingents, most notably forces loyal to the Nujafis (Athil and Usama, the governor of Ninewa and Vice President of Iraq, respectively) into the PMUs. That helped dilute the sectarian composition of the force and signaled acceptance of Sunni-Arab participation in local security arrangements.

On the negative side, little headway was made on the genuine subordination of the PMUs to formal structures. A government commission manages the affairs of these units and operates as a pressure point on the GoI to provide them resources. And one of Abadi's priorities—to prevent these forces from developing a political wing—failed to keep PMU leaders from developing a bloc (Fatah) that placed second in the 2018 elections. In reaction, outgoing Prime Minister Abadi attempted to take measures to limit the PMUs' role in politics, most notably by

removing Falih al-Fayadh, a prominent PMU leader, as head of the PMU Commission and as national security advisor in August 2018.¹⁹¹ However, Abadi’s decision was overruled by Iraqi courts, with Fayadh retaining both posts (i.e., head of the PMU commission and national security advisor).

Summary

As outlined in Table 3.9, the interests of the United States and the GoI in the PMUs receiving CAS were misaligned. Washington preferred that the PMUs be relegated to a supporting role, while the GoI saw the PMUs as a reliable and motivated assault force for liberating ISIS-held territory. Washington’s approach was to restrict air support to only Iraqi government-led offensives, creating an incentive for the GoI to reduce the PMUs’ role in the military campaign. Although U.S. officials often referred to the “congested battlespace” to rationalize PMUs benefitting indirectly from U.S. air cover, American ISR was sufficient for the United States to determine whether Iraq was complying with U.S. conditions. The clarity of what Washington was asking was diluted because its position evolved over time, beginning with a blan-

Table 3.9
Summary Coding of Influence Event 9:
Close Air Support to Popular Mobilization Units

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned
Influence strategy	Hard conditionality
Strength of inducement or sanction	High
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	Low
Short-term outcome	Partial success
Long-term outcome	N/A

¹⁹¹ The full Arabic text of Abadi’s order is online.

ket exclusion of PMUs before evolving into a more nuanced position of distinguishing between different types of PMUs. The short-term outcome was a partial success in that the GoI did adjust its campaign planning in several instances to put formal security services in the lead, although the PMUs continued to play a major role in operations. The long-term outcome cannot be judged because this policy was designed around four years of military operations.

Conclusion

Chapter Five contains a detailed analysis of the nine influence events addressed in this chapter and the nine influence events addressed in Chapter Four, on Afghanistan. It is worth briefly highlighting some broad conclusions from the Iraq case, however. First, the United States was able to successfully exercise leverage in Iraq. In the most extreme case, the United States was able to use its leverage to remove a sitting head of government. This represents an important corrective to those who suggest the United States can never move the local partner's position.

Second, despite some inconsistencies and some arguably disastrous exceptions (e.g., de-Ba'athification), in the early years of the intervention, the U.S. government did attempt to press for inclusion and institutionalized capacity-building in Iraq. From 2005 onward, Washington attempted to use principles associated with conflict reduction and reduced risk of conflict recurrence. In the short term this had a salutary effect, in that security greatly improved after the United States adopted this approach, although other factors (e.g., increased force levels) likely contributed to the improvement. In addition to the short-term reduction of violence, this approach led to positive institutional development (e.g., creation of CTS) that could be used to address renewed conflict, after Maliki's authoritarianism eroded gains made in the first intervention.

Third, although U.S. intervention in Iraq cannot be considered a strategic success, given the enormous cost in dollars and human lives, it is important to assess the role of leverage independent of the initial

decision to invade Iraq. American officials' efforts to nudge their Iraqi partners were not adequate to prevent a return to violence in 2014. On the other hand, many of the events discussed in this chapter provided the essential foundations on which the response to ISIS was built. Although Iraq can hardly be considered a success story, without a number of the U.S. efforts discussed here, it might well have experienced even more intense or longer-lasting violence.

Afghanistan: U.S. Efforts at Influence in Operation Enduring Freedom–Afghanistan and Operation Freedom’s Sentinel

This chapter chronologically analyzes nine influence events spanning the first days following the fall of the Taliban through the presidential elections of 2014. Each case reflects a unique set of motivations, circumstances, and objectives. As with many efforts in post-Taliban Afghanistan, the results have been decidedly mixed. Considered in sum, however, these events reveal a number of useful lessons for U.S. policymakers to consider for future engagements with partner nations recovering from conflict.

Background

The early years of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan demonstrated little appetite on the part of the Bush administration to prioritize either inclusive politics or institutional development. For the initial years of the conflict, Washington’s priority was short-term stability, which led to a series of political compromises that would affect future efforts to advocate for inclusive politics and pursue institutional development. As Giustozzi argued,

[d]uring the first three to four years of the post-Taliban era the development of bureaucratised and institutionalised security ser-

vices proceeded very slowly, a fact that prevented the central state from sufficiently increasing its leverage on regional players.¹

The low-footprint U.S. military mission focused exclusively on targeting the remnants of al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters. Even Washington's endorsement of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2002, which initially had no U.S. forces, was reluctant and conditioned on its confinement to protecting Kabul and years away from its eventual NATO affiliation.²

After Hamid Karzai was named head of the interim Afghan government following the Bonn Conference in late 2001, neither he nor senior U.S. officials prioritized the development of capable, transparent governance. As George Packer noted, "Bush and his defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, had no interest in the long, difficult work of building Afghan institutions and training an Afghan army."³ As Giustozzi argued, "Karzai and his tribal allies were not so much interested in institution-building as in the centralisation of patronage."⁴ The potential damage from these policy choices was not completely lost on Washington. In May 2002, Senator Joseph Biden warned, "America has replaced the Taliban with warlords. . . . Not only is the U.S. failing to rein in warlords, we are actually making them the centerpiece of our strategy."⁵

From a political standpoint, the early policy decisions of senior Bush administration officials would have a profound impact on establishing a functional governing structure in Kabul. In particular, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and other senior Pentagon officials played

¹ Antonio Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords of Afghanistan*, New York: Hurst, 2009, p. 90.

² Theo Farrell, *Unwinnable: Britain's War in Afghanistan, 2001–2014*, London: Vintage, 2017, p. 92.

³ George Packer, *Our Man: Richard Holbrooke and the End of the American Century*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019, p. 441.

⁴ Giustozzi, 2009, p. 96.

⁵ As quoted in Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*, London: Penguin Books, 2008, p. 134.

roles in explicitly consenting to what Ahmed Rashid referred to as a “warlord strategy” until late 2003.⁶ Rumsfeld left little doubt that the tension between the state and the warlords was by design:

How ought security to evolve in that country depends on really two things; one is what the interim government decides they think ought to happen, [the other is] what the warlord forces in the country decide they think ought to happen, and the interaction between those two.⁷

As will be seen, while the United States intervened on behalf of the burgeoning Afghan government to prevent these emboldened warlords from posing a security threat to the country, it oftentimes came at the cost of their restoration to political power.

The Bush administration’s envoy to the Bonn Conference, Ambassador James Dobbins, has described senior U.S. officials’ general lack of focus on Afghanistan. From January through April 2002, he wrote, no senior officials inquired about the status of efforts in Afghanistan. While Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, and her deputy Stephen Hadley were available to meet on request, “there was no prodding to get things moving or to show results.”⁸ From the inauguration of Karzai in December 2001 through Dobbins’s departure in April 2002, there were only two meetings of the National Security Council focused on Afghanistan. The first one rejected a proposal to expand the ISAF mission beyond Kabul and the second ignored Iranian offers to provide assistance in building the Afghan army.⁹

Khalilzad, a naturalized U.S. citizen who was raised in Kabul, served as a senior Department of State adviser on Afghanistan during the Reagan administration and would later serve as the Bush adminis-

⁶ Rashid, 2008, p. 133.

⁷ As quoted in Rashid, 2008, pp. 134–135.

⁸ James F. Dobbins, *Foreign Service: Five Decades on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2017, p. 259.

⁹ Dobbins, 2017, p. 259.

tration's special envoy for and ambassador to Afghanistan. He is credited with playing an influential role in pressing the White House to move away from policies that were inherently contradictory in favor of those that supported a stronger and more inclusive central government. Reflecting on his time as U.S. ambassador in Kabul and Baghdad, Khalilzad argued that, "[i]n postconflict countries, it is essential to ensure all groups and factions are represented in governmental institutions from the outset."¹⁰ Khalilzad and his U.S. military counterpart, LTG David Barno, pressed hard on their respective Afghan colleagues in 2004 and 2005 to help ensure that all ethnicities were represented in the new government and developing security forces. It should be noted, however, that, aside from a handful of early individual reintegrees among more senior leadership, it would be years before the United States would consent to even conceptualizing a political role for the Taliban.

A rather abrupt increase in violence beginning in 2006 took Afghan officials and the international community by surprise. According to Ali Jalali, "The situation had an adverse impact on the development of legitimate state institutions, as the government and its international backers tended to favor shortsighted, quick fixes such as poorly trained militias and to work around, not through, the new democratic institution."¹¹ By the end of President Bush's second term in 2008, it was clear that the insurgency was gaining momentum and that new options needed to be considered. Over the next year, there would be four assessments of United States policy and missions in Afghanistan, one under the Bush administration and three under the incoming Obama administration. The culmination of this was a speech President Obama gave at West Point in December 2009 announcing an increase of 30,000 U.S. forces in Afghanistan. No longer would the Afghan theater be the "economy of force" effort dwarfed by the concurrent conflict in Iraq.

¹⁰ Zalmay Khalilzad, "Lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 21, No. 3, July 2010, p. 45.

¹¹ Ali Ahmad Jalali, *A Military History of Afghanistan: From the Great Game to the Global War on Terror*, Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2017, p. 509.

Along with the increased military investment, Obama's objectives explicitly included improvements in Afghan governance:

We must deny al Qaeda a safe haven. We must reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government. And we must strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and government, so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan's future.¹²

The 2010–2014 period both increased U.S. combat power in Afghanistan considerably and heightened expectations for the development of a governing structure that would be capable of enduring after coalition forces departed.

More resources and increased focus, however, brought with them greater complexity. After years of deprioritizing the development of effective institutions, U.S. officials quickly found the task of fostering good governance beset not only by local cultural hurdles but also by years of its own contradictory practices. Reflecting on disputes between principals at a September 2010 National Security Council meeting, Steve Coll pointed out,

American policy remained laced with contradictions The C.I.A. put warlords and Karzai aides on its payroll for information, security, and stability. Simultaneously, Petraeus's command, Justice prosecutors, and Treasury investigators tried to put some of the same men in jail.¹³

In such an environment, explicit guidance from Washington could be difficult to articulate. Thus, senior officials in theater represented overlapping interests but competing priorities. This sometimes resulted in mixed messaging when multiple departmental equities were involved.

¹² Barack Obama, "Transcript of Obama Speech on Afghanistan," CNN, December 2, 2009.

¹³ Steve Coll, *Directorate S: The C.I.A. and America's Secret Wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, New York: Penguin Press, 2018, p. 496.

In many respects, the combination of the time already invested and the influx of resources and attention beginning in 2010 ultimately had an inverse effect for U.S. leverage in Afghanistan. After nearly a decade pursuing an ambiguous strategy with shifting priorities, Afghan officials became adept at accommodating numerous rotations of U.S. and allied counterparts while pursuing their own interests. Moreover, Afghans correctly sensed that, as time in country grew longer and as costs grew higher for the Americans, following through with sanctions would become more difficult. In effect, wittingly or not, the United States had slowly built equity in this new Afghan experiment and, after 2010, it was obvious to all that backing out would at the very least incur great political costs. This did not completely prevent U.S. officials from using conditionality, although doing so would increasingly require consistent messaging and a unified voice.

Throughout this time, America's Afghan partners in fostering a new political order have worked through their own disparities in vision. The overthrow of the repressive Taliban government created a great opportunity for a coterie of reform-minded technocrats, many of whom had been forced to live abroad. They, however, had to compete with a collection of influential warlords revitalized by their cooperation with U.S. forces. After some initial clashes, these two classes largely merged into a symbiotic, if tenuous, equilibrium that has resulted in an imperfect blend of progressive liberalism and traditional patronage. At certain points during this evolution, the United States has attempted to use its leverage to guide the direction of this process, with varying degrees of success.

Influence Event 1: The Bonn Conference, 2001

This influence event examines the Bonn Conference, a gathering of disparate Afghan constituencies that would form the new Afghan government in the wake of the Taliban's collapse. The United States and its international allies considered this critical step in revamping Afghanistan's political system to be vital to achieving lasting stability. Moreover, with its forces still engaging remnants of Taliban forces

and a general understanding that it would be the lynchpin of securing vital international aid, the United States wielded considerable leverage over all Afghan participants. As the most influential attendee from the broader international community, the United States had, on occasion, had to intervene to help break through stalemates and prevent the dissolution of the conference without resolution. With all sides aligned, at least on the principle that a generally inclusive government needed to be formed, persuasion was the first option for the U.S. delegation and generally sufficed. In at least a couple of instances, however, U.S. leadership reverted to soft conditionality to prevent influential actors from dominating key resolutions. By the end of the conference all sides had agreed to a comprehensive way forward that included the appointment of an interim leader, a blueprint for the drafting of a constitution, and a path to presidential and parliamentary elections. Years later, however, issues and interests omitted from the proceedings would limit the sustainability of these foundational decisions.

Context

With Taliban forces dispersing under pressure from the U.S.-led military offensive, the international community in late November 2001 turned its sights toward the establishment of a new government in hopes of bringing political stability to a land that had suffered over 20 years of persistent conflict. In late November and early December, the UN hosted a conference in Bonn, Germany, with its Special Representative for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, leading the proceedings. Four designated groups of Afghans were invited to attend. The most influential of these, the Rome group, which was loyal to exiled king Mohammed Zahir Shah, and the Northern Alliance each had 11 representatives. The Peshawar Group, represented by mostly Pash-tun exiles in Pakistan, and the Cypress group, consisting of exiles tied to Iran, each had five delegates. Pakistan lobbied for the inclusion of moderate members of the Taliban, but no other participants supported this. Rounding out the attendees were representatives from 18 foreign nations.¹⁴

¹⁴ Jalali, 2017, p. 487.

In the weeks prior to Bonn, Northern Alliance forces, with the assistance of U.S. special operations forces (SOF) and airpower, had pushed the Taliban out of many of its strongholds and had reached the outskirts of Kabul. Fearing a repeat of the reprisals that had characterized the bloody civil war of the 1990s, Washington and the UN requested and received assurances from Northern Alliance leaders that they would refrain from entering the city until a new interim government had been established. In mid-November, however, the Taliban abruptly vacated the capital. Going against their agreement, elements of the Northern Alliance occupied Kabul on November 13, citing a need to bring order.¹⁵ This would provide the Northern Alliance contingent with demonstrable leverage over the other Bonn attendees because no other group had the wherewithal to attempt to change the situation.

U.S. Position and Approach

Senior leaders in Washington made clear that they wanted the proceedings in Bonn to result in an interim government and a subsequent path for formalizing a new political order. Secretary of State Powell believed time was of the essence and issued curt guidance, “We need to get this [a governance agreement/architecture in Afghanistan] done—speed, speed, speed.”¹⁶ At a sticking point in the negotiations, a proposal by an Afghan group to delay the proceedings for a couple of weeks and transition them to Kabul, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage reiterated Powell’s directive that they continue on until a new government was fully agreed on.¹⁷

The two key U.S. players in Bonn were Ambassador Dobbins, the recently appointed Special Envoy for Afghanistan, and Khalilzad, then serving on the National Security Council staff. Dobbins confirmed that his guidance was minimal:

¹⁵ “Northern Alliance Takes Kabul,” *The Guardian*, November 13, 2001.

¹⁶ Mark Fields and Ramsha Ahmed, *A Review of the 2001 Bonn Conference and Application to the Road Ahead in Afghanistan*, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies, Strategic Perspective 8, November 1, 2011, p. 9.

¹⁷ Dobbins, 2017, p. 248.

I had no written instructions My job was to get an agreement, and almost any agreement would do so long as it resulted in an Afghan government that could replace the Taliban, unite the opposition, secure international support, cooperate in hunting down Al Qaeda remnants, and relieve the United States of the need to occupy and run the country.¹⁸

He went on to clarify that no official in Washington suggested that Karzai be the candidate of choice, although he acknowledged a general understanding that Pashtuns made up the single largest ethnic group in the country.

At the outset of the conference, Dobbins instructed the U.S. delegation to maintain a low profile, to engage representatives from other delegations, and to avoid congregating together.¹⁹ The hope was that the Afghans present would be able to agree to the terms for an interim government largely independently; take ownership of it; and, in so doing, demonstrate UN leadership without the impression of American overbearance. Early signs were positive; the four groups approved a transitional framework quickly and with minimal tension. Yet, as the conference wore on and resolving some of the details proved contentious, it became clear that Dobbins and Khalilzad would have to increasingly take on a leading role, engaging both the Afghan representatives and the other national delegations to keep the conference from failing.

Dobbins and Khalilzad relied largely on direct engagement with representatives from the four groups, in particular the more influential Rome and Northern Alliance contingents, appealing to their interests and their stated willingness to participate in a heterogeneous government. Khalilzad's Afghan upbringing and previous work as a senior regional adviser in the Reagan administration granted him increased access to key Afghan players and the ability to communicate with them in their native tongue. Thus, when necessary he was able to avoid

¹⁸ Dobbins, 2017, p. 246.

¹⁹ Zalmay Khalilzad, *The Envoy: From Kabul to the White House, My Journey Through a Turbulent World*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016, p. 122.

delays or miscommunication of the U.S. position by directly contacting influential Afghan actors, a few of whom were not among the limited attendees at the Bonn Conference, via telephone. Finally, on one occasion, Dobbins leveraged his position to influence events via more public means when more discrete discussions proved insufficient.

Afghan Position and Approach

In the early weeks and months following the dissolution of the Taliban government, the renewed attention on Afghanistan from the international community and the associated promise this brought for assistance to help rebuild the country were palpable. While a handful of influential rivals to the Taliban had become accustomed to receiving support from regional benefactors, the breadth and scale of potential aid from the international community dwarfed all this. Thus, even the Northern Alliance was wary of overplaying its leverage in Kabul and suffering the blame for any delay or reduction in the aid everyone knew was crucial to rebuilding the Afghan state. As Ali Jalali, who would serve as Minister of Interior under the new government, argued, “[t]he pledges of international aid were seen as the indispensable incentive for the factions to unite in an all-inclusive government.”²⁰

Despite shared motivation to form an inclusive government, Dobbins and/or Khalilzad had to intervene in Bonn in a number of instances to ensure the talks were proceeding. On two occasions when the Rome Group was instigating delays in the process, Khalilzad telephoned exiled king Zahir Shah, now elderly and still in Rome, to break the impasse. The first time, he gained Shah’s acceptance of a compromise Dobbins had proposed in which, rather than Shah serving as the interim head of state, his group would nominate the leader to be approved by the other three groups.²¹ A more serious potential setback occurred after the Rome Group nominated Abdul Sattar Sirat, a divisive figure even within his own delegation, instead of the more widely accepted Hamid Karzai, an affiliate of the group who did not attend Bonn but addressed the delegation via satellite phone from Afghani-

²⁰ Jalali, 2017, p. 485.

²¹ Khalilzad, 2016, p. 122.

stan. In this case, Khalilzad decided to press harder on the Rome Group, accusing them of reneging on their earlier agreement to nominate someone the others would approve of and explicitly threatening that Washington would blame them if the conference failed to reach a resolution. Khalilzad followed this with another call to Shah, who agreed to make calls to his followers. Finally, the Rome Group reconvened and presented Karzai as its candidate.²²

With Karzai's place as the interim head of government secured, the next hurdle was forming an interim cabinet. Northern Alliance leader and former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani, monitoring developments from the recently reoccupied Presidential Palace in Kabul, instructed the head of the Northern Alliance Group, Younus Qanooni, to withhold the group's list of candidates. Rabbani deemed that an inconclusive conference would benefit the Northern Alliance because it currently held Kabul and because its members were sitting in many of the ministries. In this instance, Dobbins and Khalilzad decided to circumvent Rabbani altogether and, instead, reach out to other influential figures within the organization. In calls to Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostum and Tajik warlord Ismail Khan, Khalilzad voiced sympathy that their respective constituencies were underrepresented in Bonn before reasoning that their influence would be greater if they played a positive role in the political transition. In speaking with Khan, Khalilzad stated that he would not be able to rely on American support if he did not cooperate.²³ Dobbins engaged Abdullah Abdullah and Mohammed Fahim. Despite this, Rabbani refused to relent.

Dobbins sent a note back to Washington with Qanooni's proposal that the proceedings be adjourned for a couple of weeks to allow him to go back to Kabul to deliberate with Rabbani and other leadership before resuming, this time in Kabul, where the Northern Alliance had an imposing advantage as the only faction with forces in the city. This resulted in the aforementioned response from Armitage conveying Powell's directive that the proceedings continue until a new

²² Khalilzad, 2016, p. 125.

²³ Khalilzad, 2016, p. 125.

government was fully agreed on. Dobbins reports that Qanooni, the reluctant messenger in this case, was visibly relieved when he reported Powell's reaction. Dobbins provided reinforcing support when he used his only on-the-record press conference in Bonn to maintain that, if the Bonn Conference failed, there should be no doubt that Rabbani served as the primary obstacle.²⁴

Soon thereafter, on December 5, the Iranian delegation at Bonn urged Khalilzad to reach out to Rabbani directly. Khalilzad states that he was surprised by this because, although he and Dobbins had communicated well with the Iranians in Bonn, the Iranians had, on occasion, intervened on behalf of the Northern Alliance when they felt the United States was pressing them too hard. Adopting a "less conciliatory tone," Khalilzad informed Rabbani that his stance was unacceptable, and Washington would refuse to provide billions in reconstruction aid unless he resigned. When Rabbani asked, "Would you really do that?" Khalilzad responded, "You can count on it." Rabbani promised a decision shortly. The next day, at what Khalilzad called "a stroke of luck," a U.S. plane accidentally fired a rocket near Rabbani's compound. Although this was unintentional, Rabbani concluded that the United States was sending him a message.²⁵ Finally, Russia, a longtime supporter of the Northern Alliance, informed Rabbani that it, too, would relinquish all assistance to his movement unless he submitted his list of cabinet candidates. It was then that he relented.

Now, with the lists submitted, the Northern Alliance still refused to finalize an agreement unless it was guaranteed three-quarters of all ministries, including the influential interior, defense, and foreign affairs ministries. Instructed to hold firm, delegation leader Qanooni resisted compromise. As Dobbins wrote, "the resultant government would hardly be broadly based if the Northern Alliance, which represented maybe 30 or 40 percent of the population" held such sway.²⁶ At this, Dobbins convened a meeting with Lakhdar Brahimi and the top diplomats from India, Russia, Iran, and Germany. Over two hours,

²⁴ Jalali, 2017, p. 487.

²⁵ Khalilzad, 2016, p. 126.

²⁶ Dobbins, 2017, p. 249.

each tried to explain to Qanooni that satisfying his demands would establish a government that “was not sufficiently broad-based, representative, and inclusive.”²⁷ Finally, at 4:00 a.m., Iranian diplomat Javad Zarif pulled Qanooni aside and whispered something to him. At this Qanooni exclaimed, “OK, I give up!” and agreed to relent on two of the ministries and allow the creation of three additional ones. Only hours before the end of the conference on December 6, a deal had been struck, and the UN Security Council approved Resolution 1383, formally endorsing the provisional arrangements surrounding Afghanistan’s interim governance.²⁸

Outcome: Short-Term Gains, Long-Term Questions

The Bonn Agreement not only established a much-needed interim government in Afghanistan but also put forth a plan that eventually led to the drafting of a new Afghan constitution and elections that would formalize Karzai’s presidency and form a parliament. For what it was intended to produce, Bonn was a success at addressing the most immediate questions required to put a government in place. Bonn did not, however, lay the groundwork for the institutions required to sustain it. Jalali has argued that, “[i]n the coming years, the roadmap chartered in Bonn achieved its political procedural benchmarks but not the institutional capacity to sustain the reform and progress toward a democratic system.”²⁹

The U.S. delegation sought to permit the Afghans enough latitude to come to an agreement yet had guidance from Washington to ensure that a comprehensive deal was reached and, thus, interceded when the sides refused to compromise or when the proceedings jeopardized inclusivity. As the Powell directive demonstrates, senior leadership in Washington were very clear about their expectations, broad as

²⁷ Khalilzad, 2016, p. 126.

²⁸ United Nations, “Security Council Endorses Afghanistan Agreement on Interim Arrangements Signed Yesterday in Bonn, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1383 (2001),” press release, December 6, 2001; UN Security Council Resolution 1383, “The Situation in Afghanistan,” December 6, 2001.

²⁹ Jalali, 2017, p. 502.

they were. Persuasion was the preferred method, but when that failed, hard conditionality was used to achieve the necessary breakthrough. Additionally, a few decisions made by or with the support of the United States, either tarnished its reputation among some at the time, justifiably or not, or were later recognized as detrimental to fostering long-term political stability.

For some Afghan participants at Bonn, having Karzai as the only nonattendee to address the conference, and that with a satellite phone that the American troops protecting him had provided, appeared intrusive. This suggested to these participants that the United States and perhaps the UN were placing their thumbs on the scale. “It went over terribly with the Afghans,” the UN’s Francesc Vendrell recalled, “It was quite obvious the international community had a plan.”³⁰ The Rome Group later expressed some dismay at having its initial candidate Sirat effectively vetoed from contention by the international contingent. As Rome Group member Mohammed Amin Farhang argued, “That was the beginning of Americans intervening in Afghanistan’s domestic affairs.”³¹ Such ill will may not have been warranted as Dobbins received support for Karzai not only from Iranian and Pakistani officials but also from Northern Alliance member Abdullah Abdullah, and the other groups at Bonn would not have agreed to Sirat. This episode did, however, establish the United States as the lead outside player in Afghanistan, meaning that it would be held to high expectations.

At this stage of Afghan government formation, the United States enjoyed considerable leverage because the risks associated with stymieing the process were high and could benefit an internal rival. The Afghans collectively understood that American and international aid would be crucial for the future of their country. Whatever outside funding some groups had come to rely on paled in comparison and would likely not be guaranteed now that the Taliban was out of power. In this early stage, no one wanted to be the reason for international support falling through. Thus, even the most obstinate and ostensibly

³⁰ As quoted in Joshua Partlow, *A Kingdom of Their Own: The Family Karzai and the Afghan Disaster*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016, p. 50.

³¹ As quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 52.

influential actors were forced to relent. The signing of the UN resolution made the way forward clear for all stakeholders.

In terms of longer-term political stability, Bonn is now often remembered for who was excluded more than who participated. Reflecting on the process later, Brahimi regretted not including representatives of the Taliban among the participants. Omitting them, he felt,

was our original sin. If we had had time and spoken to some of them and asked them to come, because they still represented something, maybe they would have come to Bonn. Even if none came, at least we would have tried.³²

As described in an ensuing influence event, at this stage of the conflict, the Taliban was in retreat, and its leaders were harboring modest aims for even the most optimistic outcome for them and their movement. As the insurgency would strengthen in later years, the question of whether it would have been wiser to explore Taliban participation at Bonn grew in prominence.

Summary

As outlined in Table 4.1, the United States and the Afghan participants at Bonn were aligned in their understanding that the new Afghanistan government needed to include the non-Taliban constituencies it would represent. There were disparities, however, in the influence of the Afghan delegations; in some cases, U.S. leadership exerted its robust leverage to help maintain equity. In each case, U.S. intent was evident and the eventual assent clearly observable. With all sides aware of the importance of continued development aid from Washington, the strength of the inducement was particularly pronounced, and the use of leverage helped facilitate agreement on the formation of a nascent government. While these milestones were crucial to addressing foundational bureaucratic requirements, the failure to guarantee long-term institutionalization and incorporate all facets of Afghan society led to future problems.

³² As quoted in Jack Fairweather, *The Good War: Why We Couldn't Win the War or the Peace in Afghanistan*, New York: Basic Books, 2014, p. 28.

Table 4.1
Summary Coding of Influence Event 1:
Bonn Conference, 2001

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Aligned
Influence strategy	Persuasion, <i>then</i> soft conditionality
Strength of inducement or sanction	High
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	High
Short-term outcome	Success
Long-term outcome	Partial success

Influence Event 2: The Abrogation of Early Cease-Fire Agreements Between Karzai and Taliban Leadership, 2001

This influence event addresses the U.S. role in stemming early Taliban inquiries for a cease-fire and potential conditional surrender to the new Afghan government. Untrusting of Taliban leadership and loathe to stem its military pressure on the group, particularly with Osama bin Laden still at large, Washington made it clear to the newly appointed President Karzai that proceeding with peace overtures would place continued U.S. involvement at serious risk. In only a matter of weeks, the force brought to bear on the Taliban by the U.S. intervention would pivot its senior leadership from a position of defiance to one of acquiescence. Soon, emissaries of Taliban leader Mullah Omar would approach the newly appointed leader of the interim Afghan government to negotiate a cease-fire, one that he was inclined to accept. The United States, however, was wary of quick political agreements and threatened to stop working with the Afghan government if it continued negotiations. Still lacking access to central funding or a security

force, Hamid Karzai had little choice but to comply with U.S. leadership, which was supplying both. While the observability of this outcome is clouded by counterfactual conditions, this failure to entertain negotiations with an adversary that considered itself defeated continues to be the subject of great reflection.

Context

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States mounted a swift military response that relied on a light footprint, dominant airpower, and coordination with anti-Taliban militias. In a matter of weeks, the Taliban had been pushed back to heavily Pash-tun parts of the south and east of the country that served as the base for both the movement's creation and ever-dwindling support structures. With the remnants of the organization expressing reluctance to continue the fight against an adversary with overwhelming firepower, time had come for Taliban leader Mullah Omar to consider alternative options. At this point, the Taliban movement was at its nadir, with top spokesman Mullah Zaeef conceding to journalists that the movement was finished as a political force, adding "I think we should go home."³³ In early December, a delegation of former senior Taliban officials was sent to deliver a message to and discuss terms of surrender with Hamid Karzai, who had recently been named head of Afghanistan's interim government.

U.S. Position and Approach

With the military operation against the Taliban government and al-Qa'ida terrorists underway, senior U.S. leadership was scrambling somewhat to articulate a clear, unified stance on its position vis-à-vis the Taliban and any potential role it could play in future Afghan governance. In mid-October, Secretary of State Powell met with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in Islamabad and, at Musharraf's insistence, agreed that moderate Taliban officials should be permitted to serve in a more inclusive post-Taliban Afghan government. Powell jus-

³³ Brian Knowlton, "Rumsfeld Rejects Plan to Allow Mullah Omar 'to Live in Dignity': Taliban Fighters Agree to Surrender Kandahar," *New York Times*, December 7, 2001.

tified this by stating that “[y]ou can’t ethnically cleanse Afghanistan after this is over, but you can certainly get rid of this particular regime that has driven this country into such devastation.”³⁴

U.S. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, another leading voice in articulating U.S. policy in Afghanistan, adopted a more hard-line stance, although his exact position was somewhat difficult to pin down. In early December, when asked about the potential surrender of senior Taliban leadership in exchange for their safe return home, Rumsfeld directly threatened the continuation of U.S. support if peace was further pursued, stating that “our cooperating and assistance with those people would clearly take a turn south” if they let key Taliban or al-Qa’ida leaders escape justice.³⁵

Later in the same press conference, however, Rumsfeld went on to reflect the Bush administration’s conflicted perspectives between finding an expedient end to the conflict and enforcing justice on those who perpetrated the 9/11 attacks: “I do not think there will be a negotiated end to the situation that’s unacceptable to the United States.”³⁶ In other remarks made over these fateful days, Rumsfeld also insinuated that the United States was not planning for an immediate exit, dubbing the war effort a “complicated, long, difficult, messy, dirty job.”³⁷ “Reporters at the Pentagon repeatedly expressed confusion over where Mr. Rumsfeld was leaving the official U.S. stance, or what the response would be if Mullah Omar were allowed to remain free,” according to the *New York Times*.³⁸

Much of this initial refusal to entertain peace entreaties with the Taliban is attributed to a failure to differentiate between the actors involved. It is commonly believed that the Bush administration conflated the Taliban with al-Qa’ida, lumping the two groups together as

³⁴ “Powell, Musharraf Discuss Future of Afghanistan,” *USA Today*, October 16, 2001.

³⁵ As quoted in Knowlton, 2001.

³⁶ As quoted in Michael R. Gordon, with Norimitsu Onishi, “A Nation Challenged: Talks Continuing,” *New York Times*, December 7, 2001.

³⁷ As quoted in “Surrender,” *The Economist*, December 7, 2001.

³⁸ Knowlton, 2001.

high-priority terrorist networks.³⁹ Also associated with this is a lack of understanding of the more-localized conflict resolution measures typically adopted in the Afghan context. By negotiating a peace plan with the Taliban in late 2001, Karzai was acting in accordance with the Pashtunwali custom of *nanawatai*, offering sanctuary or reconciliation to defeated enemies.⁴⁰

Afghan Position and Approach

In early December 2001, in a secret meeting of senior Taliban leadership following a decisive setback in the battle of Tarin Kowt, Mullah Omar unsuccessfully prodded his counterparts to take to the hills to launch an insurgency. None were interested in continuing a fruitless fight. As one senior Taliban military commander stated: “Time was up. Fate laughs at even the best schemes.”⁴¹

Left with few other options, Omar drafted a letter to Karzai that acknowledged his recent appointment to lead the interim Afghan government and granted permission to senior Taliban officials to surrender. Omar’s delegation was led by Taliban’s defense minister, Mullah Obaidullah, and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a key military adviser who hailed from Karzai’s own Popalzai tribe.⁴² Aside from pledging to retire from political life, the Taliban members also agreed to surrender their arms.⁴³ Karzai reportedly initially agreed to the arrangement, which also included Mullah Omar’s public renouncement of terrorism.⁴⁴

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, however, immediately objected to aspects of the arrangement, specifically any outcome that

³⁹ Arturo Muñoz, “A Long Overdue Adaptation to the Afghan Environment,” in Brian Michael Jenkins and John P. Godges, eds., *The Long Shadow of 9/11: America’s Response to Terrorism*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1107-RC, 2011, p. 29.

⁴⁰ Muñoz, 2011, p. 29.

⁴¹ Anand Gopal, *No Good Men Among the Living: America, the Taliban, and the War Through Afghan Eyes*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014, p. 47.

⁴² Fairweather, 2014, p. 37.

⁴³ Gopal, 2014, p. 47.

⁴⁴ Knowlton, 2001.

would permit Omar to remain in Kandahar to “live in dignity.”⁴⁵ White House spokesman Ari Fleischer echoed this sentiment, stating that Omar remained “a combatant against the United States and other nations.”⁴⁶

According to one source with access to former Taliban commanders, Mullah Omar initially reached out to Karzai through tribal intermediaries as early as mid-November, when the latter was still in Pakistan. Wanting to discuss terms of a surrender, Omar reportedly hinted that he sought some face-saving abdication of power that resulted in an honorable immunity. A U.S. Special Forces officer traveling with Karzai sent this request through the CIA and up to Rumsfeld, who relayed that the United States would accept nothing less than an unconditional surrender.⁴⁷

Perhaps with the previous U.S. responses in mind, Karzai’s public statements surrounding the details of a potential Taliban surrender differed somewhat. For instance, in one interview, Karzai reported that “I have offered amnesty to common Taliban. Omar must distance himself from terrorism, from the presence of foreign terrorists in Afghanistan, he must condemn terrorism. If he doesn’t do that, he will not be safe.”⁴⁸ In a follow-on discussion with Reuters, he began by clarifying that, “[f]or the higher-ranking Taliban, if there is a case against them they must face trial.”⁴⁹ Referring to Mullah Omar, Karzai continued, “He has not made even a statement of regretting what he has done. If he is found, he must face trial.”⁵⁰

Outcome: Potential Missed Opportunity

Ultimately, Karzai had little choice but to abide by the clear signals he was receiving from Washington and back down from initial reports

⁴⁵ Knowlton, 2001.

⁴⁶ As quoted in Knowlton, 2001.

⁴⁷ Gopal, 2014, p. 47.

⁴⁸ As quoted in Knowlton, 2001.

⁴⁹ As quoted in Gordon and Onishi, 2001.

⁵⁰ As quoted in Gordon and Onishi, 2001.

that he had agreed to grant amnesty to senior Taliban officials. He had been designated as the head of the interim government by those participating in Bonn only two days earlier, had yet to even arrive in Kabul, and did not have direct command over any forces. Despite the fact that the insurgency was at its low point and behaving akin to a defeated adversary, Karzai was now fully dependent on U.S. intelligence and military personnel for his safety and well-being. Thus, it is no surprise that, while deliberating on whether to engage Mullah Omar's representatives, Karzai confided in a USSF officer, "Rumsfeld expects unconditional surrender and so does the Northern Alliance. I might be able to calm the Northern Alliance, but I can't risk alienating the United States by negotiating with the Taliban."⁵¹

Domestic political considerations still played a role, however. According to details of the tacit agreement with the Taliban, the hypothetical surrender would be managed by Mullah Naqibullah, a Kandahari strongman with long ties to senior Taliban members but who, in more recent years, had had a falling out with the group. Gul Agha Shirzai, another local strongman who was instrumental in removing Taliban forces from Kandahar, rejected this outright. Referring to Naqibullah, a Shirzai spokesman stated that he was no different from the Taliban because he provided them open support, money, and arms: "We consider him a member of the Taliban movement."⁵² It is also highly likely that members of the Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance, who came out of Bonn with the lion's share of influence in the interim government and who had suffered at the hands of the Taliban since the onset of civil war in the early 1990s, would have been highly reluctant to endorse a clean surrender without some prodding. Consequently, the United States would have had difficulty remaining neutral on this issue and would likely have had to use its leverage to prod non-Pashtun constituencies to be more pragmatic in this case.

As time wore on, however, Washington continued to serve as a bulwark to peace talks and left Karzai with limited options in this area. Despite Rumsfeld's statement about Washington being amenable to an

⁵¹ As quoted in Fairweather, 2014, p. 36.

⁵² As quoted in Gordon and Onishi, 2001.

agreement negotiated among Afghans, the United States interceded in a handful of other attempts by senior Taliban officials to engage the nascent Afghan government. In February 2002, former Taliban foreign minister Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil offered to return to Afghanistan to serve as an intermediary between the two sides. Instead, he was detained and subsequently sent to Guantanamo by U.S. authorities.⁵³ Likewise, it was around this time that Ibrahim Haqqani, the younger brother of influential Zadran tribe leader Jalaluddin Haqqani, traveled to Kabul to discuss the prospects of peace with the Afghan government, only to be captured by U.S. forces and sent to Bagram Air Base, where he was reportedly tortured.⁵⁴

At the more tactical level, the U.S. rejection of the Taliban's willingness to negotiate a surrender may have sent a message to rivals that scores could be settled through violence. Jalali maintained that "[t]he situation encouraged certain U.S.-backed militias to attack the former Taliban leaders, who had returned to their homes, forcing them to go underground and then flee to safe areas" across the border in Pakistan.⁵⁵ Thus, as years progressed and the insurgency was rekindled, Pakistan played host to both disenfranchised leaders and foot soldiers.

It can also be argued that Powell's early agreement with Musharraf to permit moderate Taliban officials to participate in Afghan governance served as a disservice to Washington's interests on two levels. Rumsfeld's pressure on Karzai to back away from a cease-fire with the Taliban meant that the United States was not legitimately going to seek a political solution in the near term while Pakistan was provided top cover to continue its practice of granting the Taliban sanctuary and offering other forms of support that played a crucial role in the eventual regeneration of the Afghan insurgency.⁵⁶

⁵³ James Dobbins and Carter Malkasian, "Time to Negotiate in Afghanistan: How to Talk to the Taliban," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 94, No. 4, July–August 2015, p. 54.

⁵⁴ Fairweather, 2014, p. 153.

⁵⁵ Jalali, 2017, p. 530.

⁵⁶ Ahmad K. Majidiyar, "Negotiating with the Taliban: Lessons from History," Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, May 1, 2014.

In retrospect, it is arguable that, had the United States and the international community latched onto this early opportunity to foster political stability in Afghanistan, their collective influence could have used the promise of long-term aid as leverage to bring the sides together to work out an agreement preferable to what would transpire in subsequent years. As the Afghan government grew to become a party to the conflict and as Taliban resistance solidified around a mantle of pushing out foreign forces, opportunities for achieving widespread consensus on a comprehensive political settlement became fewer and farther between.⁵⁷

Summary

As outlined in Table 4.2, the United States was clear in threatening its ongoing support to the still-forming Afghan government if it pursued Taliban entreaties for a cease-fire and potential conditional surrender. Still without national resources or security forces to draw from, Interim President Karzai understood his vulnerable position and quickly relented. While a host of complicating factors makes gauging the overall impact of this impossible, forcibly cutting off discussions

Table 4.2
Summary Coding of Influence Event 2:
Abrogation of Early Cease-Fire Agreements

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned
Influence strategy	Hard conditionality
Strength of inducement or sanction	High
Observability of outcome	Low
Clarity	High
Short-term outcome	Failure
Long-term outcome	Failure

⁵⁷ Michael Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2009, p. 2.

with the Taliban failed to advance the interests of either Washington or Kabul.

Influence Event 3: Marshall Mohammed Qasim Fahim and Initial Efforts to Develop the Afghan National Army, 2002–2003

This influence event analyzes early efforts to establish a national army in Afghanistan, a key priority for the new post-Taliban government. U.S. leadership understood that, for its investment to pay dividends, the Afghan National Army (ANA) would truly have to represent its diverse population or risk provoking backlash from excluded groups. As the military victors who cooperated with the United States, a cadre of influential former Northern Alliance commanders were in position to develop and lead this new force. As the primary funder of this effort, the United States used soft conditionality to help ensure that the army would be representative of all Afghan constituencies rather than a means for perpetuating ethnic rivalries. While this succeeded in opening opportunities for all Afghans to join the force, it was less effective in degrading the influence of warlords and fostering the development of impartial, functional institutions.

Context

Marshall Mohammed Qasim Fahim, an influential Northern Alliance commander and ethnic Panjsheri Tajik, was appointed as Minister of Defense of the interim Afghan government that resulted from the Bonn Agreement. Early concepts for building an army centered on the consolidation of the anti-Taliban militias, many of which coordinated with international forces to push out the Taliban, and enlisting them into one entity. In June 2002, at a security reform conference in Geneva, the international community endorsed a formal plan for an Afghan army of 60,000 forces; 12,000 border guards; and an air corps of 8,000.⁵⁸ On December 2, 2002, Karzai signed a decree formally inaugurating the ANA, banning all militias, and instituting a program

⁵⁸ Rashid, 2008, p. 202.

to disarm them.⁵⁹ Consistent with the goals of the Bonn process and wishes of the international community providing reconstruction funding, the intention was to establish an institution that was generally representative of Afghanistan's ethnic composition. Attaining Fahim's cooperation in this matter, however, would require U.S. involvement.

U.S. Position and Approach

Senior U.S. officials in Washington, especially those within the Pentagon who were intent on avoiding any and all mention of nation-building and involvement in intra-Afghan affairs, were slow to recognize the problems associated with allowing the powers that be in the Afghan security sector to build the army they wanted without outside guidance. In early 2002 and now back in Washington, Dobbins asked a senior officer on the Joint Staff about plans to train the ANA. When told that a USSF team was on its way to Kabul to get started, Dobbins inquired about who they were going to train. "Whomever Defense Minster designates," was the response.⁶⁰ Dobbins then "pointed out that if it were left to Fahim, the new army would be manned exclusively by Tajiks and officered solely by Northern Alliance veterans."⁶¹

A few weeks later, Dobbins reengaged the senior officer to learn that he had brought his recommendation that the United States become more involved in the recruiting, fielding, and sustainment of the ANA to Rumsfeld. "We're not going to do that," Rumsfeld reportedly responded, "That would be social engineering!"⁶² Dobbins argues that the result of this was a year lost as the United States trained thousands of forces recruited by Fahim and other Northern Alliance leaders, most of whom promptly deserted.⁶³

The United States also contributed to the challenges of weaning power from Fahim and other warlords in favor of the new army. While

⁵⁹ Rashid, 2008, p. 143.

⁶⁰ Dobbins, 2017, p. 257.

⁶¹ Dobbins, 2017, p. 257.

⁶² Dobbins, 2017, p. 257.

⁶³ Dobbins, 2017, p. 257.

the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan was leading a program of disarming militias of heavy weapons, Brahimi stressed that training of the ANA be done in parallel to quickly transition influence to the Afghan government. The United States, however, refused to assist because it was still recruiting militias to protect its bases, thereby increasing militia members even as the UN was attempting to disarm them.⁶⁴ U.S. SOF were also training elite “anti-al-Qa’ida” units that tended to be tied to existing warlords hailing from the Pashtun east and south of the country. Aside from the enhanced training and equipping, these units were also paid better, making them a bigger draw than the burgeoning force that was being developed from Kabul.⁶⁵

Though limited in his options to confront Fahim, Karzai and a handful of other Pashtun cabinet members without militia fighters of their own grew increasingly disenchanted with Fahim, and the pair’s relationship deteriorated as a result. To help counterbalance the largely Tajik control of the security forces, the United States pressed to have Pashtuns in positions of control over resources. Thus, Ashraf Ghani and Anwar al-Haq Ahadi were appointed minister of finance and governor of the Afghan Central Bank, respectively. This gambit backfired, however, because the independent resource base and military force of most regional security authorities left the financial institution with limited leverage.⁶⁶ It soon became clear that the United States would have to become more involved.

By mid-2002, the growing animosity between Karzai and Fahim was coming to a head. With reports of disunity mounting, the replacement of the mostly Tajik presidential bodyguards with U.S. forces, and even rumors of a coup attempt in the works, Khalilzad, then still Presidential Special Envoy for Afghanistan, called on Karzai and Fahim in

⁶⁴ Rashid, 2008, p. 202.

⁶⁵ Anja Manuel and P. W. Singer, “A New Model Afghan Army,” *Foreign Affairs*, July–August 2002, p. 47.

⁶⁶ International Crisis Group, *Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation*, Brussels, August 5, 2003, p. 10.

August 2002.⁶⁷ He conveyed President Bush's concerns about the rift and told Fahim that Bush was beginning to doubt his commitment to a stable, unified Afghanistan.⁶⁸ This interaction seems to have gotten Fahim's attention and set the tone for future engagement strategy.

It was around this time that then-MG Karl Eikenberry stood up the Office of Military Cooperation–Afghanistan. In this role, he shared Khalilzad's concerns about Fahim's leadership and demanded that he reform the MoD to create ethnic and political balance in its leadership. Eikenberry also maneuvered to remove some of Fahim's authorities, convincing both ISAF and the United States to recruit soldiers directly and to base goals on the rough ethnic breakdown of Afghanistan.⁶⁹ This had a distinct effect on Fahim, causing him to exclaim that "[a]ll Eikenberry does is torture me and give me grief," during a meeting with Khalilzad.⁷⁰

Khalilzad used his established relationship with Fahim and diplomatic temperament to try to persuade him to consider this issue from another angle. The United States, he pointed out to Fahim, would not commit its resources to building a new Afghan army that was dominated by only one ethnicity. Moreover, Afghan families would be reluctant to send their children to volunteer for an army dominated by Tajiks. "You've been spending all your time preserving militias and looking after your own people," Khalilzad told him.⁷¹ To help assuage Fahim, Khalilzad promised to advocate on his behalf for a force size larger than the 60,000 that had been approved in June 2002 and endorsed by Eikenberry, even if Fahim's goal for a 200,000-member army was beyond the pale.

⁶⁷ Ron Synovitz, "Afghanistan: U.S. Bodyguards for Karzai Signal Heightened Security Fears," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, July 23, 2002.

⁶⁸ Khalilzad, 2016, p. 136.

⁶⁹ Rashid, 2008, p. 202. According to initial guidelines, 38 percent of all new recruits were to be Pashtun, 25 percent Tajik, 19 percent Hazara, 8 percent Uzbek, and 10 percent other minority groups.

⁷⁰ Khalilzad, 2016, p. 181.

⁷¹ Khalilzad, 2016, p. 182.

The combination of Khalilzad and Eikenberry had, by 2004, reversed the early U.S. course of granting militia leaders, even those in the Afghan government, nearly free rein to use their leverage for parochial gain. Writing at this time, Simonsen argued: “It is clear . . . that the Americans have recently been leaning heavily on Marshall Fahim in order to force through a reform of the MoD. Such reform has been hard to achieve, but without the pressure it would be nearly impossible.”⁷²

Afghan Position and Approach

Fahim came into the position of Minister of Defense as a victor in the battles against the Taliban and his early actions reflect one seeking spoils. He was initially a proponent of simply combining all the anti-Taliban warlords’ militias and other standing forces into one national military.⁷³ Considering the Taliban’s retreat and the lack of cohesion among remaining Pashtun strongmen, this clearly favored the Tajiks and, to a lesser extent, other minorities, such as the Uzbeks and Hazaras.

Substantiating Dobbins’s aforementioned concerns about him, both Karzai and the international community roundly criticized Fahim’s October 2002 plan “as an attempt to perpetuate the dominance of factional militias in the ANA.”⁷⁴ Fahim’s initial proposals for the composition of the reconstituted army set off an intense debate between him and the UN and other Afghan reformists that was not resolved until Japan stated that it would not fund the DDR program until the plan was scrapped.⁷⁵

Despite an early setback, Fahim was still able to use the influence of his office to pursue elements of his plan. A 2003 report argued that Fahim responded only “half-heartedly” to criticisms that non-Tajik

⁷² Sven Gunnar Simonsen, “Ethnicising Afghanistan? Inclusion and Exclusion in Post-Bonn Institution Building,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 2004, p. 722.

⁷³ Manual and Singer, 2002, p. 54.

⁷⁴ Jalali, 2017, p. 500.

⁷⁵ Rashid, 2008, p. 210.

officials were underrepresented in the MoD.⁷⁶ Of the first 100 generals he appointed to the new Afghan forces, 90 were ethnic Tajiks.⁷⁷ Similar patterns were seen at lower echelons as “Fahim and his acolytes simply filled the ranks of the new force with loyalists sent by warlords, most of them Tajiks.”⁷⁸ Furthermore, a confidential UN report stated that 30 out of 33 directorates in the MoD were run by Fahim’s coethnic Panjsheris.⁷⁹ Even when Pashtun communities did send volunteers to join the new army, they were often disparaged by Tajik commanders under Fahim. According to one refugee aid worker in August 2003, “They were treated really badly, they were told to go back where they came from.”⁸⁰

Fahim played a double game that was driven in part by his unwillingness to fully disassociate himself from his experience as a stateless warlord as he transitioned to the leadership of a burgeoning governing institution. Thus, Fahim pledged fealty to Karzai and U.S. officials while simultaneously telling his confidantes that the international presence would soon dissipate. For U.S. officials reluctant to rock the boat early on, words appear to have been sufficient to assuage any concerns. Ahmed Rashid has suggested that Fahim’s “conciliatory tone had convinced some U.S. commanders that he was reform-minded when, in fact, he would resist reform in the Ministry of Defense . . . for as long as possible.”⁸¹ Fahim also maintained support from traditional benefactors Russia, India, and Iran, who all shared similar sentiments and wanted to maintain their influence with their former proxies.⁸²

⁷⁶ International Crisis Group, 2003, p. 10.

⁷⁷ Manual and Singer, 2002, p. 57.

⁷⁸ S. Frederick Starr, “U.S. Afghanistan Policy: It’s Working,” Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Central Asia–Caucasus Institute, October 2004, p. 8.

⁷⁹ Rashid, 2008, p. 206.

⁸⁰ Simonsen, 2004, p. 724.

⁸¹ Rashid, 2008, p. 208.

⁸² Rashid, 2008, p. 206.

His hedging both justified his favoritism and limited his commitment to developing a heterogeneous ministry and armed forces.

For their part, Afghans concerned about Fahim's actions were growing desperate for outside assistance in limiting his power. In May 2003, a senior aide to Karzai drafted an anonymous paper that accused Fahim of subverting the Bonn Agreement and the government to retain power. The paper circulated through the White House and Pentagon, reportedly shocking Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz because it was written by someone too well known and liked to refute.⁸³ This may have given Khalilzad and Eikenberry the latitude they needed to press Fahim for a greater commitment to institutional development without intervention from the figures in Washington who feared undertaking a potentially costly reform agenda for Afghan politics.

Outcome: Some Increased Equity, but Minimal Institutional Impact

The United States was slow to address the inherent contradiction of attempting to build a new standing national army from scratch while also employing numerous militia groups and financially supporting the proliferation of private security firms that were often thinly concealed militia groups. The effort to diminish warlordism was further compromised by lower-level coalition and CIA officers who, granted a high degree of independence, formed relationships with local strongmen to help with such things as providing protection or assisting with logistics. Other militias found an easier path by joining the Afghan National Police or transitioning into private security companies.⁸⁴

U.S. and other donor pressure and the eventual DDR program were ultimately successful in fracturing Fahim's patronage network within the MoD, which paved the way for more-equitable opportunities for non-Tajik Afghans.⁸⁵ At this early stage in development, such support was vital to the Afghan forces, and Fahim had little choice but to compromise. Acceding to U.S. demands was probably less onerous to Fahim, given the latitude he was given with regard to implementa-

⁸³ Rashid, 2008, p. 210.

⁸⁴ Khalilzad, 2016, p. 205.

⁸⁵ Giustozzi, 2009, p. 91.

tion. Khalilzad also credits an eventual change in Fahim's demeanor to his first visit to the United States in early 2003, which included a trip to West Point. Upon returning to Kabul, Fahim reportedly declared that he was convinced America was indeed in Afghanistan to help.⁸⁶

While the low threat from insurgents led to a smaller Afghan security force at the outset, this allowed the United States increased visibility when it came to ensuring diversity among ministerial and senior military leaders. Yet the cross-pollination of regional warlords and political office, in many cases in the form of provincial and district governorships, in the first years of the post-Taliban government made it more difficult to address the wider, more fundamental issues of warlordism and localized patronage networks.

Persistent mistrust of the government among many Pashtuns has made the formation of an army that truly reflects Afghanistan's ethnic composition a challenge that continues to confront the Afghan MoD.⁸⁷ In December 2002, a senior Afghan army officer expressed the disappointment many felt toward U.S. forces. Estimating that Afghan support for the U.S. presence had dropped from 98 percent to about 20 percent, the officer explained: "The people have much goodwill towards the Americans, but when they see that they are only supporting these warlords, then the conspiracy theories start."⁸⁸ Though impossible to quantify, the impact of Fahim's reluctance to integrate the MoD and America's refusal to intervene for more than a year played a large role in the genesis of this distrust.

Summary

As outlined in Table 4.3, the United States exerted soft conditionality on Fahim to accept the development of an army that was not dominated by his former Northern Alliance brethren and instead open to all

⁸⁶ Khalilzad, 2016, p. 183.

⁸⁷ Heidi Vogt, "Afghan Army Struggles with Ethnic Divisions," NBC News, July 27, 2010; Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Reconstructing the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, Arlington, Va., September 2017, p. 46.

⁸⁸ International Crisis Group, 2003, p. 21.

Table 4.3
Summary Coding of Influence Event 3:
Early Afghan National Army Formation, 2002–2003

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned
Influence strategy	Soft conditionality
Strength of inducement or sanction	High
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	High
Short-term outcome	Success
Long-term outcome	Partial success

Afghans. Typical of the initial years of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, the insinuation that sustained funding support would be at risk without compliance was effective in altering the actions of influential Afghan officials. The intent of the U.S. position was clear and resulted in a more equitable recruiting plan, although it did not explicitly address the unbalanced influence of senior leadership and, thus, did little to promote longer-term institutional development.

Influence Event 4: Confronting Regional Warlords, 2003–2004

After adopting an inherently divergent approach to engaging with both the burgeoning Afghan bureaucracy and the warlord class that helped defeat the Taliban, senior U.S. leadership came to the realization that hedging with each group would prevent the realization of a key strategic goal: the formation of an effective central government. In 2003–2004, the United States exploited opportunities to demonstrate its military might to both temper warlord ambitions and bolster the bona fides of the new Afghan government. In an effort to build credibility for the Karzai administration, the United States assisted in a series of targeted

efforts, which eventually included hard conditionality, to rein in key regional power brokers who had proven reluctant to cooperate with Kabul. This paved the way for a largely successful 2004 presidential election but, in the longer term, failed to stem the ability of warlords to subvert institutional development in support of parochial gains.

Context

The transitional phase following the establishment of the interim government augured a time of prosperity for an assortment of influential regional warlords, many of whom had been suppressed by the Taliban and had eagerly worked with the United States and other allied nations to push out the Taliban and hunt down the remnants of al-Qa'ida. In the wake of the military victory, many took the opportunity to reconstitute their militias and reestablish dominance of their respective areas. A handful of warlords, such as Marshall Fahim, were appointed to senior positions in the interim Afghan government. Others preferred to focus on rebuilding their personal fiefdoms but were appointed as either provincial governors or regional military commanders as a nod to their influence. What became readily apparent was that the development of the newly constructed Afghan government would be hindered by the parallel structures that were forming.

U.S. Position and Approach

As discussed earlier, in the initial months following the Bonn Conference, senior U.S. officials were reluctant to devote high levels of resources to Afghanistan and tended to view warlords as expedient means to achieve security-related objectives. Even after the Loya Jirga that solidified Karzai's position as the head of the interim government and established the initial Afghan governing structure, senior U.S. officials continued to provide warlords with near-coequal treatment. Visiting senior U.S. officials and military commanders traveling around the country routinely included meetings with powerful warlords, such as Ismael Khan, Rashid Dostum, and Mohammed Atta.⁸⁹ Paying a visit to these strongmen on their turf, most of whom were lionized for

⁸⁹ Rashid, 2008, pp. 143–144.

helping small contingents of U.S. and allied forces attack al-Qa'ida and overthrow the Taliban, became a highlight of any itinerary.

There is evidence that, early on, some U.S. officials began to recognize the inherent contradiction of fostering the development of a new government while also supporting warlords unaccustomed to and disinterested in answering to a central authority. In February 2002, U.S. Central Command commander Tommy Franks sent an assessment team to Afghanistan to examine options for developing a new Afghan army. The final report noted that U.S. reliance on warlords was impractical and insufficient.⁹⁰ Yet it does not appear that substantive and deliberate steps were taken to curtail the power of the warlords in favor of the nascent central government until at least 2003.

LTG David Barno assumed command of Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan in October 2003. It was he who initiated the first concerted U.S. effort to confront warlords. In an oral history interview, he said that his command worked closely with U.S. Ambassador Khalilzad and Karzai in late 2003 and throughout 2004 to exploit opportunities to weaken the sway of the warlords while bolstering the reach of the central government. This was a concerted effort to “develop, essentially, measured, thought-out, controlled confrontations with different warlords, sometimes initiated by actions they took, but sometimes part of actions that were planned by the government to reduce their power base.”⁹¹ Barno goes on to say that “[a]ll these were backed up by implicit, sometimes explicit, use of both the Afghan National Army and coalition military power, including airpower. So, that had a big influence.”⁹²

Barno's chief of staff, COL David Lamm, has stated that public opinion polling sponsored by Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan showed that many parts of the country felt that Karzai and the government he led had little clout outside Kabul. Lamm

⁹⁰ Rashid, 2008, p. 201.

⁹¹ Christopher N. Koontz, ed., *Enduring Voices: Oral Histories of the U.S. Army Experience in Afghanistan: 2003–2005*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2008, p. 20.

⁹² Koontz, 2008, p. 21.

explained that, with the 2004 Afghan presidential election looming, the U.S. country team sought to demonstrate that Karzai had both the reach to affect parts of the countryside and clout to rein in some of the warlords.⁹³ These warlords were both reluctant and increasingly entrenched, however, so accomplishing this would require flexibility and resourcefulness.

An opportunity presented itself in late 2003, when a skirmish occurred between militias associated with Ismail Khan, the powerful governor of Herat, and rival Amanullah Khan. According to Lamm, the coalition sent in a significant show of force with Afghan army and police forces, followed closely by U.S. military forces.⁹⁴ This was much more than was necessary to subdue the skirmish, but the Afghan government and the coalition leveraged the situation by “making a big deal out of it in the press.” The coalition placed Amanullah Khan under house arrest and took control of a tank park controlled by Ismail Khan as a first step toward forcing him to comply with a DDR program designed to remove heavy weapons from militias.⁹⁵ Ismail Khan was then offered a ministerial position in Kabul as a means of removing him from his center of power.

This show of force and successful undermining of two well-known warlords received attention nationwide and likely served to help defuse another potentially destabilizing clash between two rivals in northern Afghanistan without having to resort to the same aggressive measures. In this case, forces loyal to Rashid Dostum and Mohammed Atta were clashing. Minister of Interior Jalali served as the Afghan government’s interlocutor with the two sides, and each time he visited them, he traveled with the U.S. deputy chief of mission, the British ambassador, and the UN assistant special representative to Afghanistan as a show of solidarity.⁹⁶ According to Jalali, “[i]t was their involvement that gave

⁹³ Interview with COL David Lamm, June 5, 2019.

⁹⁴ Interview with COL David Lamm, June 5, 2019.

⁹⁵ Interview with COL David Lamm, June 5, 2019.

⁹⁶ Interview with Ali Jalali, May 14, 2019.

me the authority and legitimacy to engage these warlords who each had such large fighting forces.”⁹⁷

Lamm concurs that the initial coordinated effort to use Afghan and coalition military presence to dissuade rival warlords in western Afghanistan from fighting each other had positive repercussions in other areas. “What we found was that the other warlords, like Dostum and Atta, began to really negotiate with the ambassador and the international community about rapidly tying up and completing the DDR process.”⁹⁸ In this case, the show of force would be unnecessary to get to a resolution. In the end, Minister Jalali was able to secure an agreement between the two whereby they arranged to canton their heavy weapons and permit their militias to form one unified army corps.⁹⁹ It is this agreement that is credited with allowing the formal beginning of the Japanese-sponsored DDR program.

Afghan Position and Approach

In his early days in office, Karzai, with no standing army of his own to command, was completely dependent on allied militias for security and had little choice but to work with warlords. This often meant granting them a formal title and allowing them to operate with a high degree of independence. Early efforts at establishing his influence tended not to go well for Karzai, with the United States sometimes acting as impediment.

In late 2002, Karzai mentioned to Rumsfeld that he intended to sack Ismail Khan as governor of Herat. Rumsfeld replied that the timing was not right because of the U.S. preoccupation with Iraq. Reformists among his cabinet pressured Karzai to get tough with the warlords anyway, postulating that the United States would have no choice but to respect his authority to do so. If he was intent on asking permission beforehand, Washington would never be willing to take

⁹⁷ Interview with Ali Jalali, May 14, 2019.

⁹⁸ Koontz, 2008, p. 139.

⁹⁹ Interview with Ali Jalali, May 14, 2019.

any risks.¹⁰⁰ Apparently, before it was necessary to force Washington to support a significant political move by Karzai, Barno and Khalilzad had arrived and found common cause with him.

Overall, Karzai viewed the modernization of the country as a longer-term goal and, for the nearer term, adopted a pragmatic approach of working tribal networks to build his own power base.¹⁰¹ This relied on being able to stem the influence of any one warlord such that he could not threaten the sovereignty of the government while condoning, in certain cases, the backing of a strongman capable of providing local stability and political support.

Thus, while working with the United States to weaken the military and, to a lesser extent, political power of some warlords, Karzai continued to appoint others to civilian positions and show favor to those with whom he had an established relationship. Thus, existing warlords were accommodated with formal positions, and new strongmen were granted greater influence via the same process. For instance, on Karzai's first day in office, he replaced the provincial government in Helmand, appointing Sher Mohammed Akhundzada governor. A scion of notorious warlords responsible for the spread of poppy cultivation and opium production in the province, Akhundzada quickly filled other top posts with cronies selected for their loyalty and dedication to criminality.¹⁰²

The reformists in Karzai's inner circle who encouraged him to be bold in weaning warlords from the government grew to regret some of the choices he later made. When asked about his biggest failures, Karzai's critics within his government often point to the coddling of the warlords, particularly after they were coerced to disband their militias and surrender their heavy weaponry. According to Said Tayeb Jawad, an early chief of staff to Karzai and later Afghan ambassador to the United States,

¹⁰⁰Rashid, 2008, pp. 210–211.

¹⁰¹Fairweather, 2014, p. 58.

¹⁰²Fairweather, 2014, p. 59.

That was always a big debate: Should we include them? Karzai insisted that we had to include them and they had to be part of the system. That was a source of some frustration among the more idealistic people who were around him. In his calculation, there was really no force to confront these people.¹⁰³

Jawad went on to argue that whatever role Karzai envisioned for warlords in the system, things did not pan out as intended:

A lot of people who are now significant players in Afghan politics and the parliament, we were thinking they'd end up in Guantanamo Bay. But instead what took place was to allow them to loot half of the national resources, the lands, the government resources. That was the mistake.¹⁰⁴

For his part, Karzai justifies his early decisions regarding warlords as an unfortunate necessity, telling Ambassador Ronald Neumann, "Mr. Ambassador, in ten years perhaps I will have institutions. Now, I have only men."¹⁰⁵

Outcome: Immediate Benefit with Minimal Institutional Impact

The coordinated effort between the United States and Karzai to stem the influence of Afghanistan's most powerful warlords was most useful in attaining their acceptance of the disarmament program aimed at removing heavy weapons and addressing the most direct threats to the stability and sovereignty of the embryonic Afghan state. Beyond these immediate benefits, however, these efforts did little to fully cut the ties between warlords and their fighters or foster the necessary political transition to empower institutions over individuals. Early decisions by the United States to lend support to both the interim government and the warlords in the name of expediency played a role in limiting the options of the newly appointed Karzai. Robert Finn, the first post-Taliban U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, later reflected,

¹⁰³Quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 125.

¹⁰⁴Quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 126.

¹⁰⁵Interview with Ambassador Ronald Neumann, May 6, 2019.

We should have moved away from the warlords much earlier and we should have stopped visiting them. We should have supported the government more visibly. I stopped visiting Ismael Khan and Dostum, but Rumsfeld visited them several times.¹⁰⁶

That said, though late to act, the United States played a key role in fostering the relative political stability during the early years of the Afghan conflict. In arguing that Karzai reached the peak of his power in 2005, Fairweather noted that, in addition to winning a landslide election, troublesome warlords, such as Ismail Khan and Gul Agha Shirzai, had been forced out of their positions of power, and the parliamentary election offered an opportunity to accommodate others, such as Pacha Khan Zadran and Sher Mohammed Akhundzada. "These political developments," he continued, "were largely due to U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, who had sweet-talked, cajoled, and bullied one warlord after another into siding with Karzai, America, and its allies."¹⁰⁷ This unmistakable show of force on the part of U.S. and Afghan militaries made it clear to the warlords that they would have to alter their decision calculus and find ways to channel their influence through more formal bureaucratic mechanisms.

The problem was that these successful cases of clipping the threat from individual warlords were largely ad hoc and did not contribute to a more comprehensive plan for building lasting, functional Afghan institutions. Provincial governorships, parliamentary seats, and even cabinet seats may have provided positions with which to satisfy the most prominent warlords, but their participation in these bodies served to undermine rather than assist institutional development. The prioritization of security matters ultimately hindered what would always have been a slow and uneven process of building institutions in Afghanistan. Karzai never fully broke ties with warlords, and attempting to do so would have hastened his political demise.

In short, the early efforts to rein in the most powerful warlords were a tactical response to a complex problem requiring a strategic solu-

¹⁰⁶Rashid, 2008, p. 143.

¹⁰⁷Fairweather, 2014, p. 137.

tion. British Maj Gen John McColl, the initial commander of ISAF, later reflected: “The warlords undermined what we were trying to achieve. We promised the Afghans government, and instead they got them.”¹⁰⁸ This missed opportunity to establish Afghan governance on a path of comprehensive reform while the insurgency was weak would make later efforts more challenging as the insurgency reconstituted in subsequent years.

Summary

As outlined in Table 4.4, U.S. military leadership recognized that the ongoing presence of regional warlords with forces unaccountable to the Afghan government was incompatible with the priority of developing a national army. Thus, when provided an opportunity to intervene under the auspices of assisting the nascent Afghan army, U.S. forces did so with a significant show of force. This ultimately convinced both the warlords involved and others who observed the effects to make concessions that led to the gradual disarmament of heavy weapons from these groups via the DDR program. While the immediate effect of this action successfully addressed a nonstate security threat and bolstered

Table 4.4
Summary Coding of Influence Event 4:
Confronting Regional Warlords, 2003–2004

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned
Influence strategy	Hard conditionality
Strength of inducement or sanction	High
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	High
Short-term outcome	Success
Long-term outcome	Failure

¹⁰⁸Fairweather, 2014, p. 58.

the bona fides of the national army, the warlords maintained heavy influence over Afghan political and security institutions and hindered their development for years to come.

Influence Event 5: Afghanistan Presidential Election, 2009

The increased focus on Afghanistan at the end of the Bush administration and outset of the Obama administration made 2009 an important year for U.S. strategy. No longer viewing the strategy as an “economy of force” effort, senior officials determined that realizing its strategic objectives would require both an increase in U.S. resources and manpower and renewed commitment to political reform in Kabul. To secure the latter, U.S. leadership felt it had to use the former as leverage. In the lead-up to that fall’s Afghan presidential election, many in Washington had grown frustrated by the Karzai administration’s lack of progress in improving governance. Corruption remained rampant, and there was increasing evidence that Karzai and his inner circle were complicit. In the aftermath of what was universally viewed as a flawed election, the Obama administration turned to a Democratic senator to intervene with Karzai as other, more-typical senior administration candidates had run afoul of the enigmatic leader. When persuasion failed to convince Karzai to agree to a second-round vote, an escalation to soft conditionality on Washington’s part resulted in his begrudging acceptance. While this prevented a collapse of the Afghan government and, ultimately, led to a second term for Karzai, it would have a negative effect on U.S.-Afghan relations for the next five years.

Context

As discussed under Influence Event 4, in the lead-up to the 2004 Afghan Presidential election, the priority for the United States was to improve the reach, and thus the legitimacy, of the central government. In addition to using its leverage to rein in some of the most influential warlords, U.S. officials took every opportunity to demonstrate Karzai’s central role in rebuilding Afghanistan. He was feted around the country by Ambassador Khalilzad and encouraged to cut the ribbon at new

U.S.-funded development projects. During this time, the directive to the political office in the U.S. embassy was to avoid meeting with any rival candidates. Colonel Lamm, the Chief of Staff to the U.S. military command at the time, stated bluntly: “Did we help him [Karzai] win the election? Yeah. You’re damn right.”¹⁰⁹

By 2009, things had changed drastically. A view had taken hold in parts of Washington that Karzai was hopelessly corrupt, and many questioned whether another five-year term would only make things worse. The newly elected Obama administration, which had run in part on the need to refocus efforts from Iraq to the chronically under-resourced Afghanistan conflict, was conflicted on how to deal with Karzai and more generally incorporate political objectives into the various strategic reviews that took place over the course of the year. In Kabul, Karzai remained the favorite to win reelection but, unlike in 2004, he would face formidable competition from competent candidates. He would also, as it turned out, face additional challenges from some of the new appointees selected by Obama to manage Afghan policy.

U.S. Position and Approach

The incoming Obama administration elected to adopt a tough love strategy in its engagements with Karzai. Ten days before Obama’s inauguration, Vice President-elect Joe Biden and his Senate colleague Lindsay Graham had dinner with Karzai in Kabul. Biden delivered a message that Karzai needed to clean up his government and deliver services to his people. He also informed Karzai that he would not have the same chummy relationship with Obama that he enjoyed with Bush. After a testy back-and-forth, Biden threw down his napkin. As Partlow argued: “This type of pressure tended to backfire. The Afghans present, even those with little sympathy for Karzai, found it offensive. They saw Biden as not just impolite but condescending.”¹¹⁰

This would be the first of numerous instances in the coming months where actions taken by U.S. officials seemingly to pressure

¹⁰⁹Partlow, 2016, p. 23.

¹¹⁰Partlow, 2016, p. 29.

Karzai to consider important changes produced the exact opposite effect. Rudeness and condescension aside, Biden added insult by making such statements in front of Karzai's trusted subordinates. As former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ronald Neumann remarked:

Biden thought he was delivering tough love and setting the terms of Karzai's relationship with the new administration. Karzai, however, felt this was a personal attack intended to show that he was being abandoned by the Obama administration.¹¹¹

Before Obama was even in office, Karzai had become wary of his new American partners.

As the Afghan election approached, the Obama administration had to account for local political realities when deliberating on a U.S. stance. Justifiably concerned that leading Tajik candidates from the former Northern Alliance would not be able to quell unrest in the predominantly Pashtun south and east of the country and with reservations about the lack of tribal backing of Pashtun candidates, such as Ashraf Ghani and Hanif Atmar, the Obama administration "‘grudgingly’ retreated to supporting Karzai, with one notably and potentially powerful exception . . . Richard Holbrooke."¹¹²

Shortly after his inauguration, President Obama appointed Holbrooke as the inaugural Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP). Holbrooke reportedly believed that the war would be lost if Karzai were given another five-year term and made it the priority of his early days as SRAP to prevent Karzai's reelection in August, telling Zalmay Khalilzad, "I'm going to make his life a living hell."¹¹³ Despite Holbrooke's misgivings about Karzai, the official U.S. policy on the election, conveyed via a cable, was for U.S. personnel to remain impartial.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Interview with Ronald Neumann, May 6, 2019.

¹¹² Fairweather, 2014, p. 264.

¹¹³ Packer, 2019, p. 475.

¹¹⁴ Partlow, 2016, p. 19.

Cautious not to paint the United States as the overbearing partner, Holbrooke believed that encouraging other qualified Afghans to run for the presidency would both pose the greatest challenge to Karzai and shift Afghanistan back onto a democratic track. Thus, he reached out to Ashraf Ghani, Abdullah Abdullah, Hanif Atmar, and a host of others with bureaucratic bona fides. He made it a point to be photographed with such contenders and even encouraged General Eikenberry to attend rallies for multiple candidates as a show of support for free and fair elections.¹¹⁵ For his part, in the weeks leading up to the election, Eikenberry spoke at televised press conferences alongside challengers, such as Abdullah and Ghani. Additionally, the U.S. embassy was paying for commercial airline tickets for candidates to hold and attend rallies around the country and, in some cases, even allowing transport on U.S. government planes.¹¹⁶

Beyond a drive for electoral competition and outward displays of support for Karzai's political rivals, the effort Holbrooke undertook was not tethered to a grander strategy to improve institutional development. The general assumption that any Karzai replacement would be preferable or that a victorious but politically weakened Karzai would be forced to enact reforms was thin. The degree to which a different president would improve Afghanistan's political ills was not thoroughly considered; neither was the impact of a potential Karzai reelection following a concerted U.S. effort to unseat him.

Holbrooke's actions also caused confusion among those he was encouraging to run and among the broader Kabul political class. As Barnett Rubin, who served as a senior advisor to Holbrooke, argued:

When a senior U.S. official approaches you to run for president, it is their understanding that the U.S. wants you to be president, not that you want a competitive election. Thus, this caused a lot of confusion among the Afghan political elite.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Fairweather, 2014, p. 265.

¹¹⁶ Partlow, 2016, p. 19.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Dr. Barnett Rubin, May 8, 2019.

The confusion about U.S. intentions in the Kabul political sphere would persist through the election, and the actions of Holbrooke and, to a lesser extent, Eikenberry would affect the options Washington had to address the controversial aftermath.

Afghan Position and Approach

Karzai and his inner circle appear united in their interpretation of the message senior U.S. officials in Kabul were sending. Omar Daudzai, Karzai's chief of staff, grumbled, "If we had any doubts about what Holbrooke and Eikenberry thought of him, it was made very clear during the campaign. The American message was, 'We want you out.'"¹¹⁸ Note that Daudzai drew no distinction between the messages they were receiving directly from Holbrooke and Eikenberry and the correlation with broader U.S. policy. In the estimation of these officials, this was yet another signal from the Obama administration that Karzai had fallen out of favor.

Holbrooke's efforts understandably upset Karzai but also disappointed a coterie of reform-minded officials in Karzai's inner circle who wanted the president to step aside, take on a more ceremonial role as father figure to the nation, and usher in the next phase of democratization. They felt that a carefully orchestrated strategy of diplomatic persuasion on the part of Washington and other key Afghans might convince Karzai to accept this. The reformers watched Holbrooke's antics with growing dismay as everything he did seemed to only strengthen Karzai's hand.¹¹⁹ To them, Holbrooke's preference for assertive, ham-fisted pressure over coordinated tact led to the loss of an ideal opportunity to find a graceful way to transition Karzai out of the presidency.

As the events unfolded, even those in Karzai's camp willing to consider an alternative candidate felt that Holbrooke was limiting their options. While Holbrooke was adamant about defeating Karzai via the ballot box, his actions sparked suspicions that this was part of a more comprehensive plan to get Karzai out of office by any means. According to Coll, "Holbrooke's methodology—diplomacy as jazz

¹¹⁸ As quoted in Fairweather, 2014, p. 266.

¹¹⁹ Packer, 2019, p. 479.

improvisation—in this instance threatened only to alienate Karzai and motivate his network of allies to generate fraudulent votes as a defense against any American scheme to overthrow him by ballot.”¹²⁰

In the aftermath of the contentious vote, the reaction to perceived U.S. efforts provided Karzai with greater cohesion among his inner circle and broader support among his fellow Pashtun constituents. This, and the fact that Washington had just approved a considerable increase in forces for Afghanistan, granted Karzai added leverage when dealing with the repercussions of the polling. As Packer put it, “Karzai . . . was the unreliable client whose very weakness was his strength over his rich and powerful sponsor. The Americans had the F-16s and agronomists, but Karzai had the leverage, and he wanted another five years of it.”¹²¹

Outcome: Government Holds but Bilateral Relations Damaged

Election day, August 20, was the most violent in 15 years, and voter turnout was just over 30 percent. Moreover, voter fraud was so rampant that it was deemed to be on an industrial scale. Using the widespread reports of fraud as justification, Holbrooke pressed for the international community to unite in insisting that a second-round vote take place, despite the fact that Karzai was already claiming victory. Norwegian diplomat Kai Eide, the head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, warned Holbrooke not to insist on this when he spoke to Karzai. Holbrooke responded, “I’m on good terms with Karzai now. I can handle him.”¹²² During a small group lunch in the presidential palace that afternoon, however, Holbrooke asked Karzai if he would hypothetically accept a second-round vote if it was determined that one was necessary. Eikenberry and his deputy, Frank Ricciardone, reportedly gasped at Holbrooke’s cultural impudence of effectively accusing Karzai of lying in front of his most senior advisers. This kicked off a

¹²⁰Coll, 2018, p. 378.

¹²¹Packer, 2019, p. 484.

¹²²As quoted in Packer, 2019, p. 485.

brief and testy exchange that led to Karzai proclaiming, "I will not accept fake facts based on foreign interference."¹²³

A few days after the election, Eikenberry and Ricciardone were invited to a meeting by an Afghan minister. When they arrived, they found a large gathering of the influential Pashtun government leaders who formed the bulk of Karzai's political support. They believed in Karzai's victory and argued that forcing a second-round vote would lead to more violence and unrest. In referring to the anarchy of the 1990s, Eikenberry responded, "There were no rules. It was the jungle. Now you are returning to the jungle. What we are talking about is rules. The rules aren't perfect. But if you don't follow them you're going back to the jungle. This is your chance."¹²⁴

After two hours, the meeting ended without firm resolution. Then former Afghan president Sibghatullah Mojaddedi asked to speak with Eikenberry. Mojaddedi stated that, because Eikenberry represented the United States, he could have any outcome he wanted. Eikenberry reiterated his commitment to a fair democratic process and insistence on a second round. "Okay," Mojaddedi responded, "there will be a second round."¹²⁵ When the groups of Pashtuns met with Karzai at the Palace later they delivered a clear message, either you could have the majority of the votes from the first round, or you could have the United States.¹²⁶ Despite Mojadeddi's assurance and the dire message, the controversy over vote counts and audits stretched into the fall with no resolution. Washington eventually decided it would require yet another interlocutor to help bring closure.

By this time, Karzai was barely on speaking terms with Holbrooke and harbored suspicions about Eikenberry. Senator John Kerry, now the Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had engaged with Karzai on multiple occasions and established a good rapport with him. Thus, it was he who was asked to fly to Kabul to persuade Karzai to

¹²³As quoted in Coll, 2018, p. 383.

¹²⁴As quoted in Partlow, 2016, pp. 38–39.

¹²⁵As quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 39.

¹²⁶Partlow, 2016, p. 39.

agree to a second-round vote. Following more than 20 hours of negotiations, a tentative agreement was reached. But prior to the subsequent press conference, Karzai had second thoughts. At this point, Kerry reiterated the point others had made that, without a second round, it would be difficult if not impossible for the United States and Afghanistan to continue to work together.¹²⁷ This was the most direct and, considering the messenger, credible voicing of conditionality Karzai received from a U.S. official regarding the election.

One of the most difficult, yet underappreciated, aspects of this was the public humiliation Karzai would have to endure by essentially admitting that fraud had transpired and that he was being forced to yield to foreign pressure in accepting a second round. For him, the only validation would be a decisive second-round result that would end any questioning of the legitimacy of his office. Karzai's spokesman, Waheed Omar, recalled Karzai telling Kerry, "Look, I'm going for the second round, I accept the second round, but can you guarantee that it will happen?" Kerry replied, "I swear to the Bible and the Koran that there will be a second round."¹²⁸

In the end, however, the second round never materialized. Abdullah, perhaps believing he could not win or because, as he said, the system was so rotten that no vote could be trusted, elected to bow out, leaving Karzai "damaged, discredited, and feeling betrayed—winner by default." It was, as Waheed Omar would say, "the wound that never healed."¹²⁹ While Washington exerted its leverage on Karzai, it had no such recourse with Abdullah, who knew that, either way, he was not going to be president.

It is unclear whether Kerry and other senior U.S. officials understood Abdullah's position or considered the likelihood that he would bow out. What is apparent is that this episode left a bitter imprint in Karzai's future dealings with the United States. In his memoirs, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates reflected on the indelible impression this left on Karzai and his relationship with the United States: "Our future

¹²⁷Partlow, 2016, p. 40.

¹²⁸As quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 41.

¹²⁹As quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 41.

dealings with Karzai, always hugely problematic, and his criticisms of us, are at least more understandable in the context of our clumsy and failed putsch.”¹³⁰

In the end, Holbrooke’s unsanctioned, yet tolerated, campaign backfired, offending Afghan sensibilities and rallying Pashtun support around the president.¹³¹ Yet while Holbrooke played the willing lead, alienating Karzai in the early days of the Obama administration was a group effort. Back in Washington, the White House was looking for answers. Peter Lavoy, then the National Intelligence Officer for South Asia, briefed the National Security Council that, in the run-up to the election, Karzai saw the United States, in particular the Obama administration, walking away from him and “turned to the warlords and made deals to get reelected.”¹³² There is no way to know whether Karzai would have permitted the use of fraud on his behalf anyway. The evidence suggests, however, that perceived messaging from the United States provided Karzai with both justification and additional support in these efforts.

This episode demonstrates the limitations of leverage in the lead-up to an event with winner-take-all stakes and partners willing to accept added risk to prevent the loss of political power. An initial desire for a more democratic process and reform-minded leadership had devolved into a fraudulent vote and the return of a president who now viewed the United States with contempt. The United States had minimal visibility on the extent to which fraud would overwhelm the vote and apparently did not see how the actions of some senior U.S. officials likely fueled this. Then, in the aftermath of the vote, Washington became hyperfocused on getting agreement for a second-round vote as a means of salvaging some legitimacy to the process. Yet, once again, Washington miscalculated by exerting leverage on Karzai, who now had something to lose, without fully considering how Abdullah, with nothing to lose, would react. In the end, the United States took

¹³⁰Robert Michael Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014, p. 359.

¹³¹Packer, 2019, p. 480.

¹³²Gates, 2014, p. 358.

what was always going to be a controversial event and made it worse by engaging in a series of ill-defined measures divorced from a clearly articulated desired end state.

Summary

As outlined in Table 4.5, the United States felt that accepting the contested results of the first-round Afghan presidential election in 2009 would be an endorsement of the clearly fraudulent activity surrounding it and, more important, would risk the destabilization of the government. The actions of senior U.S. officials leading up to and in the immediate aftermath of the vote, however, created confusion among Afghan political leaders regarding U.S. intentions. Senator Kerry’s intervention and clear application of soft conditionality finally pressed Karzai to agree to a second-round vote and, with it, a *de facto* admission that fraud had affected the first round. While this staved off the threat of government collapse and kept Karzai in office for a second term, the process of attaining this negatively affected U.S. interests in Afghanistan in the following years.

Table 4.5
Summary Coding of Influence Event 5:
Afghanistan Presidential Election, 2009

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned
Influence strategy	Persuasion, <i>then</i> soft conditionality
Strength of inducement or sanction	High
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	Low
Short-term outcome	Partial success
Long-term outcome	Partial success

Influence Event 6: The Formation and Sustainment of the Afghan Local Police, 2010–Present

Slow to react to early signs of a rejuvenated insurgency, the United States and its Afghan partners were, by 2010, struggling to stanch the insurgency's momentum as the coalition refocused on training and mentoring the Afghan security forces. Senior U.S. military leadership decided to pursue the development of locally recruited, quasi-official forces that could be quickly generated and confined to their home villages. Without this, it was feared that parts of the countryside would be at high risk of falling to Taliban pressure. This program could not, however, be successful without the approval of Karzai and the cooperation of local Afghan stakeholders. It took persistent persuasion for senior U.S. leaders to convince a wary Karzai to approve, although limited visibility on how the program was developing at local levels led to a host of problems that has taken years to address. While the program remains formally active after more than eight years, early mismanagement has negatively colored the use of locally recruited forces in many parts of the country.

Context

President Obama's December 2009 West Point speech announcing his administration's strategy in Afghanistan called for a significant increase in the number of authorized Afghan military and police forces to stem the insurgent momentum revealed by a host of assessments conducted over the previous year. Training and deploying these forces, however, would take time, and the more immediate need to fulfill security requirements that were growing dire in some areas led to the consideration of alternative options.

General Petraeus was scheduled to take over command of ISAF in early July 2010. As a means of addressing both a requirement for enhanced local security and a closer connection to the central government in areas threatened by the insurgency, Petraeus took a page from his time in Iraq. In advocating for the creation of a semiofficial community police force, Petraeus was, in effect, replicating the Sons of Iraq program he helped establish to great effect in 2007–2008.

U.S. Position and Approach

On the eve of his change-of-command ceremony, Petraeus took the occasion of his first engagement with President Karzai to press a priority effort for which he knew Afghan officials to be skeptical: the formation of locally recruited village police forces to augment the struggling Afghan security forces.¹³³ Despite being led to believe by senior Afghan security officials that Karzai was supportive, Petraeus found that the president had serious reservations about a program that could empower out-of-control militias. The new commander, however, remained persistent on what he considered his top priority. In his first ten days in country, Petraeus met with Karzai every day, continuing to urge for the approval of local forces.¹³⁴

The United States quickly ran into difficulty trying to quickly scale up a program that showed initial promise in a limited sample size. Initial Afghan local police (ALP) units were recruited and trained with the assistance of teams of U.S. SOF. As the program spread quickly and as the U.S. footprint began to gradually decline, however, U.S. conventional forces increasingly took on these responsibilities. In addition, early on, significant time was spent analyzing the human terrain before designating an ALP site. As things progressed, such analysis was truncated or even eschewed, at times because of pressure from influential Afghan officials.¹³⁵

Evidence suggests that U.S. forces made other programmatic compromises that undermined some of the principles of the effort and made it vulnerable to manipulation by Afghan authorities and power brokers disinterested in promoting inclusion or institution building. In ethnically heterogeneous areas and where local Pashtuns distrustful of the government refused to volunteer, U.S. SOF at times circumvented safeguards against ethnic and tribal imbalances and accepted Tajik and

¹³³ Paula Broadwell, with Vernon Loeb, *All In: The Education of General David Petraeus*, New York: Penguin Press, 2012, p. 42.

¹³⁴ Mark Moyer, *Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police*, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.: Joint Special Operations University Press, 2014, p. 12.

¹³⁵ Moyer, 2014, p. 72.

Uzbek volunteers.¹³⁶ Such arrangements often led to predatory behavior and served only to deepen mistrust of the government among the Pashtuns.

In 2013, Afghan officials, hoping to increase their influence without otherwise altering investments in the conventional Afghan forces, were pressing for the expansion of ALP into areas that American officials deemed to be poorly suited for the program. At this time, the coalition decided to freeze any expansion of ALP.¹³⁷ Then—MG Scott Miller, the Special Operations Joint Task Force—Afghanistan commander, issued guidance that there would be no expansion of the ALP program until the roughly 30,000 currently being paid could be revalidated and any “ghost soldiers” or other units not formally part of the program stricken from the record. As of this writing, the approved *tashkil* [manning level] for the ALP remains at 30,000, although issues persist.

Afghan Position and Approach

President Karzai opposed the ALP program when Petraeus first proposed it.¹³⁸ Other senior Afghan officials shared this sentiment, fearing that any circumvention of central authority would reprise militias similar to those that contributed to the civil wars of the 1990s. A retired senior Afghan official who participated in these meetings between Petraeus and Karzai recalls warning the former about the complexities of Afghanistan, “I told him, okay, you want to fight guerillas with guerillas, fine, but it’s a lot more complicated here than in Iraq. Here it’s not Sunni against Shia; you have a whole mix of tribes and ethnicities.”¹³⁹ Karzai also feared that such groups would only

¹³⁶International Crisis Group, *The Future of the Afghan Local Police*, Brussels, June 4, 2015, p. 16.

¹³⁷Moyar, 2014, p. 65.

¹³⁸Partlow, 2016, p. 271.

¹³⁹International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 6.

empower some of his rivals by providing a veneer of officialdom to those with already formed militias.¹⁴⁰

Karzai eventually relented contingent on three conditions: that the term “police” would be included in the name, that the ALP would fall under the authority of the MoI, and that the program would last only two to five years.¹⁴¹ The initial cap on ALP forces Karzai agreed to was 10,000, although some senior U.S. officials were immediately talking about expanding it to 50,000 or even 100,000.¹⁴² Thus, at the outset, Karzai portrayed a somewhat conflicted stance. On the one hand, his insistence that the ALP be formally tied to the MoI provided at least the opportunity for the program to benefit institution-building. On the other hand, his requirement that it be temporary would make putting proper management and oversight in place challenging. Other senior figures in the government, however, saw this, instead, as a chance to enhance their patronage networks.

Bismullah Khan Mohammadi was appointed Minister of Interior in June 2010 after having served as the Chief of Army Staff since 2002. A former Tajik warlord with close ties to Fahim, Mohammadi had established a reputation for favoring former Northern Alliance commanders and was removed from his Army post in large part because of widespread reports that he had done this throughout the middle ranks of the army.¹⁴³ Now, with oversight of the ALP program, Mohammadi moved to exploit his position. In the northern province of Kunduz, he attempted to reserve 1,125 ALP slots to bolster a network of non-Pashtun commanders. The provincial chief of police allied to Mohammadi reportedly even used these positions in negotiations with local Taliban supporters, who were predominantly Tajik.¹⁴⁴ Mohammadi attempted to get U.S. forces to legitimize and support these units in exchange

¹⁴⁰As quoted in Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Hurray for Militias? Not So Fast: Lessons from the Afghan Local Police,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2016, p. 266.

¹⁴¹International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 6.

¹⁴²Moyar, 2014, p. 12.

¹⁴³Dexter Filkins, “After America,” *New Yorker*, July 2, 2012.

¹⁴⁴Philipp Münch, “Local Afghan Power Structures and the International Military Intervention,” Afghanistan Analysts Network, November 2013, p. 40.

for his approval to expand the program to the predominantly Pashtun south and east of the country, as initially intended. When the United States was reluctant to allow lax practices when it came to these northern militias, Mohammadi would freeze the disbursement of ALP salaries elsewhere in the country.¹⁴⁵

In some cases, ALP units created or exacerbated disputes between local Afghan officials and nongovernment power brokers. The Afghan government ostensibly relied on local leaders to manage the selection process, but government or even coalition forces often overtook it.¹⁴⁶ The ability of provincial officials to rein in bad actors in the ALP was limited because of such factors as a lack of firepower to confront these actors, security concerns about leaving a military vacuum, and political impediments from senior officials in Kabul, who were prone to protect the ALP leaders representing their factions. Influential politicians in Kabul often served as a bulwark against attempts to enforce oversight and accountability against ALP units suspected of engaging in predatory or other criminal activity. Even minor changes to a payroll roster could instigate a call from a senior official in Kabul.¹⁴⁷

By 2012, senior Afghan officials were exerting what one senior Western official classified as “huge pressure” to expand the authorized cap on ALP personnel from 30,000 to 45,000. This pressure was reportedly coming “from the highest government levels.”¹⁴⁸ In 2015, concerned about the U.S. drawdown and dubious commitment to the program, some Afghan officials were even reaching out to other potential donors in case the United States did not extend its commitment to the program beyond 2018.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Felbab-Brown, 2016, p. 261.

¹⁴⁶ Moyer, 2014, p. 76.

¹⁴⁷ International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 16.

¹⁴⁸ International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 13.

¹⁴⁹ International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 2.

Outcome: Some Localized Successes, but General Disappointment

Confronting an insurgency that was gaining momentum against out-matched Afghan security forces and buoyed by the recent success of the Sons of Iraq program, senior U.S. officials in Kabul in 2010 used persistent persuasion to get President Karzai to authorize an effort to increase security in contested areas with local recruits. Despite a large footprint, the United States was beginning to devote more forces to training and mentoring the Afghan security forces and saw an opportunity to enhance security in priority areas more quickly.

The attempted rapid expansion of the ALP program led to assorted early missteps. The fundamental shortcomings can be tied to a lack of oversight, a willingness to compromise on core tenets, and a failure to institute accountability measures for ALP units that misbehaved. U.S. leadership was so eager to grow the program that it was willing to accept a decline in observability that proved damaging.

Eventually, the compromises to the initial guidelines of the program had a compounding effect that made the ALP increasingly vulnerable to corrupt actors. The more-rapid-than-expected drawdown of U.S. forces necessitated transitioning many ALP units with much shorter periods of SOF mentorship.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, the intended transition of ALP units from U.S. to Afghan SOF units often never materialized, leaving the ALP units “on their own and on the loose.”¹⁵¹ This led to ALP units reporting personnel figures outside the purview of U.S. forces, leading to rampant allegations that there were ghost soldiers.¹⁵²

Lack of oversight permitted influential power brokers in Kabul to manipulate the program and reduced situational awareness of what was transpiring in many areas. During 2010 and 2011, unofficial local security forces and militias started to spring up in various parts of the country, many falsely claiming an affiliation to the ALP program.¹⁵³ In other cases, ALP units from rival factions would turn on each other

¹⁵⁰ Moyer, 2014, p. 82.

¹⁵¹ Felbab-Brown, 2016, p. 267.

¹⁵² International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 12.

¹⁵³ Moyer, 2014, p. 15.

or turn on their local communities after they had succeeded in pushing the Taliban out. Such cases significantly damaged the reputation of the program and failed to improve the perspectives of disenfranchised Pashtun communities.

Despite a host of factors contributing to criticism of the ALP program, it did demonstrate positive effects in some areas. This, coupled with fears that units forced out of the program would add instability, made U.S. officials wary of making large cuts to the program. In some cases, however, it was ultimately decided that the human terrain in some areas was so inhospitable to the program that some ALP units were demobilized on a targeted basis. According to one analyst, this focused measure increased U.S. leverage with Afghan officials with respect to other matters without risking increased instability.¹⁵⁴

By 2015, the end of the NATO combat mission resulted in another significant drawdown of U.S. and coalition forces. At this point the ALP Directorate in Kabul was solely responsible for reporting personnel numbers, which U.S. overseers had no way of independently validating.¹⁵⁵ The ALP program still exists as of this writing but continues to be beset by issues. As recently as 2018, only 49 percent of ALP units had been validated and entered into the electronic pay system, which led payment to all ALP forces to be suspended for months.¹⁵⁶ After nearly nine years in operation, and despite episodic success, the ALP program has failed to contribute materially to institutional development and has instead become an example of central government failure in many parts of Afghanistan.

¹⁵⁴ Moyer, 2014, p. 66.

¹⁵⁵ International Crisis Group, 2015, p. 12.

¹⁵⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, *Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, Washington, D.C., June 2018, p. 92; Mujib Mashal, Taimoor Shah, and Rahim Najim, "30,000 Afghan Police Officers, on Front Line of War, Are Denied Pay," *New York Times*, June 6, 2018.

Summary

As outlined in Table 4.6, the United States saw value in creating a force of locally recruited guardians to enhance an Afghan security apparatus that was struggling to cope with a reinvigorated insurgency. Rather than threaten punitive measures, the recently arrived and influential U.S. commander, General Petraeus, adopted a plan of persistent persuasion to win Karzai’s approval. While initially a success, the ALP program suffered when it expanded into areas not initially intended while simultaneously eschewing some of its original oversight requirements. By this time, Afghan officials had exploited the program to benefit patronage networks and were themselves pressing for its continued expansion. Belatedly recognizing the negative effects that the ALP was having in many locations, U.S. officials halted its expansion until all sites could be validated. While the program enjoyed success in limited locations, the ALP program became a symbol of government mismanagement and abuse in many parts of the country.

Table 4.6
Summary Coding of Influence Event 6:
Formation and Sustainment of the Afghan Local
Police, 2010–Present

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned
Influence strategy	Persuasion
Strength of inducement or sanction	Low
Observability of outcome	Low
Clarity	High
Short-term outcome	Partial success
Long-term outcome	Failure

Influence Event 7: U.S.-Taliban Peace Talks and the Opening of the Taliban Political Commission Office, 2010–2013

After years of advising Karzai against engaging senior Taliban leadership in peace negotiations, senior U.S. officials in the Obama administration began to consider ways to reach the nonmilitary resolution that had long been mentioned. This was accelerated when messages from the Taliban expressed similar interests. Washington understood both that it would need to serve as the primary interlocutor with the Taliban, at least at the outset of talks, and that pursuing this without Karzai's endorsement would compromise the Afghan government's position and, ultimately, fail to bear fruit. Over the span of roughly three years, senior U.S. officials made numerous attempts to convince Karzai to permit a U.S.-Taliban bilateral dialogue as a preliminary means of fostering a dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban. A breakthrough was reached in 2013 following a renewed U.S. persuasion attempt that was aided by complementary efforts by the Qatari government. Karzai's acquiescence was in vain, however; the subsequent opening of a Taliban political office in Doha abruptly fell apart, taking with it Karzai's willingness to place at risk his political capital in pursuit of a peace process.

Context

As previously discussed, the Bush administration had had little appetite for engaging, or permitting the Afghan government to engage, Taliban leadership in pursuit of a political agreement that did not involve the Taliban's surrender. In 2004, Ambassador Kahlilzad was able to work with Karzai to bring in a handful of former Taliban ministers and diplomats as defectors, but no broad program of reconciliation or reintegration ever materialized. The effort did, however, result in a broad policy on talks with the Taliban that was updated in 2007. Focused on what the Bush administration was comfortable permitting the Karzai government to do independently, it did not envisage direct talks between the U.S. and Taliban. The policy's main provision was a

blacklist of 31 names of senior Taliban officials with whom the Karzai government was not permitted to engage under any circumstances.¹⁵⁷

At the outset of the Obama administration, the prospects of a political process that included reconciliation and/or reintegration was noticeably absent from the numerous reviews and senior-level policy deliberations that led to Obama's West Point speech in December 2009. Highlighting some of Holbrooke's misgivings about this process, Packer synopsized the feeling among senior Obama officials in late 2009: then-Secretary of State Clinton "did not want to hear of peace talks, and neither did the military, and neither did the White House. Talking to the enemy—the only way to end the war—was never part of the strategy review."¹⁵⁸ Packer later went on to provide additional detail about the military position: "The military, and above all Petraeus, thought it was much too soon to negotiate in 2009, or even 2010—the surge needed time to punish the enemy first."¹⁵⁹

In January 2010, at a conference of special representatives to Afghanistan in Abu Dhabi, Holbrooke was approached by Bernd Mützelburg, his German counterpart. A couple of months prior, Mützelburg had met with the former Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Zaeef, during a visit to Kabul. Zaeef asked if he would be willing to explore the potential for direct contacts between German and Taliban leadership. With Karzai's blessing, Mützelburg flew to Dubai and met with Tayeb Agha, the trusted aide of Mullah Omar who was reportedly present at the meeting to discuss Taliban surrender options in Kandahar back in December 2001. In Dubai, Agha laid out the Taliban's initial priorities: a place independent from the prying eyes of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence organization from which to engage in talks and relief from international sanctions and blacklists to ensure free passage to that location.¹⁶⁰ For the first time since those early days, a potentially key player in reaching a comprehensive politi-

¹⁵⁷ Coll, 2018, p. 424.

¹⁵⁸ Packer, 2019, p. 498.

¹⁵⁹ Packer, 2019, p. 514.

¹⁶⁰ Christoph Reuter, Gregor Peter Schmitz, and Holger Stark, "How German Diplomats Opened Channel to Taliban," *Spiegel International*, January 10, 2012.

cal solution in Afghanistan had a name and an opening proposal. Nevertheless, it would take more than three years of interagency debate, squabbling with the Karzai government, and a host of other setbacks for this chapter of the conflict to play out.

U.S. Position and Approach

Perhaps buoyed by reports that the Taliban might be interested in peace talks, Holbrooke and Doug Lute, a carryover from the Bush administration and now the White House's Senior Coordinator for Afghanistan and Pakistan, agreed in spring 2010 that it would be beneficial for the United States to pursue peace talks when its military presence was high rather than wait for some undefined inflection point of Taliban degradation. Lute began chairing what was called the Conflict Resolution Cell. The group moved to dismiss the Bush administration order that blacklisted all Taliban members until they surrendered. The group also converted the three organizational preconditions for talks into desired end states: that the Taliban stop fighting, renounce al-Qa'ida, and accept the Afghan constitution.¹⁶¹ Holbrooke saw this as an opportunity to address what he saw as the missing political dynamic to the 2009 strategy review. His goal now was to persuade Karzai to "authorize direct contacts" between the United States and the Taliban.¹⁶² Karzai, however, initially refused. According to him, Pakistan controlled the Taliban, whom he once referred to as just a bunch of "country bumpkins," and any peace talks thus had to involve the Inter-Services Intelligence organization.¹⁶³

Initial efforts to expand the support among the interagency for this was uneven. GEN Stanley McChrystal endorsed talks in May 2010, only to be abruptly replaced as ISAF commander by Petraeus after a controversial article in *Rolling Stone* magazine was published.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Packer, 2019, p. 518.

¹⁶² Coll, 2018, pp. 454–455.

¹⁶³ Coll, 2018, pp. 454–455.

¹⁶⁴ Helene Cooper and David E. Sanger, "Obama Says Afghan Policy Won't Change After Dismissal," *New York Times*, June 23, 2010.

Petraeus was unable to be convinced, dismissing the topic when Holbrooke broached it by saying, “That’s a fifteen second conversation.”¹⁶⁵

By September, however, the interagency Conflict Resolution Cell was ready to make a formal recommendation to authorize direct U.S. talks with the Taliban for the first time. President Obama signed a secret memo authorizing this on September 17.¹⁶⁶ Secrecy was lost, however, later in the month, when Petraeus mentioned to reporters in Kabul that there were “very high-level Taliban leaders who have sought to reach out to the highest levels of the Afghan government.”¹⁶⁷ Posing it as an Afghan-led (and, thus, Karzai-led) endeavor may have softened the blow, but this caused consternation in both Kabul and Islamabad. It also presented Washington with another dynamic to account for before moving forward.

After secret meetings between Tayeb Agha and a representative from the National Security Council and SRAP staffs in November 2010 and February 2011 in which the two sides laid out their positions but agreed to little, the White House determined that it had to inform Karzai of this effort. Without his blessing, these preliminary discussions could not lead to the necessary negotiations between the Afghan government and Taliban. In a March 2 video teleconference with Karzai, Obama stated that the purpose of the talks with Agha was to foster “an Afghan process.” Karzai complained that “Afghanistan is a client state, not a partner,” and used the opportunity to once again voice his rejection of Petraeus’s military strategy.¹⁶⁸

Despite Karzai’s protestations, Marc Grossman, a seasoned diplomat who succeeded Holbrooke as SRAP, traveled to Doha later that summer to meet Agha in person. Grossman returned from the talks feeling that progress had been made and told colleagues that he expected the Taliban would have their political office in Qatar opened within

¹⁶⁵ Packer, 2019, p. 521.

¹⁶⁶ Coll, 2018, p. 498.

¹⁶⁷ Mohammed Abbas, “NATO Helped Bring Taliban Official to Kabul: Petraeus,” Reuters, October 15, 2010.

¹⁶⁸ As quoted in Coll, 2018, p. 525.

a few months.¹⁶⁹ On October 19, Secretary Clinton briefed Karzai on the most recent engagement with Agha while on a visit to Kabul. Her message was that if the ongoing negotiations for the prisoner exchange for the return of Bowe Bergdahl were successful, Mullah Akhtar Mansour, deputy head of the Taliban, would lead substantive discussions about the war and the future of Afghan politics. Karzai responded that he wanted things to develop faster and recommended that Clinton put more pressure on the Pakistanis to help in this matter.¹⁷⁰ While Karzai's response was noncommittal, the engagement demonstrated the U.S. policy of keeping him informed of all communications with the Taliban to help tamp down his suspicions about Washington's intentions.

In December 2011, diplomats from around the world assembled in Bonn to commemorate the ten-year anniversary of the beginning of the Karzai-led interim Afghan government. By this time, the United States, Qatar, and the Taliban had agreed to most of the classified memorandums that had to be resolved prior to the opening of a political office. Grossman intended to travel from Bonn to Doha to finalize the details with the newly acquired endorsement of Karzai to both proceed with the opening of the office and permit U.S.-Taliban preliminary talks. In Bonn, however, Karzai blew up and decided that the Qatar office proposal was evidence that Washington intended to negotiate a separate deal with the Taliban that accommodated Pakistan at Afghanistan's expense. Karzai then insisted that only he could grant the Taliban authorization to open such an office, not the United States.¹⁷¹

As Dobbins has contended, "[i]n early 2012 the Taliban was ready to negotiate with the United States but not with Karzai or his representatives. Karzai insisted talks should not proceed without his government's participation."¹⁷² Realizing it could achieve little with the

¹⁶⁹ Coll, 2018, pp. 572–574.

¹⁷⁰ Coll, 2018, p. 578.

¹⁷¹ Coll, 2018, p. 584.

¹⁷² Dobbins, 2017, p. 274.

Afghan government openly opposing such efforts, Washington decided to shelve any exploratory dialogue. Yet soon after Dobbins took over the SRAP position in 2013, “Qatar, Pakistan, and two other Western governments all reported to us that the insurgent leadership was ready to open talks with both the United States and the government in Kabul.”¹⁷³ Thus, preparing for such talks became a priority issue for Dobbins in his first weeks as SRAP.

Afghan Position and Approach

As previously discussed, Karzai was an early proponent of talking to the Taliban about a peace agreement but had been dissuaded from doing so by American officials for years.¹⁷⁴ Now, following a steep regression in Karzai’s relationship with Washington in the aftermath of the 2009 election, he was wary of endorsing U.S.-led exploratory talks with Taliban interlocutors. Karzai’s distrust was such that he feared that the United States would seek a bilateral deal with the Taliban that would leave out him and his administration.

As Karzai would continue to demonstrate, it was, for him, less about being against a peace process with the Taliban than it was his reluctance to cede any control over such discussions to the United States or any other foreign entity. In fact, on multiple occasions, seeing them as fellow Pashtuns, he referred to the Taliban as “disenchanted” or “upset” brothers.¹⁷⁵ In 2010, during a period when the NATO coalition had turned its focus to reintegrating low-level Taliban fighters as a means of compelling its leadership to the table, Karzai contradicted the strategy by offering to host a peace conference in Kabul with senior Taliban leaders.¹⁷⁶

Around the same time, the Taliban found ways to reach out to American interlocutors to lay out their broad requirements for engaging in bilateral discussions. In April 2010, Mullah Zaeef, a former senior

¹⁷³ Dobbins, 2017, p. 274.

¹⁷⁴ Dobbins, 2017, p. 273.

¹⁷⁵ For example, Mark Landler and Alissa J. Rubin, “War Plan for Karzai: Reach Out to Taliban,” *New York Times*, January 28, 2010.

¹⁷⁶ Partlow, 2016, p. 111.

Taliban official who maintained contacts with leadership, hosted an American visitor at his Kabul home and outlined his version of the Taliban negotiating position. They demanded that foreign troops leave Afghanistan, that their names be removed from any blacklists, and that they be given a safe office from which to negotiate. The Taliban also wanted the constitution to be revised in accordance with their understanding of Islamic law.¹⁷⁷

Following his vociferous rejection of Grossman's December 2011 proposal in Bonn to finalize the opening of a Taliban office in Doha, Karzai communicated three terms he required to proceed in January 2012. Some U.S. officials deemed these "poison pills" because of their infeasibility and called for Qatari officials to fly to Kabul to explain the Taliban political office to Karzai, for Taliban and Afghan officials to agree to a memorandum of understanding, and for the Taliban to agree to meet with representatives of the Karzai government.¹⁷⁸ The last point was particularly distasteful to the Taliban, who had long held that Karzai was an American puppet. When Grossman presented these conditions in Doha, Agha and even the Qataris were reportedly furious. In early March 2012, the Taliban publicly announced that they were withdrawing from peace talks.¹⁷⁹ Karzai had successfully undermined U.S. efforts at bilateral talks with the Taliban and, in so doing, instilled doubt in the Taliban and among Qatari officials about the potential utility of such talks.

In spring 2013, in his initial days as SRAP, Dobbins successfully attained U.S. interagency support to reexamine the possibility of opening a Taliban political office in Doha. Now he had to convince Karzai. On his first trip to Afghanistan as SRAP, Dobbins broached the subject with Karzai, including informing him that he had received Qatar's guarantee that limits would be placed on Taliban actions such that they could not try to establish an alternative Afghan embassy. Adopting a stance similar to the one he took in Bonn in 2011, Karzai responded that the Qataris should make such guarantees to him and

¹⁷⁷ Coll, 2018, p. 441.

¹⁷⁸ Coll, 2018, p. 583.

¹⁷⁹ "Afghanistan's Taliban Suspend Peace Talks with US," BBC News, March 15, 2012.

immediately instructed his foreign minister to fly to Doha to secure such assurances directly.¹⁸⁰

Outcome: Short- and Long-Term Failure

In early 2013, as Dobbins expected, the Qataris expressed little appetite to renegotiate the terms of a Taliban political office with Karzai's representatives. Instead, the emir invited Karzai for a state visit, which went so well that he agreed to drop his insistence on further negotiation and provided his approval for the office and, with it, bilateral talks between Washington and the Taliban. For their part, U.S. officials assured Karzai he would be briefed regularly, that no decision would be made without his approval, and that the process would be transitioned to the Afghan government as soon as possible.¹⁸¹

The Taliban Political Commission office in Doha was short-lived, lasting only several hours. During its ceremonial opening on June 18, 2013, television cameras showed Qatari officials with Taliban representatives in a compound that flew the flag of the Islamic Emirate and displaying a sign that read, "Office of the Islamic Emirate." Secretary Kerry quickly called the emir to protest and the sign and flag came down, although the damage was done. Karzai's objections were vocal and generally shared across the political spectrum in Kabul. The Taliban, for their part, felt humiliated by what had transpired and announced that the office was closed. Kerry and Dobbins soon traveled to Doha, where the emir claimed that a U.S. delegation more than a year earlier had stated that the Taliban could identify themselves as they wished. This was despite a more recent signed memorandum of understanding stating the contrary. The Taliban claimed that they did not request the sign and flag but rather that the Qataris had provided these.¹⁸²

Qatari missteps notwithstanding, for Karzai, this was yet another setback instigated by the United States, which he came to accuse of

¹⁸⁰Dobbins, 2017, p. 276.

¹⁸¹Karen DeYoung, "U.S. to Launch Peace Talks with Taliban," *Washington Post*, June 18, 2013.

¹⁸²Dobbins, 2017, pp. 279–280.

prolonging the war and intentionally sabotaging opportunities for a peace dialogue. In this instance, it did not matter that the United States did not impose measures of conditionality and, instead, opted for what became a prolonged period of persistent persuasion among various officials. In Karzai's eyes, once again acceding to U.S. insistence damaged his reputation. These accusations prompted a testy video conference between Obama and Karzai that failed to resolve the issues. This kicked off an acrimonious year between the two leaders as Obama pressed for Karzai's approval of a revised Bilateral Security Agreement, and Karzai kept refusing until Washington brought the Taliban to the negotiating table with his government, a nearly impossible request but, perhaps, the only action that could restore some of his standing.¹⁸³ This has not come to pass, for Karzai or his successor, because years of sporadic contacts between the United States and the Taliban, as well as a number of other interlocutors, have failed to convince the group to remove its long-held refusal to engage the Afghan government bilaterally.

Summary

As outlined in Table 4.7, in late 2009, senior members of the Obama administration began crafting ways to pursue a political accommodation that would end the Afghanistan conflict. Advancing talks with the Taliban would require cooperation from Karzai, and U.S. officials intermittently attempted to gain his approval for a U.S.-Taliban dialogue designed to facilitate talks including the Afghan government. Persistence eventually paid off, although a series of oversights led to a sudden collapse of the process; for the rest of his term, Karzai refused to entertain similar entreaties toward peace.

¹⁸³ Dobbins, 2017, pp. 284–285.

Table 4.7
Summary Coding of Influence Event 7:
Peace Talks, Doha Office, 2010–2013

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned
Influence strategy	Persuasion
Strength of inducement or sanction	Low
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	High
Short-term outcome	Failure
Long-term outcome	Failure

Influence Event 8: Countering Corruption and the Push to Replace Ahmed Wali Karzai as Head of the Kandahar Provincial Council, 2006–2010

From the outset of the interim government in late 2001, a top priority of the United States and other international donors has been countering corruption in the Afghan bureaucracy. Anxious for a triumph in this area, senior U.S. officials tried to persuade President Karzai on multiple occasions to remove one of the most egregious suspected illicit power brokers, his half-brother Ahmed Wali Karzai (AWK), as head of the Kandahar Provincial Council. AWK's value as a long-standing asset to U.S. forces and intelligence officials in Kandahar, however, prevented some key U.S. stakeholders from reaching consensus on his ouster. Without pressure from the most senior officials in Washington, Kabul-based U.S. officials were unable to wield sufficient leverage to compel Karzai to comply. Neither were they able to provide the hard evidence Karzai demanded as a prerequisite. This was indicative of the U.S. approach to a complicated problem set that was collectively seen as a priority yet persistently lacked a comprehensive strategic approach.

Context

Throughout its involvement in Afghanistan, the United States has perhaps struggled most with finding a strategic balance between fostering the development of an independently functional Afghan government and the pursuit of its more immediate security-centric goals and objectives. Perhaps no other single topic is more illustrative of this challenge than that of corruption. As discussed earlier, the complete lack of any governmental institutions at the outset of the Afghan conflict, coupled with an abject aversion to nation-building that the Bush administration demonstrated in the opening years, set in motion a series of intermittent, disjointed, and ad hoc efforts to address an issue that was serving to both stymie and advance competing U.S. objectives.

In the 2003–2004 time frame, the coordinated efforts of the United States and the Afghan government succeeded in allaying the military threat that warlords with their own heavy arsenals posed. These efforts included bringing a handful of particularly influential warlords into the government. While this satisfied an immediate requirement to foster a relatively smooth 2004 presidential election, these actions did little, if anything, to stem the warlords' political clout or prevent Karzai from supporting his own collection of corrupt power brokers.

AWK, the powerful head of the Kandahar Provincial Council, was one prominent example of the complexities U.S. policymakers confronted. As a half-brother to Hamid Karzai and regional strongman suspected to have notable influence, even by Afghan standards, AWK personified the difficulties U.S. officials faced in attempting to articulate a cohesive policy position when it came to these actors. On the one hand, a figure like AWK could provide indispensable intelligence, help protect coalition forces, and ease logistical challenges. On the other hand, his reported involvement in the illicit economy, extrajudicial punishment, and suppression of competing political actors served to harm the reputation and legitimacy of the central government. How best to deal with AWK and his ilk was the subject of countless deliberations among U.S. officials both in Washington and Kabul, and the lack of a unified decision had adverse strategic effects.

U.S. Position and Approach

AWK's relationship with the United States dates back to 2001, when he served as a much-needed guide to the labyrinth of southern Afghanistan tribal politics for unenlightened American military and intelligence officials.¹⁸⁴ He leveraged this relationship with the United States and other foreign backers to bring under his influence Kandahar's key commercial, military, and contracting networks.¹⁸⁵ His election as the head of the Kandahar Provincial Council in 2005 helped cement his place as the province's most powerful individual.

AWK's utility to the U.S. military and counterterrorism missions in the south notwithstanding, media accusations of AWK's involvement in drug smuggling started as early as 2004, and speculation about his involvement in the opium trade ran rampant.¹⁸⁶ In reaction to a 2006 *Newsweek* article making similar allegations, President Karzai, according to U.S. cable traffic, asked "both U.S. and British intelligence whether they had any evidence to back that up," to which officials admitted they had only "numerous rumors and allegations," but insufficient evidence to support a criminal indictment.¹⁸⁷ Later that year, however, Ambassador Neumann recommended that AWK not only be pushed out of power but be asked to leave the country. Such a symbolic gesture from President Karzai would, in Neumann's estimation, both legitimize his leadership at home and avoid questions from the U.S. Congress and American citizens.¹⁸⁸ This was the onset of a periodic pattern of senior U.S. officials attempting to convince Karzai to sack, or at least relocate, his half-brother by appealing to the positive symbolism of such a gesture, only to be asked to provide proof of his involvement in illicit activities before any consideration would be afforded.

¹⁸⁴Dexter Filkins, "Death of an Afghan Godfather," *New Yorker*, July 12, 2011.

¹⁸⁵Carl Forsberg, *Politics and Power in Kandahar*, Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, April 2010, p. 6.

¹⁸⁶Carlotta Gall, "Afghan Poppy Growing Reaches Record Level, U.N. Says," *New York Times*, November 19, 2004.

¹⁸⁷As quoted in Coll, 2018, p. 278.

¹⁸⁸Partlow, 2016, p. 146.

As discussed, the Obama administration reached the conclusion early on that U.S. goals and objectives in Afghanistan could not be reached without much improved governance. Shortly after being appointed SRAP in January 2009, Holbrooke went to the CIA to meet with director Leon Panetta, his deputy Stephen Kappes, and a group of analysts and aides prepared to discuss South Asia. Holbrooke understood that, since 2001, the agency had installed a handful of warlords loyal to assassinated Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Massoud or who had other anti-Taliban bona fides and had maintained ties with them ever since for reasons associated with counterterrorism objectives. Holbrooke argued that CIA's docket of strongmen, such as AWK, was part of the problem. The strongmen provided a veneer of security while governing as predators that strengthened the insurgency.

Kappes disagreed, noting that the fight against al-Qa'ida was the priority and that "the security of the United States trumped any concerns about the moral qualities of its Afghan interlocutors."¹⁸⁹ Ultimately, the CIA would not be forthcoming with the highly compartmentalized details about which Afghan and Pakistani officials had been and were on their payrolls, and they had little interest in taking a side in some interagency policy debate.¹⁹⁰ According to Holbrooke's senior advisor, Barnett Rubin, "Holbrooke's first fight with the Agency was Ahmed Wali Karzai," and the agency was not interested in changing its course on AWK because he was providing great intelligence and cooperating on counterterrorism issues.¹⁹¹ According to Rubin, this "was a clear case of different U.S. agencies carrying out different missions in Afghanistan."¹⁹²

As with the 2009 presidential election, Holbrooke was not impeded by interagency disagreement in Washington. In March 2009, during a meeting with Karzai, Holbrooke beseeched him to sack AWK, although Holbrooke appealed to Karzai's ego without threatening pen-

¹⁸⁹As quoted in Coll, 2018, p. 360.

¹⁹⁰Coll, 2018, p. 360.

¹⁹¹Interview with Barnett Rubin, May 8, 2019.

¹⁹²Interview with Barnett Rubin, May 8, 2019.

alties. “He’s hurting you. He’s holding you back,” Holbrooke argued. “Everybody always says this,” Karzai responded, “but nobody ever shows me evidence.”¹⁹³ Given the lukewarm response he received from the CIA, a lack of guidance from Washington to have AWK replaced, and no substantial evidence, Holbrooke’s ability to exert further leverage was limited.

It was also around this time that GEN David McKiernan, who commanded ISAF from October 2008 through June 2009, instructed subordinates to gather any evidence that might tie AWK to the drug trade.¹⁹⁴ This likely stemmed from at least four occasions when European diplomats came to him asking for him to press Hamid Karzai to push out AWK. “I’ve got nothing on the guy,” was all he could reply.¹⁹⁵

Holbrooke’s outlook on AWK appears to have been shared more broadly within the Department of State over the course of the year. Bill Harris, who would arrive in Kandahar in November 2009 as the senior American diplomat in the south, recalls that his predeployment meetings at State were tinged with residual embitterment toward Hamid Karzai and his family:

There was kind of an appetite for, you know, ‘We didn’t get Hamid in the election. We missed . . . So what we’re going to do is teach them a lesson. . . . And the way we’re going to do that and help ourselves at the same time is to get rid of this pesky brother, so that we can have good governance in the south.’¹⁹⁶

The following month, a U.S. embassy cable stated that, in Kandahar, AWK “dominated access to economic resources, patronage, and protection” and that he operates “parallel to formal government structures, through a network of political clans that use state institutions to protect and enable licit and illicit enterprise.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ As quoted in Coll, 2018, p. 379.

¹⁹⁴ Mark Mazzetti, “Former Spy with Agenda Operates a Private C.I.A.,” *New York Times*, January 22, 2011.

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 147.

¹⁹⁶ Quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 130.

¹⁹⁷ Quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 138.

On the military side, General McChrystal replaced General McKiernan as ISAF commander in mid-2009. McChrystal put great stock in building a sound relationship with Karzai. This effort was quickly enhanced by his prioritizing reduced civilian casualties, a top concern of Karzai's. Among the key U.S. officials deployed to or regularly in Afghanistan, McChrystal's relationship with Karzai stood out: "His credo in Afghanistan was no civilian casualties, and through his strenuous efforts the number came down. . . . Karzai loved him and tried to use him against Eikenberry and Holbrooke."¹⁹⁸

McChrystal was also a strong advocate for the idea that Afghanistan could not be stabilized without improved governance. Thus, two of his priorities ran into conflict when two of McChrystal's senior staffers, intelligence chief MG Michael Flynn and senior adviser Sarah Chayes, advocated forcing AWK out. McChrystal was receiving similar sentiment from senior officials based in Kandahar, where Harris described the situation as a manhood test: "removing Ahmed Wali would send a strong message to President Karzai that this was a new era in the war, one where impunity would not stand."¹⁹⁹ UK General Nick Carter, the commander of Regional Command–South was also an advocate for AWK's removal.

In early 2010, however, some doubt began to seep in as military intelligence officials failed to find the smoking gun tying AWK directly to the opium trade or other illicit activities. In addition, Ambassador Eikenberry was wary of presenting Karzai with an ultimatum and encouraged McChrystal against it. Nevertheless, in late February, McChrystal visited Karzai in the Presidential Palace and, putting his close relationship on the line, told him that he felt that AWK needed to leave. Once again, as he had done multiple times in the past, Karzai replied, "No problem. Bring me the evidence."²⁰⁰

McChrystal then ordered his staff to conduct a deep-dive investigation of AWK to resolve the issue. At the same time, Deputy Ambassador Frank Ruggiero traveled to Kandahar to deliver a sterner mes-

¹⁹⁸ Packer, 2019, p. 492.

¹⁹⁹ Quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 141.

²⁰⁰ Quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 149.

sage to AWK. With the focus of the war about to shift to Kandahar, the United States would not tolerate people who were working against American aims.²⁰¹ AWK characteristically offered a stern denial of the accusations against him. Once again, the deep dive failed to turn up definitive evidence. At one point during the briefing, a frustrated McChrystal said: “So there’s nothing? So I went to the president of this country and I had nothing to go on?”²⁰² After going around the packed room seeking recommendations, the consensus was that the coalition had no choice but to work with AWK. The meeting concluded with McChrystal’s order: “We’re going to stop saying bad stuff about AWK. Okay? Stop.”²⁰³

Ultimately, McChrystal and Flynn were forced to settle on a policy of establishing redlines that AWK must not cross, such as providing material support to the Taliban, while tacitly permitting other indiscretions he had long been thought to be routinely involved in.²⁰⁴ Roughly a year later, another U.S. intelligence analyst was instructed to review AWK’s adherence to the redlines and determined that they had not been crossed.²⁰⁵

Afghan Position and Approach

It is difficult to state definitively why Karzai seemingly expressed calmness and confidence in responding to multiple requests over a number of years to remove AWK from the Kandahar Provincial Council. Perhaps it was at least because it was well known that AWK had close ties with the CIA and that requests for this evidence from military officials and diplomats would likely be fruitless. One Karzai aid who recalled speaking with American officials about the allegations against AWK noted that most would say that they did not have any evidence, while

²⁰¹Partlow, 2016, p. 149.

²⁰²Partlow, 2016, p. 150.

²⁰³Partlow, 2016, p. 150.

²⁰⁴Coll, 2018, p. 472.

²⁰⁵Partlow, 2016, p. 273.

those in the intelligence community that worked with him would say, “[h]e’s very helpful.”²⁰⁶

There is evidence that U.S. requests to remove AWK did not resonate more generally with Afghan officials. Even reformers among Karzai’s inner circle, for instance, found Holbrooke’s request to be misguided. Reacting to Holbrook’s insistence to President Karzai that he replace his half-brother, reformers explained that the Karzais had been running Kandahar for generations, that this is where the president’s base was. Considering this, how could he sack his brother?²⁰⁷

In terms of broader accusations of corruption in the Afghan government, there is evidence that Hamid Karzai felt they were disingenuous attempts to leverage him. In an interview with a U.S. journalist, Karzai contended that

[c]orruption was there. True, sure. But they didn’t raise it because corruption was there. They raised it as a pressure tactic. And we know that. So the main purpose all along of the pressure was to turn me silent on issues that we raised and were very important to us.²⁰⁸

For his part, AWK consistently denied participating in the drug trade in Kandahar and even offered to take a polygraph test to prove his innocence. His refutations were unconditional. He once told ABC News, “I was never in the drug business. I never benefited. I never facilitated. I never helped anyone with transportation of any kind.”²⁰⁹ Such denials were at least partially effective; opinion varied widely across the Obama administration and within NATO about how dangerous AWK was, whether he was involved with opium, and whether he should be accepted as a necessary evil or be forced out.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶Quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 143.

²⁰⁷Packer, 2019, p. 479.

²⁰⁸Quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 32.

²⁰⁹Quoted in Partlow, 2016, p. 147.

²¹⁰Coll, 2018, p. 471.

Outcome: Failure Indicative of a Persistent Strategic Gap

There is little evidence that senior Bush or Obama administration officials provided explicit guidance on how to address the issue of AWK. Thus, left to stakeholders in the field, efforts to send a signal about Washington's seriousness when it came to corruption suffered from competing priorities and perspectives. Quoting a dossier compiled in 2010 for U.S. military commanders that outlined AWK's involvement in the drug trade, the *New York Times* reported:

Mr. Karzai's ties to the C.I.A.—which has paid him an undetermined amount of money since 2001—may be the reason the agency 'is the only member of the country team in Kabul not to advocate taking a more aggressive stance against AWK.'²¹¹

This lack of interagency consensus was likely a contributing factor in preventing U.S. officials, such as Neumann, Holbrooke, and McChrystal, from exerting some level of conditionality on Karzai and instead relying on persuasion. Sensing a lack of explicit guidance from Washington and discord among members of the U.S. country team, Karzai does not seem to have taken any of these requests very seriously.

Neumann has argued that Karzai's defensive response to corruption allegations and strong reluctance to act on U.S. appeals to take action are based, at least in part, on U.S. inaction on the matter early on and a general lack of understanding of Afghan society:

By the time we really got wound up on corruption, we were also becoming very unclear about where we were going, how long we would stay, what we would do. If you're Karzai, what you're hearing is, "I want you to fire people without whom you could not politically survive, and I know you can't do that unless I stay around and support you, and I can't tell you if I'm going to stay around." That dialogue is wholly unpersuasive.²¹²

²¹¹ Mazzetti, 2011.

²¹² Partlow, 2016, p. 245.

Considering this, the consistently ambiguous messaging from U.S. officials, and failure to exert any conditionality supported by concrete evidence, Karzai appears never to have seriously contemplated sacking AWK.

This chapter of Washington's up-and-down efforts to counter corruption came to an abrupt end on July 12, 2011, when AWK was assassinated in Kandahar by a trusted confidante. As with so much else surrounding AWK, the details surrounding his death were murky.²¹³

Summary

As outlined in Table 4.8, the United States has persistently seen the corrosive effects of corruption as an impediment to its institutional development goals in Afghanistan. Perhaps no individual better encapsulated U.S. struggles to confront this problem than AWK, whom various U.S. stakeholders viewed as both an invaluable collaborator and dangerous adversary. Over the span of nearly a decade, senior U.S. officials who viewed him as the latter appealed to President Karzai

Table 4.8
Summary Coding of Influence Event 8:
Countering Corruption—Ahmed Wali Karzai,
2006–2010

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned
Influence strategy	Persuasion
Strength of inducement or sanction	Low
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	Low
Short-term outcome	Failure
Long-term outcome	Failure

²¹³ Joshua Partlow and Kevin Sieff, "Ahmed Wali Karzai, Half Brother of Afghan President, Killed by Trusted Confidant," *Washington Post*, July 12, 2016.

that pushing out such a threatening actor, who also happened to be his half-brother, would demonstrate his commitment to establishing sound governance. Such persuasion proved ineffective, however, and the lack of consensus in Washington about how best to address the overarching issue of Afghan corruption limited the leverage of these requesters. In the end, this became one of many issues on which the recalcitrant President Karzai refused to accommodate.

Influence Event 9: The 2014 Election and Formation of the National Unity Government

With the incumbent Karzai forced out of office by term limits, the 2014 Afghan presidential election was a hotly contested race among numerous candidates. First-round winners, Ashraf Gahni and Abdullah Abdullah, endured a second round plagued by rampant fraud. Initial announcements of Ghani's victory led to calls by Abdullah's supporters for him to take drastic measures. Over a span of months, a coordinated effort by senior U.S. officials exerting hard conditionality resulted in both sides eventually agreeing to the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG). This alleviated the immediate threat of a government collapse and fostered a more inclusive, if utterly imperfect, longer-term bureaucratic alliance.

Context

The Afghan Presidential election of 2014 would be the first of the post-Taliban era that did not feature Hamid Karzai, who was obligated to step down following two terms in office. Consequently, the lack of an incumbent made the stakes for this election quite high because it provided a key opportunity for a diverse group of candidates to sit atop an extremely centralized governing structure. The vote took place in April, and no candidate reached the 50 percent threshold required to avoid a runoff. Despite some accusations of fraud, Abdullah Abdullah (45 percent) and Ashraf Ghani (31.5 percent) were clearly the top two vote getters, and both campaigns agreed to participate in a second vote, to take place in June. This time, however, polling was marred by

reports of widespread fraud that were seemingly substantiated when voice recordings were released of the head of the Independent Election Commission (IEC), Ziaulhaq Amarkhil, perpetrating what the Abdullah campaign dubbed “industrial scale” fraud in favor of Ghani.²¹⁴ Amarkhil’s subsequent resignation did little to satisfy the Abdullah camp, which was growing restless shortly after the second round. IEC’s abrupt release of preliminary results in early July that favored Ghani plunged Afghanistan into a full-blown crisis.²¹⁵

Reports of armed protesters taking to the streets and influential Abdullah supporters calling for the formation of a parallel government headed by their candidate signaled the most significant challenge yet to Afghan governance since the overthrow of the Taliban.²¹⁶ This touched off a drawn-out U.S.-led intervention to find a mutually acceptable outcome, featuring a host of incremental agreements, that was punctuated by setbacks before reaching a more comprehensive resolution in September.

U.S. Position and Approach

As the immediate crisis unfolded, the United States was quick to renounce any calls for the establishment of a parallel government in Kabul and was explicit in outlining the consequences of such a move. In an interview with BBC World, the SRAP, Ambassador Dobbins, stated the following:

We made clear that the United States and its partners are not in a position to support a divided Afghanistan. That any effort to establish a parallel presidency would make it impossible for the United States and its partners to continue their financial, eco-

²¹⁴Yaroslav Trofimov, Nathan Hodge, and Margherita Stancati, “Afghan Election Official Draws Ire of Abdullah Supporters; Candidate’s Opponent Is Estimated to Lead in Presidential Runoff Tally, a Reversal from First Round,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 22, 2014.

²¹⁵Martine van Bijlert, “Elections 2014 (38): Candidate Positioning After the Preliminary Results,” Afghanistan Analysts Network, July 9, 2014a.

²¹⁶Rob Crilly, “Afghan Presidential Candidate Rejects Election ‘Coup’ and ‘Plans Parallel Government,’” *The Telegraph*, July 8, 2014.

conomic and military support, and that the consequences for the country would be potentially quite dire.”²¹⁷

Washington saw little choice but to be quick and assertive with its response. As U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan James Cunningham stated: “The reason we intervened so rapidly was to urge them to stop even thinking about going down that road, which, I agree, would have been a disaster for the country.”²¹⁸

There was also much activity behind the scenes between senior U.S. officials and their Afghan counterparts. Secretary of State Kerry immediately called both candidates. The Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dempsey; and the CIA director, John Brennan called their Afghan counterparts. Later that evening, Obama called President Karzai and both candidates, reemphasizing the U.S. message that there would be no American aid for a divided Afghanistan.²¹⁹ Obama also informed the trio that Kerry, similar to the 2009 election, would soon be arriving in Kabul to consult with both sides about a way to move forward. Abdullah used this point in tamping down unrest among his constituency. Before he even arrived, Kerry issued a statement urging similar caution:

[T]here is no justifiable recourse to violence or threats of violence, or for resort to extraconstitutional measures or threats of the same. . . . Any action to take power by extralegal means will cost Afghanistan the financial and security support of the United States and the international community.²²⁰

Following two days and at least 20 hours of intensive meetings, Kerry had brokered an agreement in which all the 8 million votes cast in the second round would be audited. At a press conference announcing the deal, Kerry maintained a positive public face and congratulated

²¹⁷James F. Dobbins, “Interview with BBC World,” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, July 8, 2014.

²¹⁸Partlow, 2016, pp. 384–385.

²¹⁹Dobbins, 2017, p. 294.

²²⁰van Bijlert, 2014a.

all sides: “This is unquestionably a tense and difficult moment, but I am very pleased that the two candidates who stand here with me today and President Karzai have stepped up and shown a significant commitment to compromise.”²²¹ What was not announced at this time was that both sides had also agreed, in principle, to engage in a power-sharing arrangement yet to be determined that would be based on the outcome of the audit.

This initial agreement, however, would prove to be short lived. The vote audit, while managed by the UN, occurred under tight time constraints and required the overwhelmed IEC to maintain an unrealistic pace. On a couple of occasions, fights broke out among rival officials; by early August, only 5,291 of the more than 23,000 boxes of votes had been counted.²²² The points on power sharing left much open to interpretation and depended on the unlikely cooperation of the two camps to hammer out the details of a power-sharing agreement. Dobbins returned to Kabul a few days after the agreement to find that “the candidates themselves were making no progress toward putting together a coalition government.”²²³

Kerry returned once again to Kabul in August for a second round of engagements with the two camps. This time, a more-detailed agreement was forged. On September 6, Obama once again called both candidates to urge them to abide by the agreement.²²⁴ On September 14, Ghani and Abdullah completed negotiations on a four-page power-sharing agreement. When Abdullah threatened to once again back out of the deal a few days later, Kerry called him and, over speakerphone to Abdullah and roughly 30 of his aides, warned that if they didn’t

come to an agreement now, today, the possibilities for Afghanistan will become very difficult, if not dangerous. I really need to

²²¹As quoted in Erin Cunningham, “Afghan Presidential Rivals Reach Deal, Brokered by Kerry, to Recount All Votes,” *Washington Post*, July 12, 2014.

²²²Martine van Bijlert, “2014 Elections (43): The Second Installment of a Kerry-Brokered Agreement,” Afghanistan Analysts Network, August 9, 2014b.

²²³Dobbins, 2017, p. 295.

²²⁴Coll, 2018, p. 653.

emphasize to you that if you do not have an agreement, if you do not move to a unity government, the United States will not be able to support Afghanistan.²²⁵

Thus, on the evening of September 20, Ghani and Abdullah met to sign an agreement that established the NUG.

Afghan Position and Approach

In the immediate aftermath of the initial vote, debates swirled about whether avoiding a second round of polling through a power-sharing agreement would be preferable to organizing another vote that would be threatened by violence and likely plagued by widespread fraud. Neither Ghani's nor Abdullah's camp, however, entertained designs of cogoverning. During an interview in May, Ghani stated bluntly, "I'm not interested in a deal—period."²²⁶ Ghani went on to state his belief that such a deal would leave both candidates without a mandate and would result in a bureaucratic stalemate. Abdullah voiced similar sentiments prior to the second-round polling, noting that engagement with Ghani would eventually be necessary but "not an engagement in order to avoid going into the second round. I don't think he is asking for that and I don't think we can."²²⁷ Thus, the second round went on as scheduled with the full endorsement of each candidate.

The aforementioned IEC release of preliminary results of second-round polling occurred with little warning and while negotiations for a detailed audit of the votes were ongoing. These "raw" totals reflected over 8 million votes, a turnout much higher than expected, and accounted for only a small fraction of fraudulent votes that would have to be removed over the course of an audit. Unsurprisingly, the pronouncement that Abdullah had received only 43 percent of the vote to Ghani's 56 percent, preliminary or not, resulted in an immediate and

²²⁵Coll, 2018, p. 660.

²²⁶As quoted in Kate Clark, "2014 Elections (20): The Ashraf Ghani Interview," Afghanistan Analysts Network, May 18, 2014b.

²²⁷As quoted in Kate Clark, "2014 Elections (18): The Abdullah Interview," Afghanistan Analysts Network, May 11, 2014a.

emotional response from Abdullah's supporters.²²⁸ This placed Abdullah in a difficult position, having to soften the rhetoric of some of his influential supporters, who were calling for the establishment of a parallel government, while signaling his displeasure with the results and vowing to fight on. For his part, Ghani issued an even-keeled public statement emphasizing that the results were preliminary and supporting an audit of the votes from over 7,000 polling stations.²²⁹

As the weeks dragged on, however, and as it was becoming more apparent that a thorough, timely, and trusted audit would be nearly impossible, reports surfaced that an influential group of Afghan elites was maneuvering to undo everything and seize power themselves. In August, the *New York Times* reported that a "coterie of powerful Afghan government ministers and officials with strong ties to the security forces are threatening to seize power if an election impasse that has paralyzed the country is not resolved soon."²³⁰ The reported group comprised Minister of Defense Bismallah Khan, Minister of Interior Omar Daudzai, National Security Advisor Rangin Spanta, and National Directorate for Security Director Rahmatullah Nabil.

The U.S. response to this development was swift and unambiguous. Gen Joseph Dunford, the ISAF commander at the time, "warned the quartet that if they followed through on their plan, the United States would treat them no differently than the Taliban—as enemies of the state."²³¹ After this, reports of a potential overthrow of the government ceased, and the laborious Kerry-led process was permitted to reach a resolution the following month.

The U.S.-Afghan bilateral dynamic was aided by a temporary thaw in relations that had, by this point, been on a downward trend for years. Despite rumors at the peak of the controversy over the summer that Karzai was helping instigate a coup to remain in power, he proved

²²⁸van Bijlert, 2014a; Kate Clark, "Elections 2014 (37): Preliminary Results Before Agreement on Auditing," Afghanistan Analysts Network, July 8, 2014c.

²²⁹van Bijlert, 2014a.

²³⁰Matthew Rosenberg, "Amid Election Impasse, Calls in Afghanistan for an Interim Government," *New York Times*, August 19, 2014.

²³¹Coll, 2018, p. 652.

to be accepting of U.S. involvement in finding a resolution.²³² Either because of the enormity and potential consequences of the impasse or because he was, unlike in 2009, not vying for office, Karzai shifted quickly and somewhat unexpectedly away from his contentious posture toward Washington. Instead, Karzai admitted that he was no longer able to control the situation and had reached the conclusion that it was up to the United States and the international community to intervene. Ambassador Dobbins, the SRAP, reported that “Karzai actually begged” for the United States to intervene; agreed to fully cooperate; and, for the first time in more than a year, got through a meeting without an argument.²³³ This would not, however, endure throughout the term of the NUG.

Outcome: Government Collapse Averted, and Imperfect Alliance Muddles Along

The U.S. intervention in the 2014 Afghan presidential election was necessary to prevent a prolonged controversy that did not appear to have a resolution in sight and would likely have resulted in a political collapse. Nevertheless, considering the stakes involved in the Afghan system of government, a crisis tied to graft was predictable. The Bonn Agreement acknowledged the importance of inclusion in the interim government and accounted for it in its appointments. It did not, however, codify inclusion. Moreover, the Afghan Constitution approved in 2004 encourages inclusion by calling for two vice presidents but grants the president authority to appoint all ministers, judges, senior security-sector officials, and senior subnational officials.²³⁴ Thus, the presidential election in 2014 was, in effect, a winner-take-all proposition, with no formal consolation for the losing candidates and their supporters. What became the NUG was, in effect, an organic and imperfect modification to a governance structure that was completely incompatible with Afghan political realities.

²³²Partlow, 2016, p. 385.

²³³Dobbins, 2017, p. 293.

²³⁴Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, “The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,” ratified January 26, 2004.

Unsurprisingly, the awkward arrangement that resulted in the NUG suffered from the outset. As Giustozzi and Ali have posited, “the NUG was . . . an arranged, loveless marriage.”²³⁵ With no constitutional definition of the authorities granted to the chief executive officer position that Abdullah accepted, he and Ghani quickly and often found themselves at odds. For instance, the respective camps had distinctly different expectations regarding the process of filling ministerial, provincial, and diplomatic appointments, which became bogged down.²³⁶ Aside from their immediate inner circles, neither leader was able to fully satisfy his ticket, each of which included two vice presidential candidates.

By 2016, a combination of bureaucratic stagnation and lack of progress toward tenets of the NUG agreement hurt the legitimacy of the construct and frustrated its participants. A key component of the original agreement was the holding of a Loya Jirga within two years that would consider changing the constitution to allow and define a prime minister position. This would effectively provide formal backing of Abdullah’s role and split executive power. With parliamentary and district council elections delayed, it was becoming apparent by the middle of the year that the Loya Jirga would not be held by the September mandate. During an April visit to Kabul, Kerry took the opportunity to refute the position that the NUG would lose authority to govern after this date. Karzai, who had become an increasingly vocal critic of the NUG and came to question its post-September mandate, criticized Kerry’s stance as a blatant violation of national sovereignty and sensitivities.²³⁷

Any remnants of this controversy were, however, eclipsed in August when Abdullah himself made a public speech in which he criti-

²³⁵ Antonio Ali Giustozzi and Ali Mohammed Ali, “The National Unity Government and the Re-Shaping of Political Coalitions in Afghanistan,” Washington, D.C.: Center for Research Policy Analysis, January 9, 2018, p. 3.

²³⁶ Jason Campbell, “What’s the Plan? The Afghan Government,” War on the Rocks website, November 10, 2014.

²³⁷ Martine van Bijlert and Ali Yawar Adili, “When the Political Agreement Runs Out: On the Future of Afghanistan’s National Unity Government,” Afghanistan Analysts Network, May 29, 2016.

cized Ghani as being unfit for office.²³⁸ Abdullah also charged Ghani with making decisions unilaterally, slow-rolling promised reforms, and violating the spirit of the NUG agreement. This commenced a months-long period of back and forth recriminations from both sides and uncertainty as to whether the NUG would hold together. In time, and with the help of persistent engagement from U.S. Ambassadors Michael McKinley and John Bass and members of the Afghan political elite, each side dropped its rhetoric, and Ghani and Abdullah found a way to continue on under an imperfect construct.

After resolving the immediate need to keep the Afghan government together following the second round of the 2014 election, the United States never elected to exert conditionality when it came to actually fulfilling the main points of the NUG agreement. In 2019, the agreement's five-year term elapsed in the spring, creating bureaucratic limbo before the twice-delayed elections were held in September. Once again, a controversial vote led to a standoff between Ghani and Abdullah, resulting in eight months of bureaucratic stasis. When the two men finally signed another agreement in May 2020, it was much more specific about the roles to be assumed and much less ambitious in its hopes for transformation based on shared goals. In exchange for relinquishing any formal executive title, Abdullah's coalition would be permitted to select one-half of all cabinet appointments, while Abdullah himself would take over leadership of the peace process with the Taliban via the to-be-established High Council for National Reconciliation. Ghani also agreed to establish a High Council of Governance to grant other major political leaders an opportunity to advise him. Unlike in 2014, the 2020 government abstained from adopting the "National Unity," or any other formal moniker.²³⁹

²³⁸Mujib Mashal, "Afghanistan Chief Executive Abdullah Denounces President Ghani as Unfit for Office," *New York Times*, August 11, 2016.

²³⁹Mujib Mashal, "Afghan Rivals Sign Power-Sharing Deal as Political Crisis Subsides," *New York Times*, May 17, 2020.

Summary

As outlined in Table 4.9, the United States once again had to intercede to prevent a likely government collapse following another fraudulent presidential election. In this case, the lack of an incumbent made a power-sharing arrangement more feasible but only after senior U.S. diplomatic and military leadership asserted its willingness to resort to hard conditionality by cutting off assistance and even considering targeting those who attempted to establish a parallel government. Such consistent and complementary messaging pressed the two camps to accept certain concessions and form a political alliance that partially accommodated each side and, numerous setbacks notwithstanding, helped sustain the political order in Kabul for another presidential term.

Conclusion

Chapter Five contains a thorough analysis of the nine influence events from Chapters Three and Four. A few broad themes from the Afghanistan case nonetheless stand out.

Table 4.9
Summary Coding of Influence Event 9:
Presidential Election, 2014

Dimension	Coding
Interest alignment	Misaligned
Influence strategy	Hard conditionality
Strength of inducement or sanction	High
Observability of outcome	High
Clarity	High
Short-term outcome	Success
Long-term outcome	Partial success

The United States demonstrated some proficiency exerting leverage in Afghanistan, although it managed to achieve only partial success in the long term. In many cases, U.S. leverage served as a means of addressing an impediment to an issue requiring a more immediate resolution. In a couple of other instances, such as those related to potential peace talks, the United States achieved the desired effect but to the detriment of broader strategic goals.

In the early years of the conflict, the United States prioritized establishing order and fostering the creation of a new Afghan government. During this time, political inclusion of critical factions outside the Taliban trumped institutional development, and the United States was able to exercise leverage despite having a small military footprint. During the Bonn Conference and in its immediate aftermath, there was a collective understanding among influential Afghans, be they politicians or warlords, that the future of their country hinged on the commitment of donors, especially the United States. Thus, even the victors of the fight against the Taliban could be cowed by the threat of losing international support if they overplayed their hand. When it had to, the United States was also able to use a show of force to compel certain warlords to turn in their heavy weapons and accept roles in the fledgling bureaucracy (even if this failed to completely stem their influence or illicit practices).

As its involvement in the Afghan conflict progressed, the United States focused more on institutional development, and this is reflected in the influence events. Encouraging Karzai to authorize the ALP was a response to a worsening security environment enabled by insufficient Afghan security forces. Pressing Karzai to relieve AWK from the Kandahar Provincial Council was fueled by the recognition that rampant corruption would not allow a capable bureaucracy to take shape. Finally, persuading Karzai to authorize the opening of a Taliban political office was a product of the recognition that there could be no stable political order in Afghanistan without Taliban participation. The U.S. intervention in the 2009 and 2014 presidential elections involved elements of political inclusion, although it was Afghanistan's weak institutions that instigated these crises. In sum, U.S. leverage was vital in bringing together disparate elements of Afghan society to form

a new government in 2001 and in keeping it together years later. What remains to be seen is whether these influence events will serve as short-term, transactional achievements or whether they can collectively contribute to longer-term success.

Synthesis of Findings from Iraq and Afghanistan

Chapters Three and Four have provided a sense of the complexities U.S. practitioners—both military and civilian—faced in Iraq and Afghanistan. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 summarize the findings from the two case studies. At this point, it is useful to examine broader patterns that emerge across the two cases and to compare these patterns with the debates on leverage and conditionality reviewed in Chapter Two.

In this chapter, we untangle the patterns in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 and their policy implications in three steps. First, we look at the preferences of the U.S. partners and their alignment with those of the United States, followed by an examination of whether the U.S. approach to influence was an appropriate fit with the (mis)alignment of interests. Second, we examine the preconditions for effective leverage to determine how commonly these preconditions were in place. We also assess whether common assumptions about the factors that give rise to the preconditions (such as the relationship between the U.S. military footprint and the U.S. ability to observe outcomes) are borne out by the evidence from these two cases. Third, we evaluate the overall incidence of success and failure in these influence events to determine how frequently the United States was able to influence its partners and the determinants of success and failure. A final section concludes with a brief discussion of the policy implications.

Table 5.1
Summary Coding of Influence Events—Iraq

Influence Event	Interest Alignment	Influence Strategy	Strength of Inducement or Sanction	Observability of Outcome	Clarity	Short-Term Outcome	Long-Term Outcome
1. Initial approach to Sadrists	Aligned	Inducements, persuasion	High	High	Low	Failure	Partial success
2. Support to CTS	Aligned, then misaligned	Inducements, persuasion	High	High	Low	Success	Partial success
3. Sons of Iraq program	Misaligned	Inducements, persuasion	Low	High	High	Success	Failure
4. Rebluing of INP	Misaligned	Hard conditionality	Low	High	High	Failure	Failure
5. Benchmarks for Sadrists	Misaligned	Hard conditionality	High	High	High	Partial success	Partial success
6. Hydrocarbon Law		Soft conditionality	Low	High	High	Failure	Failure
7. Maliki ouster	Misaligned, then aligned	Hard conditionality	High	High	High	Success	Success
8. National guard	Misaligned	Inducements, persuasion	Low	High	High	Failure	Failure
9. CAS to PMUs	Misaligned	Hard conditionality	High	High	Low	Partial success	N/A

Table 5.2
Summary Coding of Influence Events—Afghanistan

Influence Event	Interest Alignment	Influence Strategy	Strength of Inducement or Sanction	Observability of Outcome	Clarity	Short-Term Outcome	Long-Term Outcome
1. Bonn Conference	Aligned	Persuasion, then soft conditionality	High	High	High	Success	Partial success
2. Abrogation of Karzai peace deal	Misaligned	Hard conditionality	High	Low	High	Failure	Failure
3. Early ANA formation	Misaligned	Soft conditionality	High	High	High	Success	Partial success
4. Confronting warlords	Misaligned	Hard conditionality	High	High	High	Success	Failure
5. Presidential election (2009)	Misaligned	Persuasion, then soft conditionality	High	High	Low	Partial success	Partial success
6. ALP	Misaligned	Persuasion	Low	Low	High	Partial success	Failure
7. Peace talks, Doha office	Misaligned	Persuasion	Low	High	High	Failure	Failure
8. Corruption—AWK	Misaligned	Persuasion, inducements	Low	High	Low	Failure	Failure
9. Presidential election (2014)	Misaligned	Hard conditionality	High	High	High	Success	Partial success

Interest Alignment and Strategic Choice

The policy and academic literature on the use of leverage in conflict and postconflict contexts often begins with the assumption that foreign and local interests are fundamentally misaligned in a large proportion of cases. Although the extent of such misalignment is not quantified, the general assumption appears to be that interest alignment is rare. In the case of the United States, the reason lies in the common U.S. preference for governance reforms and the local partners' typical desire to resist such reforms, which may threaten their hold on power. Thus, as Berman and Lake wrote,

[w]ithout appropriate incentives, self-interested proxies use the flow of resources for their own opportunistic ends, diverting aid to favored constituencies, using foreign-trained troops to fight sectarian battles, or otherwise benefitting their own political agendas.¹

Similarly, Stephen Biddle and his colleagues claimed that “the conditions under which the U.S. provides [security force assistance] commonly involve large interest misalignments between the provider (the principal) and the recipient (the agent).”² In the same vein, Walter Ladwig has argued that the

priority for a besieged government is often to bolster its position within its society by ensuring that the leadership of the state's security forces is too divided to mount a coup, using economic patronage to co-opt rival elites who could pose a threat, and restricting political decisionmaking to trusted loyalists.³

The preceding analyses of Iraq and Afghanistan suggest that these claims are not wrong, but they do require some tempering. Corruption and the diversion of resources to political cronies *was* rampant. Leaders of the security forces *did* often seek to create forces that were loyal

¹ Berman and Lake, 2019, pp. 4–5.

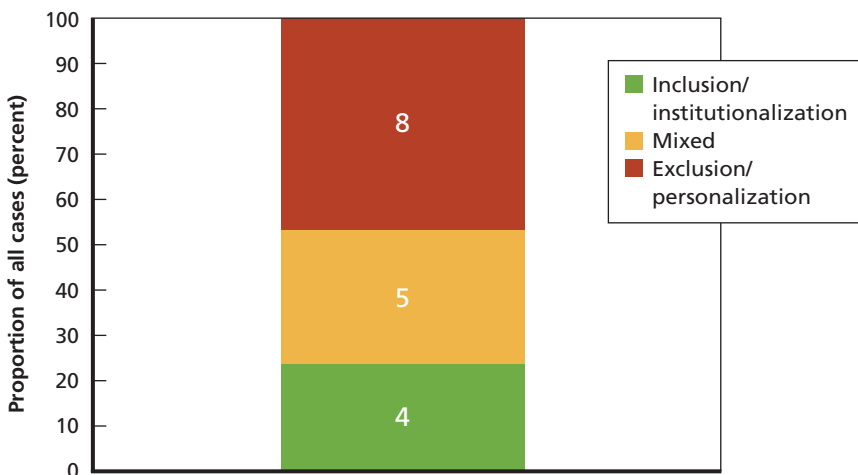
² Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, 2017, p. 7.

³ Ladwig, 2016, p. 103.

to specific leaders rather than to the state. Power-sharing arrangements often *were* fraught. But these conditions were not as ubiquitous as the literature sometimes implies. Karzai, for instance, sought to broaden political representation in the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom–Afghanistan, attempting reconciliation with elements of the Taliban. Although Maliki did rule Iraq in a narrowly sectarian fashion, many Iraqi Shia, even within his coalition, viewed this as a shortsighted and self-defeating strategy and were quick to embrace more inclusive politics under Abadi. Many figures within the security services—in particular, elite forces, such as CTS in Iraq—internalized the American emphasis on creating an apolitical force with roughly proportional representation from all ethnic and sectarian groups. Figure 5.1 summarizes the preferences of U.S. partners in Iraq and Afghanistan. The numbers in each segment of the bar represent the number of cases that fall in each category, while the vertical axis represents the proportion of the whole that each category constitutes.

As Figure 5.1 shows, Iraqi and Afghan partners seldom fully embraced inclusion or institutionalized capacity-building. But in approximately one-half of cases, the partners at least partially embraced these goals. If anything, these numbers are probably biased in the

Figure 5.1
Partner Preferences on Inclusion and Institutionalized Capacity-Building



direction of an overly negative representation of interest alignment (in most cases, more-exclusive and more-personalized preferences on the part of the partner government). When the United States and its partners shared preferences for inclusion and institutionalized capacity-building, this harmony of interests was less likely to receive media attention or stand out in the minds of practitioners; thus, these preferences are likely undercounted in our sample.

When the local U.S. partners adopted preferences for inclusion or institutionalized and rule-bound capacity-building, they typically did so for pragmatic and self-interested reasons rather than from some dedication to the ideal of a democratic society. But even partial and pragmatic support for these practices provides a point of entry for the United States and other foreign actors to nudge their partners toward at least “good enough” governance.⁴ Transitions toward good governance typically unfold iteratively, over long periods. Pragmatic and self-serving adoption of certain practices—such as incorporating members of other ethnic and sectarian groups into broader coalitions—can, over time, lead to the establishment of self-reinforcing norms.⁵ Moreover, as we will demonstrate in Chapter Six, political inclusion is associated with lower levels of conflict. Thus, local leaders do not need to embrace power-sharing as a principle so much as for the practical benefits it brings.

The relative frequency of at least partial adoption of inclusion or rule-bound capacity-building is important to recognize. In the generally pessimistic treatments of partner problems of corruption, electoral fraud, and so on, it is easy to either abandon hope of reasonable governance practices or to assume that the United States must reflexively turn to hard-nosed conditionality to get anything done. Either of these

⁴ On “good enough” governance, see Merilee S. Grindle, “Good Enough Governance: Poverty Reduction and Reform in Developing Countries,” *Governance*, Vol. 17, No. 4, October 2004.

⁵ One of the pioneering studies on this theme is Dankwart Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3, April 1970. For a more recent discussion of the importance of slowly building stocks of good governance practices, see, for instance, Thomas Edward Flores and Irfan Nooruddin, *Elections in Hard Times: Building Stronger Democracies in the 21st Century*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

would risk missing opportunities to build on local strengths and constituencies for reform. If Maliki provided abundant reason for pessimism and a keen awareness of the need for tough conditionality in some cases, the relative success of the immediate successor government in Iraq should offer some reason for hope.

These findings on interest alignment have important implications for the use of conditionality. Some of the recent work on conditionality in conflict and postconflict contexts seems to embrace a particularly aggressive use of leverage. Ladwig, for instance, has argued that conditionality should be employed on a given issue from the outset of the provision of aid, should be used across all issue areas (i.e., there should be no areas in which aid is provided without explicit conditions), and should be maintained even after the partner has begun to implement a reform to prevent backsliding.⁶ If the use of conditionality were risk free, Ladwig's advice might be sound. But the previous two chapters revealed numerous instances in which aggressive U.S. uses of conditionality provoked indignation and, ultimately, opposition from even some of the local partners who agreed with the United States on the substance of the issue at stake. At the outset of OIR, for instance, the United States employed the most hard-edged version of conditionality covered in this report. As a terrorist group accumulated territory in Iraq, committing atrocities in the process, the United States withheld vital military assistance until Iraq changed its national leadership. Despite Iraq's having ousted a sitting prime minister, Washington continued to demand restrictions on PMU activity and the establishment of a Sunni-Arab national guard. Despite an initial willingness to make large concessions, the combination of these demands provoked backlash from Baghdad. The result was that the GoI actively resisted the latter two demands and turned to Iran to increase its own leverage. Similarly, in the aftermath of the 2009 Afghan presidential election, U.S. demands on Karzai to agree to a second-round ballot faltered when Abdullah refused to participate, leaving Karzai insulted and poisoning his perception of the Obama administration and U.S. motives. Conditionality may indeed be required in many cases, considering the

⁶ Ladwig, 2016; Ladwig, 2017.

risks of excessive conditionality, but the Iraq and Afghanistan cases suggest that U.S. practitioners should use it with care, searching to build on areas of agreement wherever possible.

Insufficient attention to the risks of overly aggressive U.S. uses of leverage might explain why many observers believe the United States was overly accommodating of its partners in such contexts as Iraq and Afghanistan. Berman and Lake, for instance, wrote that “the United States too often assumes that its interests are closely aligned with those of its proxy, and funnels unconditional aid and support to the proxy’s leader—ostensibly to build greater capacity—failing to use the levers it possesses to induce appropriate effort.”⁷ Similarly, Biddle argued that “the United States often fails to use its aid to create incentives via conditionality, monitoring, and enforcement, and instead adopts exactly the apolitical capacity-building model that analysis suggests will rarely succeed.”⁸

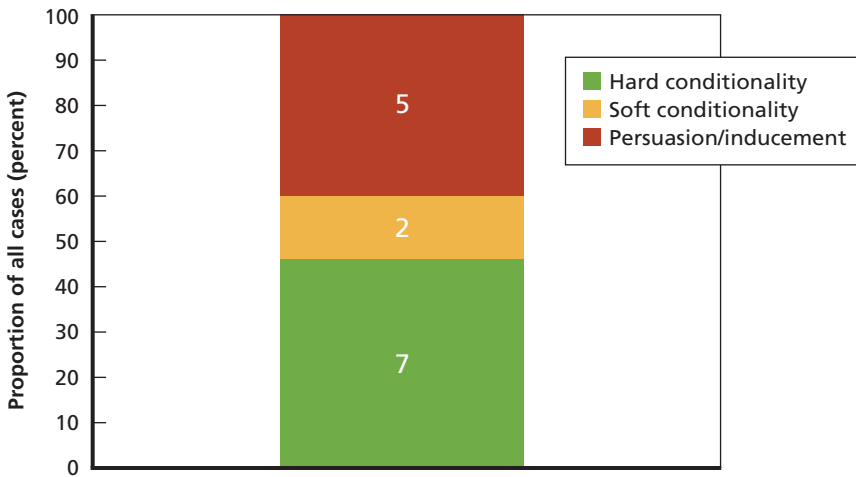
The analyses of Iraq and Afghanistan in Chapters Three and Four, respectively, do indeed suggest that the United States could have used its leverage more often and more effectively than it did. But they generally do not support the contention that the United States reflexively assumes a unity of interests between itself and its partners. Interviews with U.S. officials generally revealed a keen awareness of the many areas of disagreement. But many of the same officials justified their choices not to use leverage more frequently or more severely by their belief that reforms based on cooperation tended to be more enduring or that pushing U.S. partners too far and/or on too many issues might lead to complete dysfunction,⁹ as was seen in the latter days of Karzai’s government. Where U.S. and partner interests aligned, the United States uniformly used persuasion and inducements to try to shape reforms and encourage further progress. Where interests misaligned, however, the United States often did apply its leverage, as Figure 5.2 shows. Once again, the numbers in each segment of the bar

⁷ Berman and Lake, 2019, pp. 4–5.

⁸ Biddle, 2019, p. 267.

⁹ Interviews with former U.S. officials on January 15, 2019, March 21, 2019, and March 26, 2019.

Figure 5.2
Uses of Leverage in Instances of Interest Misalignment



represent the number of cases of hard conditionality, soft conditionality, and persuasion or inducement, while the vertical axis represents the proportion of the whole that each category constitutes. The precise numbers in Figure 5.2 almost certainly overstate the U.S. use of its leverage. Because instances of clashing priorities are more easily observable, our sample of influence events likely overstates not only the extent of misaligned interests but also the extent to which the United States employed conditionality on its aid. Despite this likely oversampling of uses of conditionality, Chapters Three and Four present ample evidence that uses of conditionality were not rare exceptions.

Conditions for Effective Leverage

As discussed in Chapter Two, there are four conditions for effective leverage: clarity of the demand, observability of the outcome, strength of the threatened sanction (or benefit), and credibility of the threat. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to directly observe the credibility of the external actor's threats. This is because foreign leaders rarely reveal when they were coerced into a decision and because the tendency

for the analyst is to interpret a successful outcome as implying the presence of a credible threat but without having the information to validate whether that was the case or played a decisive role. We can, however, find evidence in our case studies to evaluate how frequently the other three conditions were present and to identify factors that might lead to the presence or absence of these three conditions.

Clarity

In five of the 18 events we reviewed, the United States failed to clearly convey the standards that it expected its partner to meet as a condition of assistance or at least failed to convey the high priority of these particular objectives. These failures occurred for all the reasons discussed in Chapter Two. For example, in the case of the U.S. effort to build the Iraqi CTS, there was considerable confusion over the appropriate reporting structure for the body. This confusion arose in part because U.S. trainers were hesitant to slot CTS within the MoD, given the shortcomings in the effectiveness of that bureaucratic structure. To avoid CTS's regressing to the standards of the regular Iraqi Army, American interlocutors advocated for a hybrid system in which CTS would have one foot in the MoD but also maintain a degree of independence from it. The convoluted nature of the U.S. preferences created an opportunity for the prime minister to pull CTS under his purview, which he duly exploited via OCINC. In Afghanistan, Vice President-elect Biden's attempt at expressing a tough love message to Karzai instead suggested to him and his inner circle that the Obama administration was preparing to abandon them. This paved the way for increased confusion in the coming weeks when Holbrooke adopted a confrontational stance with Karzai and encouraged numerous prominent Afghans to compete against him in the election. The end result was to alienate even potential allies among the Afghan political class and make it unclear to all sides what U.S. intentions were.

Observability

Most analysts writing in this field claim that foreign interveners face many challenges to accurately observing the outcomes of interest in an attempted use of conditionality. If the foreign partner makes aid

conditional on outcomes, it may punish local allies who have made a good-faith effort to achieve the objective but failed for reasons beyond their control (such as the unrealistic expectations of foreign officials). On the other hand, if foreign decisionmakers make aid conditional on promises of performance or effort toward a goal, it is too easy for the local partner to obfuscate the true extent of its effort by focusing on the real and imagined obstacles holding back its performance. A large military footprint helps overcome these challenges, both because military personnel can act as observers and because they can provide mobility and protection for civilians in charge of overseeing aid. But one of the main reasons to rely on partners is to avoid the enormous costs associated with a large military footprint. Working with partners has the added advantage of improving understanding of local cultural and political dynamics, which no outside observers can fully comprehend. Alternatively, the United States or other outside power could condition aid on easily observable metrics, thus reducing monitoring and concomitant personnel requirements. But doing so risks substituting short-term and concrete benchmarks (such as granting access to U.S. military personnel) for the more important but longer-term and more difficult to observe behaviors that contribute most to stabilization, such as wide-ranging political reforms.

It is striking that our analysis showed that the outcomes of interest to the United States were *almost uniformly observable*; in only two instances out of the 18 events we reviewed was the United States not able to monitor compliance with its preferences. Why do our findings diverge so strongly from the expectations of many skeptics? Our analysis focused on the actions of the local partners that were most important in shaping the trajectories of Iraq and Afghanistan. In focusing on these strategic-level actions, our analysis paid less attention to the much larger number of operational-level partner actions. These lower-level actions are typically harder to observe because of their sheer number, the fact that many take place away from the capital or other areas easily accessible to foreigners, the bewildering number of contextual factors that might shape outcomes, and so on. Thus, we might expect that our analysis would show higher levels of observability than analyses focused on operational-level partner actions that are less important but

far more numerous. While lower-level actions doubtless posed greater challenges for monitoring, the fact that key strategic choices and the actions of local partners were so easily observed suggests that this requirement for leverage strategies should pose relatively few obstacles to effective implementation at the strategic level.

Moreover, we found no evidence that a large military footprint was required for effective monitoring of these high-level activities, nor did we find that U.S. decisionmakers tended to swap easily observable, concrete actions for the more important but more difficult to observe processes of political reform. Our influence events were almost evenly split between instances of large military footprints (for simplicity's sake, any period in which the United States deployed over 20,000 forces to the partner country) and instances of small military footprints (periods in which the United States deployed fewer than 20,000 military personnel and often only a few thousand). The decisions and actions over which the United States attempted to exercise influence also frequently involved important political reforms. In Iraq, these reforms included the conditions for the political inclusion of the Sadrists, the hydrocarbon law, the rebluing of the Iraqi police, and the ouster of Maliki. In Afghanistan, these reforms included attempted reconciliation with the Taliban, confrontations with local warlords, responses to corruption by local officials, and representative recruitment and institutionalization of oversight mechanisms for security forces. None of these could be described as goals that sacrificed important outcomes for the sake of easy observability.

Not only were partner actions discernible at the strategic level, but interviews with returned U.S. military officers revealed that the same pattern, in many cases, held at the operational and tactical levels. For instance, during the campaign to liberate West Mosul from Iraqi control, U.S. officers pressed the Iraqi Federal Police to be more discriminating in their use of surface fires (e.g., mortars, artillery) to soften up enemy positions.¹⁰ Because ISIS was located in populated areas, the U.S. position was driven by concerns over civilian casualties. The overall U.S. footprint in Iraq at the time was low (several thousand forces),

¹⁰ Interview with U.S. military officer, June 19, 2019.

and the forward advisors operating in the vicinity of Mosul numbered only several dozen personnel. However, U.S. forces could easily observe the targeting tactics that its local partner employed because the volume and direction of fires appeared on U.S. radars and because U.S. personnel were embedded with Iraqi forces at squadron-level headquarters.

Not all operational- and tactical-level activities are as easily visible as artillery and mortar fire. In these cases, the United States has had to adjust leverage strategies to reflect these challenges to observability. In Afghanistan, for instance, U.S. officials quickly made adjustments to the ALP program once the consequences of limited visibility were recognized. A combination of pressure to expand and a U.S. footprint declining faster than expected resulted in compromises that limited monitoring of the program and its exploitation by corrupt Afghan officials and local power brokers. Reports of this misuse of the program, however, caused U.S. officials to freeze the cap on the size of the ALP, despite Afghan pressure to continue expansion, until all units could be revalidated. While the ALP has remained a challenge, it was early recognition of limited observability that initiated efforts to purge the program of bad actors and to modify its end state to better conform to U.S. oversight abilities.

Sanction Strength

Finally, for a leverage attempt to be successful, the threatened sanction (or promised benefit) must be more important to the local partner than the cost associated with whatever action the foreign partner demands. In 11 of the 18 cases reviewed in Chapters Three and Four, the United States was able to meet this condition.

What is perhaps more interesting than this overall number are the circumstances in which the United States succeeded and failed to offer a sufficiently compelling inducement or threat. The U.S. carrots and sticks did not seem to reliably correlate with either the strength of the insurgent threat or with alternative options for financial and military resources. The U.S. threats were relatively strong in Afghanistan even when the insurgency was weak in the years after the Taliban's overthrow in 2001. Similarly, the United States was still a critical provider of support in Iraq even in years when hydrocarbon production

and prices were high, providing the Baghdad government with alternative sources of financial means. The United States enjoyed considerable sway in Iraq even when Tehran offered to advise and sustain irregular forces to counter ISIS. Conversely, the United States offered only relatively weak sanctions in Iraq in several cases while the insurgent threat (either from AQI or ISIS) was strong. Indeed, during the period of the surge in Iraq, the United States had strong sanctions in some cases and only weak ones in others.

Overall, the three conditions for effective leverage that we can observe—clarity of U.S. demands, observability of the desired outcome, and strength of the threatened sanction—were present in a little more than one-third (five of 14) of the cases we have reviewed in this report in which the United States and its partner had misaligned interests (and thus the United States had incentives to use its leverage). We might therefore expect to see U.S. leverage efforts prove relatively successful in a sizable proportion of all cases.

Success and Failure of U.S. Influence Attempts

As discussed in Chapter Two, observers of stabilization and counter-insurgency campaigns, development assistance, and international bargaining come to different conclusions about the effectiveness of leverage efforts generally and aid conditionality specifically. While many in the development community have abandoned conditionality and emphasize local ownership of initiatives, many analysts of stabilization, disappointed by the failures of Iraq and Afghanistan, have instead come to embrace highly aggressive uses of conditionality. In each influence event, we considered whether the United States largely achieved its objectives—as defined by U.S. policymakers at the time—in a particular interaction (or interrelated set of interactions) with the partner government. When the United States achieved the large majority of its objectives, we considered this outcome a success. If the United States achieved some important objectives but not others, we considered the case an instance of partial success. If the United States failed to achieve any of its priorities (or achieved only a small proportion of them when

the United States was pursuing multiple objectives), we considered the event a failure from the U.S. perspective. Failures also include instances in which objectives were achieved for only an extremely short time or were undermined in practice by other actions the partner took with the intent to undo the reforms the United States desired.

In our case studies of Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. influence efforts can be grouped into four categories:

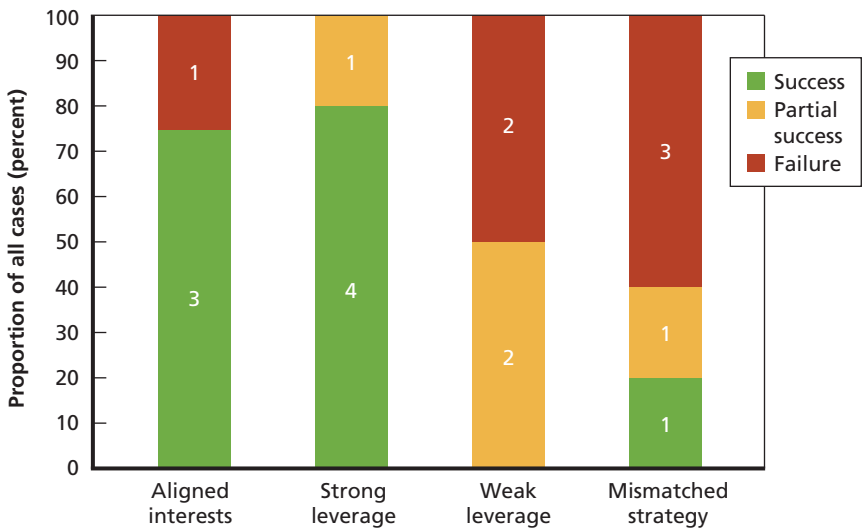
- **Aligned interests:** In these cases, the United States and local partners generally desire the same outcome. The United States may still seek to influence its partner concerning the priority of certain actions or how to carry them out, but these efforts are typically limited to persuasion and inducements rather than more-coercive methods. Because the parties' interests align, we should expect such cases to enjoy the highest rates of success.
- **Strong leverage:** In these cases, the interests of the United States and its local partners do not align. In an effort to secure its desired outcomes, the United States threatens to withhold critical aid until its conditions are met. In instances of strong leverage, all the observable prerequisites for effective conditionality (clarity, observability, and strength of the sanction) are present.¹¹ The analysts of conditionality discussed in Chapter Two differ in their expectations about the likelihood of success in such cases.
- **Weak leverage:** Cases of weak leverage are similar to those of strong leverage, but one or more of the prerequisites for effective conditionality is absent (or only very weakly present). While opinion about the overall effectiveness of conditionality is divided, success rates in instances of weak leverage should be relatively low.
- **Mismatched strategy:** In cases of mismatched strategy, the U.S. preferences differ substantially from those of the local partner, yet the United States nonetheless attempts to effect change in the

¹¹ As discussed earlier, credibility is extremely difficult to observe directly. Rather than attempt to estimate the credibility of U.S. threats without sufficient evidence, we instead deduce a few, limited conditions later, based on the actual outcomes of U.S. influence efforts.

partner’s behavior through persuasion and/or inducements. Such efforts are expected to succeed very rarely, if ever.

Figure 5.3 summarizes the proportion of U.S. influence efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan reviewed in Chapters Three and Four that may be considered successes, partial successes, or failures in the first two to three years after the United States attempted to influence the behavior of its partners. As the figure shows, when U.S. and partner interests aligned or when the United States used its leverage with all the necessary prerequisites in place (strong conditionality), the United States was highly successful in the short term; all but two of these nine cases can be considered successes. In contrast, where one or more of the prerequisites for effective leverage were missing (weak leverage) or where the United States did not attempt to use leverage despite misaligned interests between it and its partner, the outcomes were typically poor. In contrast with the previous two types of influence events, the latter types of influence events ended in failure more than one-half of the time and yielded only a single instance of success. In the short term,

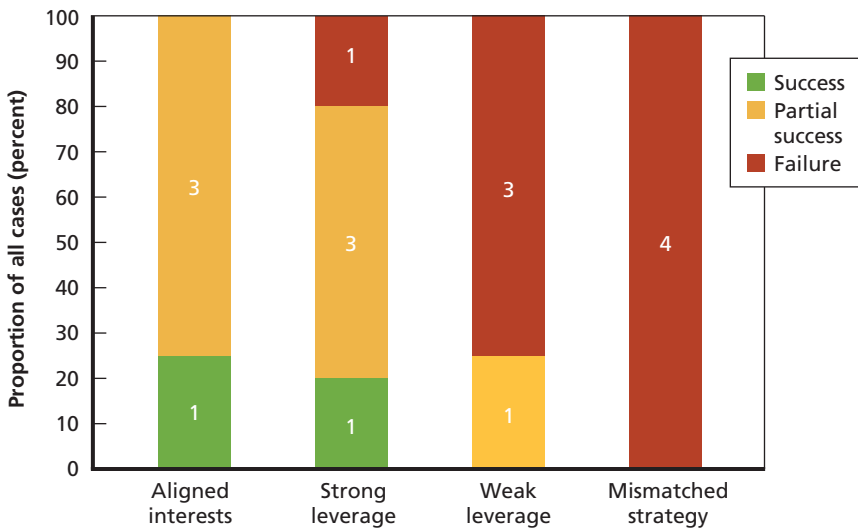
Figure 5.3
Short-Term Success of Influence Attempts



U.S. leverage was a powerful tool when the necessary conditions were in place but usually failed when they were not.

When we look further out, to the effects of influence efforts five or more years after they occurred, the broad pattern is similar. As Figure 5.4 shows, instances of aligned interests perform best, while instances of strong leverage perform only slightly less well. In contrast, cases of weak leverage or mismatched strategies ended in failure in all but one of the nine events that fell into these categories. As might be expected, rates of success decline when outcomes are observed over longer time horizons. The almost uniform failure of weak leverage and inducement or persuasion in cases of misaligned interests is particularly sobering. But even in the better-performing types of influence efforts, full success is rare. That said, in these cases, U.S. efforts were almost always at least partially successful. Such results stand in stark contrast to the expectations of leverage skeptics.

Figure 5.4
Long-Term Success of Influence Attempts



Conclusion

Summary of Findings

Overall, these results provide considerable insights into the debates over leverage discussed in Chapter Two. The interests of the United States and its partners appear to align much more often than stabilization pessimists or leverage enthusiasts seem to suggest. In line with the expectations of many in the development community, when the local partners willingly own a reform, the results are among the best of the cases examined. But contrary to those who reject conditionality, interests still misalign on a high proportion of important issues. And in these cases, the United States was able to achieve relatively high levels of at least partial success—even over longer time horizons—by using its leverage. As might be expected, rates of conditionality success were much higher when all the prerequisites for leverage were in place. But contrary to the views of some observers, these prerequisites were present in one-half of all cases in which the interests of the United States and its partner were misaligned. Moreover, the prerequisites were frequently present even in circumstances that would seem antithetical—when the United States had a small military footprint or when the insurgency was weak or other sources of financial and military resources were available to the U.S. partner.

Caveats

Our findings, which suggest that using more coercive influence strategies, such as hard conditionality, meet with some success, raise the question of why the U.S. government would not adopt this strategy across the board. Although we do argue there is opportunity for the United States to employ this hard-nosed approach more often than it opted to in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, there are also good reasons to think that there are limits to the circumstances under which this strategy will be successful and that the frequency with which it is employed will affect its success.

The outcomes of our influence events suggest that several design considerations play an important role in successful influence strategies. The choice to use persuasion, offer inducements, or impose a form

of conditionality is one of these. But so, too, are the clarity of U.S. demands, the strength of the sanction or inducement put on offer, and the observability of the outcome in question. In two influence events we analyzed, the U.S. rebalancing of the INP and the U.S. abrogation of early cease fire attempts negotiated between Karzai and the Taliban, the United States opted for hard conditionality without the three conditions for strong leverage obtaining. In these cases, the result was failure in both the short and long terms. So, the success of influence strategies depends not only on the carrot or stick (e.g., persuasion, hard conditionality) employed but also on these other design elements.

Proponents of hard conditionality might then argue that, if success depends on four elements (the type of carrot or stick employed, the clarity of the demand, the strength of the sanction, and the observability of the outcome), why not align them for success in every case? This is more complicated than it may appear. Because the strength of sanction is relative to what host nation leaders perceive as the stakes of the issue, ratcheting up the strength of sanction to a sufficient level while keeping the threat credible can be quite challenging. For example, police reform in Iraq would undercut a major constituency in the country and negatively affect the fortunes of an armed actor that can threaten the prime minister's position. So, the strength of sanction must be truly dire to overcome the prime minister's clear interest in accommodating this group. In theory, the United States could have designed a stick that would compel the prime minister to reform the police despite the dangers involved. But that threat would also have to be credible in the context of the costs and reputational risk the United States would incur if it followed through.

In addition, overreliance on hard conditionality can lead to blowback from host-nation leaders who chafe at use of these tactics and are willing to accept risk in calling the U.S. bluff. Within the influence events analyzed, Karzai's reaction to the strong pressure he received from Obama administration officials to allow a competitive 2009 presidential election and then submit to a second round of voting is a revealing example. Although key officials were willing to confront Karzai and pressure him until they got a competitive multicandidate election, the promised second round never materialized. That outcome

arguably did not advance U.S. interests. On one level, Karzai emerged the winner but was badly damaged and had questionable legitimacy. And on a second level, Karzai became convinced that the administration was intent on abandoning him, leading him to limit cooperation with Washington.

Although outside the scope of this research, it may also be true that the United States will have greater difficulty exercising leverage as China becomes an ever-larger actor in the sphere of international development assistance and investment. China claims that its assistance, in contrast to that of the United States and other Western nations, comes without political conditions.¹²

For these reasons, the U.S. government is circumspect in relying on pure coercion to force local leaders into compliance. Our findings suggest that the U.S. government is, indeed, *too* circumspect and that opportunities are likely missed when these hard-nosed tactics would produce success. But our findings do not indicate that the United States can reflexively rely on strong-arm tactics involving hard conditionality.

It is impossible to know the full range of issues in which the United States attempted to influence its partners in Iraq and Afghanistan. Consequently, it is also impossible to know the extent to which the 18 influence events examined here are fully representative of U.S. influence efforts in these countries more generally. The events examined in this report were selected in a manner to minimize bias (that is, to minimize the chances that the outcomes observed in our analysis would be consistently higher or lower than their likely true values, were all information on these cases fully available). But this analysis still represents only an imperfect basis for broader claims about the likely success rates of leverage attempts.

Consequently, in Chapter Six, we turn to a statistical analysis of postconflict states more generally. Because of data limitations, the statistical analysis cannot be used to test all the arguments about conditionality that we have discussed in this report. It can, however, offer a sense of how frequently some of the dynamics discussed in this chapter

¹² Anna Fifield, "China Pledges \$60 Billion in Aid and Loans to Africa, No 'Political Conditions Attached,'" *Washington Post*, September 3, 2018.

appear in a much broader set of cases. The combination of the next chapter's quantitative analysis with the qualitative analysis of this and the preceding two chapters together offer relatively strong evidence about the ability of the United States to influence partners to take actions that it believes are critical to consolidating gains in these fragile states.

Cross-National Comparison of Foreign Influence on Inclusion and Conflict Recurrence

In this chapter, we statistically test whether external interveners can encourage postconflict states to adopt inclusive and conflict-reducing measures. Specifically, we investigate whether measures of intervention histories and postconflict aid are associated with greater political inclusion and a lower risk of conflict recurrence. The measures we present do not capture observed attempts at leverage over postconflict governments; rather, they capture structural conditions that would facilitate the use of leverage by former interveners and measures of the outcomes the United States typically attempts to achieve through such leverage. This is an important difference from the analysis of the Iraq and Afghanistan cases, in which we were able to more directly observe the objectives, conditions, and context for discrete attempts to use leverage. The measures and tests in this chapter are thus supplementary to the cases. These measures and tests provide reason to believe that the relations observed in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan are generalizable and, on balance, contribute to more inclusive and stable postconflict states, but these statistical results are purely correlational.

We first discuss the outcomes and the data used to measure them. Second, we introduce our measures of external leverage. Third, we explain how we account for the effects of local context and distinguish them from the effects of foreign influence. Fourth, we present, in simple terms, our statistical strategy for estimating the substantive importance of external leverage on the outcomes of inclusion and the durability of peace. Finally, we present the results of the statistical analysis. In our discussion, we assess the substantive importance of external actors and

the limitations of the data and modeling approach used to generate the findings. For those interested in the technical approach and the robustness of the findings summarized here, Appendix B contains a variety of additional tests and details on the modeling approach.

Statistical Research Design and Data

In this section, we provide an overview of our statistical modeling strategy, including our measures of the outcomes of interest and data used for these measures; key factors influencing the outcomes; and a brief, nontechnical summary of the statistical model itself. The following section discusses the results of our statistical models.

Measuring Political Inclusion and Peace Duration

This report poses a number of questions about the ability of external interveners to generate leverage over postconflict states. In this subsection, we discuss the outcomes of interest for which sufficiently systematic data exist to perform statistical analysis.

All tests in this chapter take the ethnic group as the unit of analysis.¹ We assess the conditions under which the group is politically included after fighting the government and the conditions under which the group returns to conflict with the government. Obviously, not all civil wars or insurgencies are fought around questions of ethnic

¹ Note that the leverage variables are at the country level, while the main analysis is at the group level. The theoretical framework has implications at both levels. Leverage over postconflict governments can target policies that affect all groups within a country or are otherwise agnostic as to specific groups. However, some policies are targeted at specific groups (e.g., policies in Iraq regarding inclusion of Sunnis), and some conflicts involve only one or a small number of ethnic groups. In our data, 77 percent of conflicts involve only one ethnic group. For these reasons—and because data on inclusion are at the group level—our analysis of postconflict inclusion is at the group level. The recurrence analysis is also at the group level. We control for a number of factors at the group level and present additional analysis of recurrence at the country level in Appendix B. For conflicts with multiple ethnic groups, it is possible that country-level leverage variables are associated with different rates of inclusion and recurrence for different groups, but that analysis is not granular enough to speak to this. Thus, the analysis does not shine light on cases in which leverage may be associated with partial success with respect to multiple, previously warring groups.

identity, so there are some limitations associated with using ethnic groups as our unit of analysis. Even internal conflicts often considered ideological rather than ethnic, however, often have a strong ethnic component, so using these groups as our unit of analysis is a reasonable simplifying assumption.² Ethnic wars are more often about political grievances, which makes the study of political inclusion particularly relevant to understanding the postconflict dynamics of ethnic civil wars.³ By making this assumption, we can easily compare groups that are included or return to conflict with those that are not included or do not resume fighting; identifying a similar set of negative cases (e.g., groups that choose not to resume fighting) is extremely difficult along purely ideological lines.

The first outcome of interest is political inclusion. In the tests we describe here, an ethnic group is coded as *included* if it is either a junior or senior partner in the government. The Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset—a dataset that is well-regarded and commonly used in the social sciences—provides our data for political inclusion.⁴ The EPR project collects data on ethnic groups that it considers to be politically relevant. Groups are included in these data when they are subject to state discrimination or when political leaders advance claims on their behalf at the national level. We do not include ethnic groups that either dominate or hold a monopoly on political power in the government because we are interested in groups that are potentially excluded from, and willing to fight for, representation at the national level.

² See, for instance, Stathis N. Kalyvas, “‘New’ and ‘Old’ Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?” *World Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 1, October 2001. Note that, for an ethnic group to be included in our dataset, a rebel group must purport to fight on behalf of that group. Thus, even if a group is fighting in a conflict that is not considered ethnic at the macro level, rebel organizations in our analysis are still engaged explicitly on behalf of an ethnic group.

³ Nicholas Sambanis, “Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes? A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 45, No. 3, June 2001.

⁴ Manuel Vogt, Nils-Christian Bormann, Seraina Rüegger, Lars-Erik Cederman, Philipp Hunziker, and Luc Girardin, “Integrating Data on Ethnicity, Geography, and Conflict: The Ethnic Power Relations Dataset Family,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 59, No. 7, 2015. Data are available at “International Conflict Research: Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) Dataset Family 2019,” ETH Zürich website, 2019.

For the first set of models, we analyzed what factors are most closely associated with the chances that an ethnic group previously engaged in civil conflict will be included in a postconflict government. To match ethnic groups with civil conflicts, we relied on the Armed Conflict Dataset (ACD)–EPR dataset,⁵ which links ethnic groups in the EPR dataset to a widely used social-science dataset on civil wars developed by UCDP/PRIO.⁶ The ACD-EPR dataset codes ethnic groups as participating in a conflict if a rebel group makes a claim to fight on that group’s behalf and if members of that group are recruited to fight in the rebel organization.

The second set of models looked at the duration of peace after an ethnic group has experienced a civil conflict with its government. The focus on peace duration flows from the framework presented in Chapter Two and the analysis in Chapters Three through Five; inclusive and capacity-building policies are ultimately geared toward stabilizing peace. The statistical tests in this chapter are necessarily at a coarser resolution than the qualitative analysis of Iraq and Afghanistan. The recurrence analysis thus has value as an additional testable implication of the theoretical framework.

We used data from the UCDP/PRIO ACD, mentioned earlier. We code a conflict as *recurring* if an ethnic group participates in a conflict that generates at least 25 battle-related deaths in a given year and has been involved in a civil conflict with the government at any point in the past. For each ethnic group and each year, these models record whether an ethnic group experienced a renewed episode of conflict with the government.⁷

⁵ Julian Wucherpfennig, Nils W. Metternich, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “Ethnicity, the State and the Duration of Civil War,” *World Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 1, 2012.

⁶ Nils Petter Gleditsch, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg, and Håvard Strand, “Armed Conflict 1946–2001: A New Dataset,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 39, No. 5, 2002.

⁷ Note that at least two years of peace must transpire between episodes of conflict for an episode of conflict to be counted as a recurrence (and not just a continuation of the previous conflict episode).

We used a lower battle-death threshold to code conflict recurrence in our base analyses for two reasons. First, this threshold is commonly used to categorize civil conflicts in the quantitative literature on conflict.⁸ Second, using a lower threshold yields more instances of conflict, which in turn facilitates statistical analyses because the accuracy of such analyses improves with the number of events observed. There are 63 episodes of conflict recurrence at the lower threshold but only 34 episodes at the 1,000 battle-death threshold. Examples of conflicts that do not surpass a higher threshold of 1,000 battle deaths include conflict in Iran with the Mojahedin-e Khalq, episodes of separatist war in Angola, and the Georgian conflict in South Ossetia in 2008. As detailed in Appendix B, to determine whether the higher conflict threshold affected our results, we conducted our main statistical analyses using the higher threshold as well; none of the key findings were substantially affected.

Measuring External Leverage

Because leverage varies from situation to situation and because statesmen and -women often use leverage discreetly, outside the public's view, it is impractical to measure leverage directly across large numbers of cases. Instead, we can observe and measure factors that should be closely related to leverage, such as support for a group during a period of conflict or aid provided in the postconflict period. Such indirect measures are known as *proxy measures*. We have selected proxy measures that seek to account for several characteristics of aid flows:

- **Timing:** Outside actors can provide aid to the parties to a conflict during the conflict itself or afterward. Both might influence postconflict political orders, but the effects of conflict-era aid on postconflict politics and stability are likely to be weaker. States that provided aid in the conflict period may still enjoy leverage afterward, either because local partners hope to receive additional sup-

⁸ See, for example, Cederman et al., 2015, and Siri Aas Rustad and Helga Malmin Binningsbø, "A Price Worth Fighting For? Natural Resources and Conflict Recurrence," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 49, No. 4, 2012.

port or because their competitors fear such an outcome. Because the provision of additional assistance in such cases is uncertain, however, aid given in the postconflict period should demonstrate more-powerful effects than aid given in the previous conflict.

- **Type:** Outside actors can support their local partners by providing military or civilian assistance.⁹ Both can potentially provide leverage, but their effects may differ.
- **Magnitude:** The amount of assistance should also influence the degree of leverage an outside actor can exercise. We expect that higher levels of assistance are associated with greater leverage but are subject to diminishing returns; a local actor with no other sources of support may be highly dependent on the first few million dollars of foreign support it receives, but if it is already receiving support in the billions of dollars, that same few million dollars is likely to be almost inconsequential.
- **Provider:** Different actors are likely to adopt different political strategies when providing assistance. Based on past patterns of behavior, democracies are more likely to use their assistance to promote either democracy or, at least, political orders that are relatively inclusive and rule bound.¹⁰ Social democracies or welfare states have a tendency to provide aid that is more focused on local humanitarian objectives than ones that are either geostrategic or more narrowly self-serving.¹¹ These patterns are, of course, not absolute. Even autocracies, for instance, may turn to political inclusion to avoid the costs associated with repressing excluded groups.¹² All else being equal, however, we should expect to see mature democracies support politically inclusive orders more

⁹ Intelligence-sharing is another valuable form of assistance but is more difficult to observe.

¹⁰ See Robert G. Herman and Theodore J. Piccone, eds., *Defending Democracy: A Global Survey of Foreign Policy Trends 1992–2002*, Washington, D.C.: Democracy Coalition Project, October 2002.

¹¹ David Halloran Lumsdaine, *Moral Vision in International Politics: The Foreign Aid Regime, 1949–1989*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.

¹² See Ted Robert Gurr, “Ethnic Warfare on the Wane,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 3, May–June 2000a.

often and with greater vigor than other actors. It is also possible that mature democracies are selecting a different set of environments into which to intervene. This selection process could present a challenge to assessing the results of interventions or aid if, for instance, democracies systematically selected easier cases in which to intervene or ones that were more prone to political inclusion. Although the quantitative analysis in this report does not systematically address this issue, prior research has found that interveners in general and the leading democratic interveners—the United States, France, and United Kingdom—in particular are not prone to intervene in easier cases. In fact, they tend to intervene in the most difficult cases—a phenomenon known as *adverse selection*.¹³

- **Geopolitical context:** The geopolitical context in which assistance is provided is likely to substantially affect the strategies that outside powers pursue. During periods of intense international competition, such as during the Cold War, actors may care more about the alignment of their allies and partners than they care about how those actors govern themselves. External support for more-inclusive governance is therefore likely to be lower in such eras.¹⁴

The main variables of interest in the statistical models are proxy measures of leverage that former interveners can bring to bear over the policies of postconflict governments. The first variable captures whether a state received support from an external state sponsor in its most recent conflict with the ethnic group in question. To code this

¹³ Challenges to causal inference that the nonrandom selection of treatment and nontreatment subpopulations pose are known as *selection effects*. Prior RAND research found that interveners tend to intervene where insurgents are strongest—that is, in the most difficult cases. The United States, France, and the United Kingdom were particularly likely to intervene when the central government was threatened rather than during more-peripheral wars, again suggesting that intervention may be motivated by the most difficult cases. See Watts et al., 2017, Appendix A.

¹⁴ For one empirical demonstration of this relationship, see Thad Dunning, “Conditioning the Effects of Aid: Cold War Politics, Donor Credibility, and Democracy in Africa,” *International Organization*, Vol. 58, No. 2, April 2004.

variable, we relied on UCDP's External Support Dataset.¹⁵ Support includes troops, access to territory or to military or intelligence infrastructure, weapons, materiel, training, funding, and intelligence material. We were particularly interested in support provided by wealthy democratic states because these are the states most likely to adopt politically inclusive strategies of conflict resolution. Consequently, we distinguished whether the state sponsors during the conflict period were members of the OECD, a grouping often known as the *club of wealthy democracies*. This variable serves as a proxy for a relationship between wealthy, democratic states and postconflict governments that the former may use to press for inclusive politics and capacity-building measures.¹⁶ Our sample captured 115 unique progovernment interventions.¹⁷ Our definition of *intervention* includes, for example, cases of training, materiel, and logistics support, such as the United States gave the Guatemalan government during its civil war; French training and troops to the Chadian government in various conflicts; and U.S. weapons, logistics, and training support to Turkey in its conflict with the Kurdistan Workers Party.

The second measure builds on the first. We constructed a variable that records how much development assistance former OECD interveners provide target governments. To do this, we used data from the OECD on official development assistance (ODA).¹⁸ ODA is development and some forms of humanitarian aid provided by official gov-

¹⁵ Stina Högladh, Thérèse Pettersson, and Lotta Themnér, "External Support in Armed Conflict 1975–2009: Presenting New Data," paper presented at the 52nd Annual International Studies Association Convention, Montreal, Canada, March 16–19, 2011. The dataset is available from UCDP, "UCDP Dataset Download Center," website, 2020.

¹⁶ If an OECD client state extended support to the state at any point in the final five years of the previous conflict, this variable is coded as 1 until the next episode of conflict involving the state and that ethnic group. In Appendix B, we explore how the findings are affected by changing the threshold for inclusion to the final two years of a conflict.

¹⁷ This figure counts unique periods of support for a government that is experiencing at least one civil conflict. The figure counts the multinational interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan as one intervention each.

¹⁸ For access to bilateral ODA flows, see OECD, "Aid (ODA) Disbursements to Countries and Regions [DAC2a]: Open Data–Bilateral ODA by recipient [DAC2a]," *OECD.Stat* website, undated.

ernment agencies that targets economic development in the recipient country and is, to some extent, concessional. Unlike the first measure, which indicates the presence or absence of an intervention history, the ODA measure is more granular and tracks changes in the scale of development assistance across time. It is thus a potentially better indicator of the amount of leverage a former intervener can bring to bear in pushing for policy changes in the recipient country.

The final measure was constructed similar to the aid measure just described. We used data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on bilateral arms transfers and matched this data with OECD interventions.¹⁹ SIPRI produces a common unit of measurement called a *trend-indicator value* to capture the total volume of arms transfers between states. As with the aid variable, this is intended to capture another observable indicator of leverage that previous interveners can exercise over the target state.

The three variables differ in the characteristics of indirect proxy measures discussed earlier:

- **Timing:** The intervention variables reflect support given during prior conflicts, so we expect its relationship with inclusion and peace duration to be more uncertain. The aid and arms-transfer variables track support in the postconflict period by year, so our expectation is that these should display a stronger relationship with inclusion and peace duration.
- **Type:** The intervention and arms-transfer variables both capture the transfer of military capacity to the recipient government, while the ODA measure captures aid meant to promote development.
- **Magnitude:** Due to data limitations, the intervention history variables do not reflect the magnitude of military aid given during the conflict. The aid and arms-transfer variables are measured yearly. Our expectation is that increases in aid and arms transfers will be associated with more inclusion and stability but with diminishing returns as aid volumes increase.

¹⁹ For arms transfers data and details on coding rules, see SIPRI, “SIPRI Arms Transfers Database,” website, March 9, 2020.

- **Provider:** We were able to differentiate support given by provider for all three variables. For the intervention and arms-transfer variables, we differentiated between support given by OECD and non-OECD states, with the expectation that OECD support will be associated with inclusive and stabilizing outcomes. Given that the aid variable captures support only from OECD states, we differentiated providers by whether or not they had intervened in the previous conflict. Development aid provided by former interveners reflects a continued relationship between OECD members that have a demonstrated stake in the politics of the recipient government.
- **Geopolitical context:** For all measures, we evaluated their relationship with inclusion and stability in the late Cold War and post–Cold War periods, as we discuss in more detail below.

Controls for Other Factors Influencing Inclusion and Conflict Recurrence

There are a number of other factors that we must account for to better estimate the effect of the leverage variables on the outcomes of interest. States may be more or less able to exercise leverage over postconflict governments, depending on the state's domestic context. These contextual factors are known as *control variables* in statistical analysis. Our statistical models included a control variable for each of the following factors:

- **Group size:** the relative size of a minority group influences its ability to mobilize and make credible threats to extract concessions from the government in the form of power-sharing. Similarly, larger groups should be most likely to attempt to take control of the government.²⁰
- **Regime type and political institutions:** More-democratic governments are more likely to allow opportunities for excluded minority groups to participate in governance at the national level.

²⁰ Cederman et al., 2015.

More-democratic governments may also be less likely to generate grievances that motivate renewed civil conflict. Less-democratic regimes, on the other hand, may be characterized by less-peaceful means of dispute resolution and fewer opportunities for inclusion.²¹ We accounted for federal institutions. States with federal arrangements are more likely to include minorities in governance. Federal institutions may also dampen motivations for conflict by allowing ethnic groups to exercise some measure of governance at a subnational level. Finally, we accounted for whether a group is accorded territorial autonomy. These groups may be more or less likely to experience renewed conflict with the government. On the one hand, autonomous groups may harbor less resentment as a result of exercising greater political control over their own territories. On the other hand, autonomous groups—especially those with a history of conflict with the government—may increase their aims from autonomy to secession.²²

- **Economic development:** National wealth can reduce the risk of conflict by reducing dissatisfaction with the government or by increasing the opportunity costs of conflict.²³ Measures of national wealth may also serve as a proxy for the capacity of a state to prevent challenges to its authority.
- **Ethnic diversity and ethnic exclusion:** an ethnic group may be more likely to be included in national-level governance in more ethnically diverse countries as coalitions of groups may be necessary to effectively win and hold power. We also accounted for how

²¹ 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, March 2001. However, the most autocratic regimes may exercise a level of control such that civil wars are less likely to recur. See T. David Mason, Mehmet Gurses, Patrick T. Brandt, and Jason Michael Quinn, "When Civil Wars Recur: Conditions for Durable Peace After Civil Wars," *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 12, No. 2, May 2011. To account for this possibility, we include the square of the measure of regime type.

²² Cederman et al., 2015.

²³ Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol. 56, No. 4, October 2004; Fearon and Laitin, 2003, pp. 75–90.

many ethnic groups in a country are excluded from central power, either if a group lacks power at the national or regional level or if the group is an active target of discrimination by the state.²⁴

- **History of conflict:** groups that have more recently experienced conflict with the government are most at risk of returning to conflict with the government. Recent civil wars can deepen grievances and polarization; further degrade material conditions and lower opportunity costs for reengaging in conflict; and generate flows of weapons, individuals, and ideas increase the risk of renewed conflict.²⁵ Governments are also more hesitant to extend power-sharing concessions to groups with which they were recently fighting.

Each factor can potentially change the outcomes of interest— inclusion and conflict recurrence—and condition the ability of states to use leverage to promote inclusion and capacity building.

We accounted for one additional contextual factor in the main statistical tests. The ability of states to exercise leverage over recipients of aid in postconflict situations depends on the geopolitical context. When the recipient country has outside options for flows of financial or military support, countries pushing for policy changes in return for continued patronage will have a harder time securing compliance.²⁶ We expect the effect of prior interventions and aid to be different across geopolitical contexts as a result. This contextual factor thus enters into the analysis in an interactive manner. To examine this relationship, we looked at the effects of the main leverage variables during and after the Cold War. For reasons of data availability discussed later, we begin the analysis in the late Cold War, from 1975 onward.

In Appendix B, we also report results from a series of models that pair similar postconflict environments. The matching method

²⁴ Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min, “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis,” *World Politics*, Vol. 62, No. 1, January 2010.

²⁵ Barbara F. Walter, “Does Conflict Beget Conflict? Explaining Recurring Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, May 2004.

²⁶ Dunning, 2004; Girod, 2012.

pairs cases such that they are similar in their contextual factors *apart from* the relevant leverage variable. Because OECD interventions and flows of aid are not randomly applied to conflicts, this method facilitates comparison of like cases to best isolate the effects of structural leverage.²⁷ These models add controls for the outcome and intensity of the previous conflict and the presence of peacekeepers. Results can be found in Appendix B.²⁸

Statistical Strategy

The quantitative analysis uses the sample of all ethnic groups in the EPR data from 1975–2009.²⁹ The unit of analysis is the group-year (for example, the Lebanese Shi'a in 2005 would identify a row in the dataset). All outcomes of interest are binary: A group is either included or not or experiences an episode of conflict or does not, in a given year. We use logistic regression to model these binary outcomes, controlling for the factors listed earlier.³⁰ After dropping observations with missing data, the analysis contains 1,988 postconflict group-years.

Because we expect external states' leverage strategies to vary depending on geopolitical context, we included an interaction term between an indicator for the Cold War period and the leverage

²⁷ Specifically, we use nearest-neighbor propensity score matching. See Jasjeet S. Sekhon, "Multivariate and Propensity Score Matching Software with Automated Balance Optimization: The Matching Package for R," *Journal of Statistical Software*, Vol., 42, No. 7, 2011.

²⁸ The central results are unchanged. Most important, the findings that use the most granular measures of leverage—postconflict aid and arms transfers from OECD states—are replicated using the matching procedure. The matching analysis suggests that the results are not a product of OECD states systematically selecting "easier" cases to target with postconflict aid.

²⁹ The temporal coverage of the data is limited by the availability of information on external support.

³⁰ Logistic regression and survival models are both used to evaluate conflict onset in the literature on civil war. Logistic regression allows more straightforward evaluation of the impact of independent variables on the probability of binary outcomes. With proper accounting for duration dependence, logistic regression provides results similar to those of event history methods. (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, 1998.)

variables—intervention history on behalf of the government, postconflict development aid, and postconflict arms transfers to the government from former interveners. We present two different sets of models that use intervention history variables. In the first set, we differentiated between a history of intervention by OECD and non-OECD states. In the second set, we further differentiated OECD intervention histories by whether the United States had previously intervened in the conflict.³¹

Statistical Results

Results for Political Inclusion

As discussed in Chapter Five, the expectations are that intervening governments can have leverage under certain circumstances to push for greater inclusion and capacity building and that these policies, in turn, increase stability. The tests here are focused on inclusion and reductions in violence, although the measures and modeling approach we use are only coarse proxies for the underlying processes that are the focus of this report.

We did not observe attempts by external states to use leverage in the quantitative data; rather, we observed relationships between sponsor and client that are potential sources of leverage and instances of resource flows between sponsor and client persisting into postconflict periods. These models make the broad assumption—based on historical patterns in the post–Cold War era—that OECD member states will, on average, have a preference for and, when possible, push for

³¹ The first set of models codes an OECD intervention history if at least one OECD member state intervened on behalf of the government during the last five years of the previous conflict. The second set of models keeps the same coding for all OECD members except the United States, which receives a separate coding following the same rule. We account for the United States separately because it occupied a unique role—both during and after the Cold War—with regard to intervening and assembling intervening coalitions in civil conflicts across the globe.

policies of political inclusion.³² In the case of civil war recurrence, the remove from the theory is even greater; the expectation is that political inclusion should yield a lower likelihood of recurrence. We did not, however, test the entire causal chain from leverage to policy change to outcome. These models are intended to test whether data from many different cases across different periods reveal a pattern that is *consistent* with the theoretical expectations. We leave more precise testing of the causal mechanisms or pathways to the case-study chapters.

The first set of models evaluates the association between leverage variables and the probability that a group is politically included in a postconflict government. Table 6.1 displays the results of these models. In this and the similar tables that follow, cell color and shading indicate both the direction and statistical significance of the relationship, respectively. Green cells indicate that the variable is associated with an increase in political inclusion, while red cells are associated with a decrease. Darker shades indicate a more highly significant relationship. Gray cells indicate that the variable is not statistically significant at conventional levels.

The results in Table 6.1 suggest that states that received support from OECD states in their prior conflict are more likely to be inclu-

³² Herman and Piccone, 2002, found direct evidence that democracies have worked extensively to promote political inclusion in the post–Cold War era. More generally, many studies in the international relations literature suggest a tendency of countries to “externalize” their domestic norms of governance. The literature on the tendency of democracies to not fight one another, for instance, suggests that democracies tend to “externalize their domestic norms of compromise” in their dealings with other states, particularly in mediation attempts (J. Michael Greig, “Stepping into the Fray: When Do Mediators Mediate?” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 49, No. 2, April 2005, p. 254). Democracies are also more likely to mediate in civil wars (Patrick M. Regan, Richard W. Frank, and Aysegul Aydin, “Diplomatic Interventions and Civil War: A New Dataset,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 46, No. 1, January 2009). If these broad patterns for some reason do not hold in the context of countries affected by civil conflict—if, in fact, OECD countries are not more likely to push partner governments to adopt more inclusive and stabilizing policies—the results we present are more likely to be due to chance or to other factors associated with OECD intervention for which we are unable to control. Because we did not directly observe demands for policy adoption or prior interveners’ attempts to use leverage, we are careful to discuss the results as merely suggestive of an underlying connection between intervention patterns and postconflict outcomes.

Table 6.1
Summary of Estimated Effect of Leverage Variables on Political Inclusion

Model	Factor	Cold War	Post–Cold War
1	OECD intervention history	Less likely	More likely
	Non-OECD intervention history	Less likely	More likely
2	Aid from OECD interveners (logged)	Less likely	More likely
3	Arms transfers from OECD interveners	Less likely	
	Arms transfers from non-OECD interveners		

NOTE: Table cells summarizing statistical relationships are shaded according to their level of statistical significance, with the darkest shades indicating the highest level of significance. The red and green shades in this table indicate significance at the highest level. Gray cells indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship. See Appendix B for the full set of results, including those for the control variables.

sive of ethnic groups with which they had previously fought, although this relationship holds only in the post–Cold War period.³³ Model 1 groups all OECD interventions together and indicates that a history of OECD intervention is associated with an increase in the likelihood that an ethnic group is included in a post-conflict government. There is evidence that histories of non-OECD intervention are also associated with higher rates of inclusion after the Cold War. This finding is consistent with the argument that states were more likely to pursue cost-minimizing strategies of inclusion after the Cold War.³⁴ However, our results suggest that the same cases where governments are supported by non-OECD states are not less likely to experience conflict recurrence. This test is also weaker than the tests we discuss later that use more

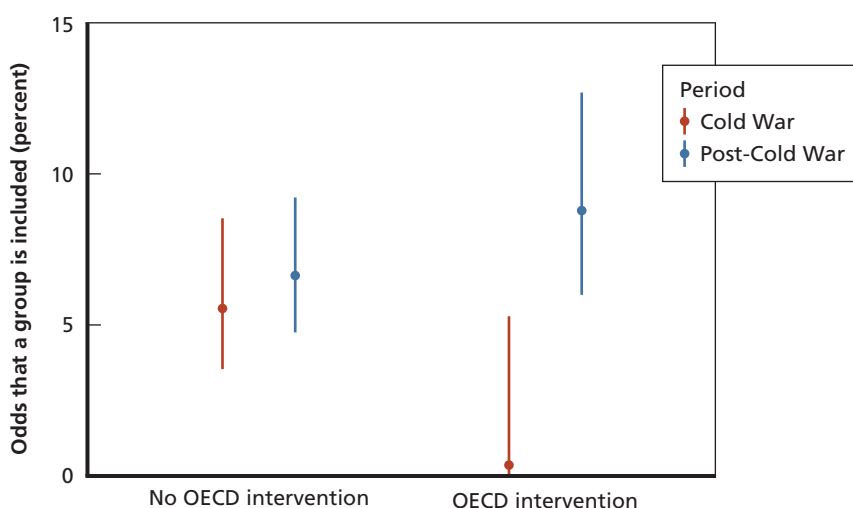
³³ Note that this relationship holds when using a higher threshold of 1,000 battle deaths for an episode of conflict to count as a recurrence. See Appendix B for full results.

³⁴ Ted Robert Gurr, *Peoples Versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2000b, pp. 176–177. Our statistical analysis does not suggest that ethnic groups were more likely to be included across the board, regardless of intervention history; the indicator variable for the post–Cold War period is insignificant in the models of conflict recurrence. See Appendix B.

granular data to capture leverage, and the results are sensitive to other modeling approaches.³⁵

To illustrate how substantively important a history of OECD intervention is for the inclusion of ethnic groups, Figure 6.1 displays the predicted probability that a group will be included in a postconflict government, broken down by period and by whether the conflict state had received support from an OECD member in the previous conflict.³⁶ The figure uses estimates from model 1 in Table 6.1. The predicted probability that a group would be included when the state

Figure 6.1
Effect of OECD Intervention History on the Probability That a Group Is Politically Included in a Postconflict Government



NOTE: The bars indicate uncertainty over the predicted probability from the model. They represent an interval in which the “true” odds fall with 95 percent confidence. The predictions are derived from model 1 in Table 6.1.

³⁵ See Appendix B for details and results for the matching technique.

³⁶ The figure displays statistical estimates of the odds that a previously warring ethnic group is included in a postconflict government. The points in the figure represent the specific estimate of the percentage chance of inclusion, but there is uncertainty around these estimates. The bars around the points thus indicate a range of uncertainty. Larger bars around the estimates thus indicate a broader range of possible relationships between the measures of

received OECD support is 8.4 percentage points higher after the end of the Cold War. By contrast, there is no significant difference between rates of political inclusion in states that did not receive OECD support across periods. This finding is consistent with the expectation that geopolitical context influences the ability of states to generate leverage over client states.

Non-OECD interventions in the post–Cold War period are also positively and significantly associated with inclusion. Recall that these are measures of structural leverage rather than discrete attempts of external actors to use leverage. Thus, the measures reflect *opportunities* that previous interveners may have had to exercise leverage over governments rather than measures of *observed uses* of leverage. This is thus a weaker test of how former interveners can or do exercise leverage over postconflict governments. The results from the matching analysis in Appendix B suggest this result may not be picking up on a stable, underlying relationship between histories of non-OECD intervention and postconflict inclusion.³⁷

The results for aid reinforce our earlier finding that OECD support is significantly associated with greater political inclusion after the end of the Cold War. Aid from former interveners had a positive and significant statistical association with greater rates of political inclusion in the post–Cold War period. The opposite was true during the Cold War, when OECD interventions were associated with less inclusive policies. The measure for arms transfers from former OECD interveners is statistically associated with less inclusion during the Cold War, but this relationship is not significant either way after the Cold War. The number of group-years in states receiving arms transfers from OECD states is much lower than those receiving aid,³⁸ so there are likely sig-

leverage and postconflict outcomes that are consistent with patterns in the data sample. If a range includes zero, the effect cannot be said to be different from zero.

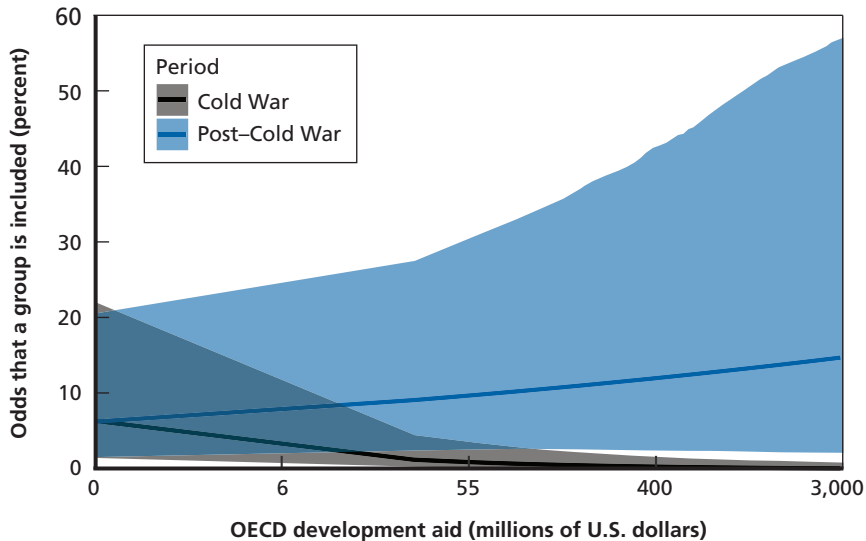
³⁷ The estimate for non-OECD intervention history in the post–Cold War period is insignificant when cases with similar contextual factors but different histories of intervention are paired together.

³⁸ In 87 group-years, the state received arms transfers and 244 group-years in which the state received aid; 28 percent of aid-years are also weapon-transfer years (68/244).

nificant differences between the types of states that receive arms transfers and those that just receive development or humanitarian aid from former interveners.

These results for the aid measure increase our confidence in the earlier results that use a measure of intervention history. The latter is just an indicator of a relationship that states might use to generate leverage. The aid measure reflects an active relationship between former interveners and postconflict states. It further captures resource flows that grant states a concrete ability to generate leverage. Figure 6.2 shows predictions from model 2 of how postconflict aid from former OECD interveners influences the probability that an ethnic group is included in a postconflict government. The figure shows that ethnic groups are most likely to be included when former OECD interveners grant greater amounts of aid to postconflict governments. This is

Figure 6.2
Effect of Aid from Former OECD Interveners on the Probability That a Group Is Politically Included in a Postconflict Government



NOTE: The line indicates the model's prediction that a group will be included in a postconflict government. The shaded region indicates uncertainty over the predicted probability from the model. The predictions are derived from model 2 in Table 6.1. The x-axis is on a log scale.

only true after the Cold War; greater aid flows are associated with *less* inclusion during the Cold War.³⁹ The size of the effect is substantial: the predicted probability that a group will be included increases by 175 percent. The baseline probability of inclusion (i.e., in the absence of aid) is 6.3 percent. This increases to a probability of inclusion of 14.7 percent when aid reaches its historically observed maximum value. The model's expectations of a group being included across periods is also significant, with inclusion 11 percentage points more likely after the Cold War at the highest levels of development aid. Magnitude of support clearly matters, but subject to diminishing returns; there are large increases in inclusion as support increases from the lowest levels, while the effect tapers off at the highest levels.

Taken together, these results are consistent with wealthy, democratic countries having some ability to exercise leverage over postconflict governments with respect to including ethnic groups. The results are also consistent with the claim that geopolitical context serves to constrain or enable the exercise of these levers of influence; during the Cold War competition, interveners and aid donors did not appear to prioritize political inclusion. There are no clear differences in the timing of support in these modes; support given both during and after conflicts showed associations with higher rates of inclusion.

Although these statistical results suggest that external leverage may, indeed, be a significant factor in influencing the political trajectory of postconflict states—moving from the minimum to the maximum of aid more than doubles the likelihood of inclusion relative to the baseline—they also provide an important dose of realism. While aid is associated with a much higher likelihood of political inclusion

³⁹ The differential effects of aid in the Cold War and post–Cold War eras have been explored in several other studies. For one in-depth look at the very different effects of security sector assistance in the two eras and the reasons for these differences, see Watts et al., 2018. This prior analysis adopted a two-stage statistical modeling strategy designed to account for the possibility that selection effects accounted for the difference in outcomes between the two eras. It found that U.S. assistance had different effects even when accounting for the different types of partners and contexts to which the United States provided assistance in the two periods.

than would be the case without aid, political inclusion in postconflict contexts is still relatively rare.

Results for Conflict Recurrence

This section presents results from models that test how the same set of factors—intervention histories and flows of aid and arms—influence the probability that ethnic groups return to conflict with the state. Table 6.2 displays results from four models, each of which uses a different set of leverage factors. As before, cells are colored based on the direction of their estimated influence on peace duration and the strength of the statistical association.

The results from these tests are largely consistent with the findings on inclusion. The most precise measures of OECD leverage—aid and arms transfers from prior interveners—are positively related to more-durable peace in the post–Cold War period. The results using the coarser intervention history measures are more mixed. After the

Table 6.2
Summary of Estimated Effect of Leverage Variables on Peace Duration

Model	Factor	Cold War	Post–Cold War
4	OECD intervention history		
	Non-OECD intervention history		
5	OECD intervention history (U.S. excluded)	Increases	
	U.S. intervention history	Decreases	Increases
	Non-OECD intervention history		
6	Aid from OECD interveners (logged)	Decreases	Increases
7	Arms transfers from OECD interveners		Increases
	Arms transfers from non-OECD interveners	Decreases	

NOTE: Table cells summarizing statistical relationships are shaded according to their level of statistical significance, with the darkest shades indicating the highest level of significance. The red and green shades in this table indicate significance at the highest level. Gray cells indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship. See Appendix B for the full set of results, including those for the control variables.

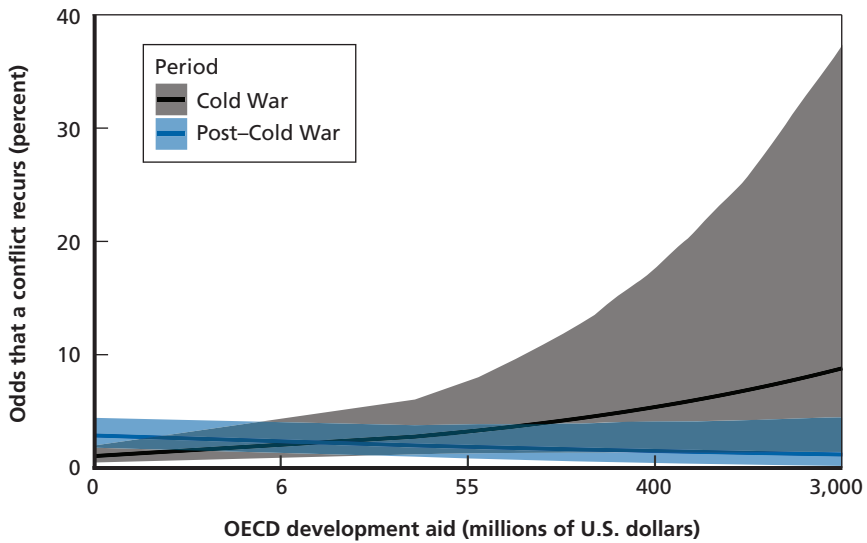
Cold War, only U.S. intervention history has a positive estimated effect on peace duration, while OECD intervention history has a positive effect during the Cold War but not after.⁴⁰

One possibility for why U.S. and not OECD intervention histories are positively associated with a more durable peace is that the types of conflicts in which the U.S. intervenes are systematically different. As discussed earlier, intervention history variables are coarse measures of the underlying mechanism of interest: relationships that provide intervening countries leverage over postconflict governments. More stock should thus be placed on results using measures that have greater fidelity to the underlying concept. In this case, the aid and arms-transfer measures tell a story more in line with expectations, by which greater flows of support from OECD interveners to postconflict governments are associated with enduring peace (models 6 and 7). Intervention history variables reflect the *possibility*, rather than the reality, of a continued relationship between former interveners and postconflict governments; aid and arms-transfers variables reflect both the existence and the scale of such relationships. These results also strongly support the expectation that the source of assistance matters for postconflict outcomes. Only support from OECD states, including the United States, is associated with longer peace duration. While we were unable to gather data on non-OECD development aid flows, non-OECD arms transfers were negatively associated with peace duration during the Cold War and show no significant relationship in the post-Cold War period.

Figure 6.3 presents predictions from model 6 of how aid from former OECD interveners influences the probability that an ethnic group returns to conflict. The figure shows that conflict recurrence becomes less likely when former OECD interveners grant greater amounts of aid to postconflict governments. As with inclusion, this is only true after the Cold War. Greater aid flows were associated with a higher risk of conflict recurrence during the Cold War. The effect size

⁴⁰ U.S. intervention history is not significantly associated with longer peace duration after the Cold War in models that pair cases with and without intervention. See Appendix B for a discussion of the matching methodology and the results.

Figure 6.3
Effect of Aid from OECD Interveners on Conflict Recurrence



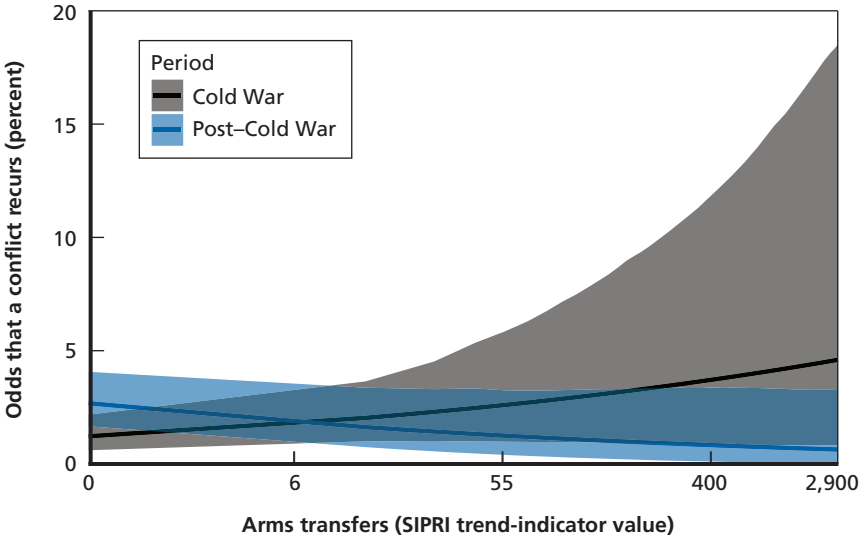
NOTE: The line indicates the model's prediction for the risk that a conflict will recur. The shaded area indicates uncertainty over the predicted probability from the model. The predictions are derived from model 6 in Table 3.2. The x-axis is on a log scale.

is substantial in the post–Cold War period: Increasing the amount of aid from 0 to its maximum in the dataset reduces the predicted risk that conflict recurs in any given year by 62 percent, from 3.9 percent to 1.5 percent. Aid appears to have a different effect between periods as well. At the highest levels of aid, the predicted probability of recurrence is about 8.5 percentage points higher during the Cold War.⁴¹

Models that use arms transfers as a measure of leverage suggest the same relationship with conflict recurrence. Figure 6.4 presents predictions of the risk of conflict recurrence from model 7. The figure shows that peace is more likely to endure as former OECD interveners increase arms transfers to postconflict governments. As with results

⁴¹ Note, however, that the wide uncertainty around the estimate indicates that there are very few cases with a high amount of aid that also experienced conflict recurrence during the Cold War. Furthermore, there is a substantial area of overlap in the uncertainty around the estimates, indicating that the effect of aid may not be different across the two periods.

Figure 6.4
Effect of Arms Transfers from OECD Interveners on Conflict Recurrence



NOTE: The line indicates the model's prediction for the risk that a conflict will recur. The shaded area indicates uncertainty over the predicted probability from the model. The predictions are derived from model 7 in Table 3.2. The x-axis is on a log scale.

described earlier, this relationship is only evident after the Cold War. Groups in states receiving the maximum level of arms transfers have a predicted risk of conflict recurrence that is 79 percent lower than in states that did not receive transfers.⁴² Increasing transfers had the opposite effect on conflict recurrence during the Cold War, when it negatively affected peace duration. The magnitude and timing of support show clear relationships with postconflict stability in these models. Greater volumes of development aid and arms transfers both decrease the risk of conflict recurrence, although subject to diminishing returns. Notably, measures of support given *during* conflicts show weak or nonexistent relationships with postconflict stability; only measures of postconflict aid demonstrate a stabilizing effect.

⁴² The predicted risk of conflict recurrence at the minimum level of transfers is 3.6 percent while the risk at the maximum is 1 percent.

One potential concern with these results is that the relationship between arms transfers and conflict risk reflects an increase in military capacity purely rather than in military capacity being put in service of a particular political strategy. Unfortunately, it is difficult to observe political strategies across large numbers of interventions. Again, however, we can differentiate between assistance from the democratic members of the OECD and assistance from other states, which may be less inclined to policies that incorporate some level of support for inclusion and rule-bound improvements in capacity. Consequently, we performed the same analysis in model 7 but included all arms transfers (i.e., from non-OECD states, as well as OECD members).⁴³ The statistical association between arms transfers and conflict recurrence disappears.

This finding suggests that military assistance by itself—and any concomitant increases in partner military capacity—is not sufficient to stabilize partner states. The lack of an association between non-OECD arms transfers and recurrence after the Cold War suggest that differences in the political strategies underlying the military assistance also play a role. The effect of support type thus seems to be linked to the provider of the support. The same caveats from the discussion of aid and conflict recurrence apply here: There is substantial uncertainty around the estimated effect of arms transfers during the Cold War. However, the results together suggest a pacifying effect of resource flows from former OECD interveners to postconflict governments in the post–Cold War era.

We were not able to account for how OECD states select states in which to intervene. This matters for evaluating the evidence presented here and may potentially explain the mixed results and the central results showing different relationships between leverage variables and outcomes during and after the Cold War. If OECD states are selecting easier conflicts in which to intervene—that is, conflicts in which parties are more likely to implement inclusive or stabilizing policies—our findings might be wrong. If the states did select such cases after the Cold War, the findings for the main measures of leverage would reflect a judicious process of picking among conflicts and not the effectiveness

⁴³ See Appendix B for the results of this analysis.

of leverage relationships. Even if OECD states are not systematically selecting easier cases, our inferences may be influenced in the same direction if non-OECD states are selecting harder conflicts in which to intervene.

Alternatively, OECD states may choose harder cases, where post-conflict parties are reluctant to adopt inclusive policies and conflicts are more likely to recur. In this case, our results would understate the ameliorative potential of resource flows and continued relationships between previous interveners and postconflict governments. This would also make it more likely that we would find no statistical relationship between different measures of OECD leverage and post-conflict inclusion and peace duration. The types of conflicts and the goals OECD states chose to pursue in their interventions potentially changed across the transition to the post–Cold War period, as democratic expansion became a higher priority for OECD states. Similarly, the types of policy tools that intervening states choose to deploy in a given intervention might be subject to a process of selection; if aid and arms are unlikely to be effective, interveners may choose another lever at their disposable. As above, this would make it more likely that we would find a relationship in those cases where interveners judge, correctly, that resources will incentivize policy adoption. In either case—whether OECD states are choosing easier or harder conflicts, or more or less effective policy tools—the results here should be interpreted with caution.

Despite these caveats, prior research does not provide reason to believe that our results are biased by selection effects—or if they are, it is likely by adverse selection, in which case we are understating the true effects of assistance from wealthy democracies. As discussed above, previous RAND research suggests that interveners in general and the leading democratic interveners—the United States, France, and United Kingdom—in particular are not prone to intervene in easier cases. In fact, they tend to intervene in the most difficult cases.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ See Watts et al., 2017, Appendix A, for an analysis of how selection effects might affect the outcomes of direct military interventions. See Watts et al., 2018, for an analysis of selection effects in the provision of U.S. security sector assistance.

Conclusion

This chapter used statistical analysis to explore the relationship between external factors, such as aid and political inclusion and the stability of peace in postconflict environments. Specifically, we developed a number of plausible measures of leverage that former intervening states might use to push for policies of inclusion and increase the durability of peace, and we examined the correlation between these instruments and the outcomes of interest. An important aspect of our analysis is the strategic context in which states generate and exercise leverage. We evaluated how different measures of leverage relate to inclusion and peace duration during and after the Cold War.

Overall, the findings are consistent with the claim that external interveners, and OECD member states in particular, can exercise leverage over postconflict governments to include groups with whom they were previously in conflict. This finding holds when using relatively coarse indicators of leverage—whether an OECD member had intervened in the previous conflict—or more fine-grained measures of resource flows from interveners to postconflict governments. Findings for inclusion by and large confirmed expectations that the type of intervener matters for understanding inclusion in postconflict environments. The one counterintuitive finding in this respect, that non-OECD intervention histories may be associated with more inclusion, is based on a weaker test and does not hold up to additional robustness analysis.

The results for conflict recurrence display a similar pattern, but with more variability. The more granular measures of leverage, aid flows and arms transfers from OECD members to postconflict governments, are associated with more durable peace. Whether this stabilizing effect is at least in part the result of political inclusion, and whether that political inclusion occurs because of leverage applied by wealthy, democratic intervening states, is not something that can be determined from this statistical analysis alone. Combined with the insights from our case studies on Afghanistan and Iraq, however, these quantitative results suggest that there is strong reason to believe that leverage can be successful in a wide variety of conflict-affected states.

Conclusions and Recommendations

U.S. experience in Iraq and Afghanistan and resulting U.S. military doctrine emphasize the need for the United States to consolidate the gains it has realized on the battlefield. Recognizing this need is much easier than understanding the measures necessary to succeed. A wide cross-section of U.S. decisionmakers and analysts has agreed that broad-based, inclusive governance and institutionalized capacity-building consistent with the rule of law are the long-term goals for stabilizing fragile states. How to realize these goals is much more contentious.

This report provides research to advance at least partial answers to these questions. The policy community has long been divided about the practicality of using leverage and specific conditions on military and civil assistance to nudge local partners toward better governance practices. The findings in this report suggest that conditionality measures can indeed work—so long as leverage strategies are appropriately designed and so long as success is defined in appropriately modest and incremental terms. This chapter extends the findings of our research to provide recommendations for both senior U.S. policymakers and officials responsible for implementing U.S. policies.

The overarching recommendation that follows from our research is that the United States should make better use of conditionality mechanisms to promote better governance practices in conflict-affected states, with the ultimate goal of improving the odds of long-term stabilization. Beyond this top-level recommendation, however, our research—and the lessons of our case studies of Iraq and Afghanistan in particular—offers more-detailed guidance for practitioners.

The policy recommendations that follow begin with the appropriate goals for U.S. leverage strategies, turn to a discussion of the appropriate design for leverage strategies, and conclude with a discussion of how the United States can put in place the conditions necessary for leverage to succeed.

Begin with Reasonable Expectations about the Meaning of “Consolidating Gains”

For a stabilization strategy to work, U.S. decisionmakers must begin with a clear-eyed understanding of what constitutes reasonable goals. The research presented in this report suggests that foreign stabilization efforts can, indeed, promote inclusion and institutionalized capacity-building and, ultimately, improve partners’ resilience. But such improvements are often obtained at great cost and may not be adequate, in any case, to prevent renewed instability. Senior decisionmakers should base their decisions to launch stabilization efforts and their strategies on a handful of hard truths:

- Countries experiencing civil war return to some level of conflict more than one-half of the time within five years of the end of the initial conflict. Carefully selecting the conflicts most amenable to successful outcomes and developing sound campaign plans can undoubtedly improve outcomes, but interventions of this type should be approached with a great deal of caution. This sober perspective ought to be reflected in the advice senior officials and general officers provide their leadership on the advisability of engaging in these operations.
- Senior officials and general officers should communicate to their leadership and to the general public the sustained commitment that these types of interventions require. Decisionmakers should be wary of claims that an intervention will be short, decisive, or inexpensive. Strengthening a partner’s commitment to political inclusion and rule-bound institutional development is a long-term endeavor that will likely require years or even decades of

sustained effort (albeit at lower intensities over time). Senior leaders and general officers should use their offices to prepare others for these realities.

- Once the United States has chosen to intervene in a civil conflict, promoting inclusion and building rule-bound capacity in the host country can lead to lower levels of conflict. The presence of irreconcilable factions complicates how to implement the first principle, but, in general, winnowing the pool of “irreconcilables” to the smallest number possible will improve chances of avoiding war recurrence. The United States attempted to promote inclusion in both Iraq and Afghanistan, if inclusion is understood in purely demographic terms. But the United States spurned reconciliation overtures from the Taliban in Afghanistan and was highly ambivalent about inclusion of the Sadrists in Iraq. There is no single rule that can tell policymakers where to draw the line between reconcilable factions and irreconcilable ones. But our research suggests that, when senior officials and general officers give their advice on where the line should be drawn, assumptions need to be continually revisited to make certain that groups designated as irreconcilable genuinely are. Moreover, the United States should provide both offramps and redlines—that is, clear indications of what behavior will not be tolerated but also openings to fuller inclusion and participation if the rules of the game are observed (as the United States ultimately did with Muqtada al-Sadr in Iraq).
- Establishing good relationships with key leaders is a central goal of diplomacy. But top decisionmakers (and those further down in the hierarchy) sometimes become overly invested in such relationships, to the detriment of the broader goal of building institutionalized governance. The evolution of the U.S. relationship with Hamid Karzai is a good example of the dangers of an overly personalized approach to partnerships. When the United States focuses its relationship on a single leader, it can weaken the broader partner government and leave the United States unable to effectively wield leverage when that leader opposes key requests.

Focus U.S. Leverage on Critical Objectives

Senior leaders' time and U.S. material resources are finite, as is the patience of the leaders of U.S. partners. Leverage is an essential tool for nudging U.S. partners toward practices that are conflict-reducing in the long term, but for leverage to work, it must be properly focused on key priorities:

- The first step in pursuing improved governance practices with U.S. partners is to recognize where U.S. and partner interests overlap. While it is true that U.S. partners in these contexts often prefer narrow ruling coalitions and transforming state institutions to become organs of their own power, *often* is not *always*. Our case studies of Iraq and Afghanistan uncovered many instances in which local leaders embraced more-inclusive or more-institutionalized practices. Sometimes they did so for reasons of cultural norms (such as the Afghan practice of *nanawatai*), and sometimes they did so for very pragmatic reasons (as in the broader political coalitions in Iraq following Maliki's ouster). The United States should seek out such opportunities for cooperation and build on them whenever possible.
- It may be possible to take measures that will, over time, better align partner interests with those of the United States. Trade and investment, for instance, create constituencies with a vested interest in maintaining stability and strong relations with the United States. If interests align, the United States may not need to exercise leverage at all.
- When leverage is necessary, it can be used to defuse crises or to build toward long-term goals. American decisionmakers should take care that their uses of leverage toward crisis management do not undermine their longer-term objectives. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States often prioritized warfighting objectives over building toward inclusive, institutionalized governance—the path that it ultimately believed would help it consolidate battlefield gains. To minimize such contradictions,

senior decisionmakers must carefully prioritize where the United States will focus its leverage.

- The United States achieved the most success (in terms of getting its desired response) with hard conditionality when the message was delivered by a cabinet secretary or other senior official from Washington. Examples from Afghanistan include the abrogation of Karzai's 2001 peace deal, U.S. demands related to the presidential elections in 2009 and 2014, and U.S. demands related to peace talks with the Taliban and the Taliban's establishment of a Doha office. Such high-level, face-to-face meetings are a finite resource, however, so senior decisionmakers must think carefully about where to concentrate such efforts.
- Senior leaders will need to show discretion in the frequency with which they attempt to use hard (*ex ante*) conditionality to compel the partner to shift its position. Even under favorable conditions, U.S. leverage attempts may fail, potentially undermining U.S. credibility in future efforts. Even when successful, hard-nosed use of conditionality can engender resentment in ways that may ultimately be self-defeating if used too often or in ways that clearly diminish a leader's standing among his or her followers, as episodes in Afghanistan clearly showed. It may be useful for U.S. decisionmakers to think about leverage as a savings account or an ammunition store that must be carefully spent down or husbanded based on the opportunity cost of using the resource. Leverage should not be spared when the partner's position threatens the ability of the United States to achieve its objectives but also should not be needlessly expended when more-consequential issues loom on the horizon.

Clearly and Consistently Communicate U.S. Demands

The best-designed leverage strategy will fail if the partner does not understand what the United States is demanding of it.

- In designing U.S. requests to the partner, planners should be aware that the most sophisticated and intricately designed approach can founder if the complexity of the proposal obscures the clarity of the demand. For this reason, planners need to balance the desire to perfectly calibrate how the United States will engage with the partner to achieve multiple objectives with the need for the partner to understand and internalize the message, while allowing the United States to monitor compliance. This may require simplifying requests for the sake of clear communication.
- Conflicting U.S. signals only serve to strengthen the partner's position at the expense of the United States. This lack of coherence is detrimental in two ways. First, it muddies the U.S. message, giving the partner a ready excuse to avoid compliance. Second, it affords the partner opportunities to play U.S. representatives off against each other. Interagency debate is helpful to reach sound policies, but such debates should not be aired in front of the partner. When engaging with a partner, the United States must speak with a single voice, and senior leaders should ensure that all interlocutors faithfully convey the message.
- U.S. senior officials and general officers should set the tone for those deployed that their mission is to advance U.S. interests, not the agendas of the partner's political leaders. Indeed, on the pivotal issues of inclusion and capacity building, U.S. preferences are likely to diverge from the partner's preferences more often than they converge. In these instances, the United States needs to consider whether to use its leverage to nudge or compel the partner to shift course. This process may be contentious. Senior leaders and general officers should recognize that the ability to get along with the partner's political leadership is not the standard of success. The standard of success is the shaping of partner leader perspectives to better align with U.S. objectives or striking bargains in which the United States is able to obtain partner cooperation on at least the most critical issues.
- It is important to take into account cultural factors and the general perspective of the partner before deciding to use leverage. Failing to do so may result in the intended message not being

received, with the miscommunication having potentially compounding effects over time. It is also important to understand the U.S. partner's perceptions of its strength relative to the United States. If the partner believes that its position is stronger than that of the United States, it may not respond as expected.

Develop Frameworks and Capabilities for Monitoring Partner Compliance

One of the findings from this research was that the United States typically had the information it needed to monitor critical elements of partner compliance. This finding does not mean, however, that the United States faces few challenges in observing partner behavior. U.S. personnel can take a number of actions to improve decisionmakers' understanding of U.S. partners:

- In addition to designing indications and warnings for the adversary's behavior, it is important for American analysts to develop indicators and warnings that provide early notice of destructive partner behavior. The mission's success and failure will depend both on effectively targeting adversary networks and on the partner adopting best practices in its approach to counterinsurgency and counter-violent extremist organization campaigns. There is a particular need for indications and warnings that alert the United States to partners' efforts to exclude identity groups or hijack the development of security forces to advance personal ambitions.
- Partner preferences and tolerances for inclusion may vary significantly by geography. For instance, the partner may be willing to accept a degree of decentralization in the hinterland while resisting this same approach in more strategically important areas of the country. Working-level U.S. officials and deployed military personnel may have better situational awareness than their senior leaders concerning dynamics outside the capital. It is important that U.S. personnel use this knowledge to provide a nuanced per-

spective on what is possible, particularly as it relates to inclusion, in different parts of the country.

- One of the most common misalignments of interests between the United States and its partners is partners' frequent preference for stacking the development of security forces with the aim of consolidating power in the hands of the current leadership. Deployed personnel will often be in the best position to observe early indicators of this behavior because they may be able to directly observe the politicization of command-and-control or promotion practices that elevate political loyalty over merit. It is crucial that, if this behavior is observed, it is communicated to U.S. general officers and senior officials in a position to consider mitigation measures.

Carefully Select Sanctions for Noncompliance and Inducements for Cooperation

Finally, U.S. practitioners need to offer carrots and sticks in such a way as to compel compliance with the most critical U.S. demands while not alienating its partners:

- A practical way for deployed personnel to support U.S. senior leaders in their exercise of leverage is to map the partner's preferences. U.S. trade negotiators refer to this exercise as a *wants analysis*. By carefully mapping what the partner is seeking and communicating that to U.S. senior leadership, the United States will be in the best position to make sure it is aware of concessions it is making and ensure that these concessions are compensated by the partner reciprocating on U.S. priorities.
- Deployed U.S. military personnel can exercise leverage at the operational and tactical levels. This is particularly true when a policy decision is taken to devolve authority to unit commanders. Under these circumstances, a unit commander can calibrate the amount of military assistance it provides to the partner based on the partner's commitment to principles it has agreed to. For

instance, U.S. ground forces can use fire support or targeting packages to incentivize the partner's commitment to avoiding civilian casualties and equally applying the rule of law. At a more prosaic level, the U.S. military can make more-basic services—such as rotary air or protected ground transportation for local leaders—contingent on partners playing by the rules of the game.

- As this report has shown, the United States will frequently need to use leverage to ensure that its partners do not abuse U.S. assistance to develop narrow, unaccountable ruling factions that antagonize other actors necessary for a new political order to take root. Practitioners, however, must be prepared for the backlash that can result when the United States throws its weight around. Wounded partner pride can be salved, at least in part, by the provision of *side payments* (inducements for cooperation). Such payments do not need to be equal to the concessions that the United States is demanding from its partners. Even relatively small gestures can demonstrate some sensitivity to the leaders of another nation and provide them with face-saving opportunities to reinforce their position among their followers.

Technical Background for Qualitative Analysis

Purpose and Design

The purpose of coding characteristics of the influence events and the background conditions under which they occur is to discern patterns in how the U.S. government employs conditionality and under what circumstances it is more or less successful. In selecting the variables for this exercise, we chose factors that we or others theorize are related to the outcome of U.S. efforts to influence partner actions. The factors are the influence strategy (e.g., persuasion, conditionality) employed, the size of the U.S. military footprint in the host country, the alternative resources available to the partner, and the attractiveness of the U.S. inducement or the strength of the U.S. sanction, among others. In addition to these independent variables, we coded the outcomes of the influence events, in both the short and the long terms.

Coding Decision Rules

The majority of the coding decisions in the tables in Chapters Three through Five are author judgments that are explained and documented in Chapters Three and Four. For example, these chapters explain in detail the issue area the United States government is attempting to influence, the partner's position and the extent of its alignment or misalignment with Washington's preferences, the leverage strategy that the U.S. government employed, and the outcome of the event. However, several considerations in the coding merit additional explanation.

Objectives

The outcomes of interest in this report are *inclusion* and what we refer to as *institutionalized governance capacity*. All 18 influence events were coded as pertaining to one or both of these two issue areas. Although U.S. policy guidance specifies that both aspects of governance are key objectives for U.S. stabilization efforts, the United States is inconsistent about pursuing either in practice, often sacrificing these long-term objectives in the interests of more-immediate considerations. Focusing on these two outcomes, however, had two advantages. First, because they are consistently a core element of U.S. policy documents, a focus on these objectives helped us assess the extent to which stated U.S. policy is implementable. Second, by narrowing the range of outcomes of interest, we could more effectively isolate differences in leverage strategy or relevant conditions as the drivers of different outcomes rather than differences in the objectives that were being pursued.

Inclusion encompasses not just opportunities for political participation, but also the representativeness of security forces and sharing in the country's wealth and resources. *Institutionalized governance capacity* is understood as the development of governmental capacity to execute its policies consistent with the rule of law and the weakening of personalized rule. Threats to such governance are particularly common from corruption and from the common practice of making security services the tools of particular leaders or regimes rather than of the state. Influence events involving U.S. efforts to shape the development of partner security forces may be characterized as pertaining to both issue areas because the U.S. government often has a preference for representative security forces (in terms of their ethnosectarian composition) that also operate in a professional manner, equally applying rule of law. If the U.S. government is pursuing both objectives, this is noted in the Issue Area column of the tables.

Interest Alignment

The first column of the tables that requires clarification pertains to the alignment of interests between the United States and its partners on a particular issue related to the governance of the partner country. Interests are primarily classified as *aligned* or *misaligned*. These catego-

ries refer to the goals of both parties, not the intensity with which the parties are pursuing the goals. (The intensity of partner motivations is treated later, in the discussion of the strength of U.S. sanctions.) Obviously, the degree of alignment could be understood as a spectrum because neither the United States nor its partners purely pursued a single objective. The decision to code interest alignment as a categorical variable was a practical one because the challenges of determining the degree of alignment more precisely and the limited number of cases available to conduct anything other than dichotomously coded analyses.

Because U.S. and partner positions evolve over time, sometimes within the duration of the influence event being considered, we have noted the initial misalignment shifting to alignment, or vice versa, in several instances. When alignment shifted over time, we coded these cases as instances of “mixed alignment,” with one notable exception. In the case of Maliki’s ouster, U.S. leverage actually changed who the key partners were (the only instance in which this was the case); we therefore tallied the influence event as two separate events, one with misaligned interests and hard leverage and the second as a case of aligned interests.

Influence Strategy

The next column in our summary table treats the influence strategy, which refers to the type of leverage the U.S. government applied to align the partner’s preference with its own. In the narrative accounts presented in Chapters Three and Four, we refer in detail to different strategies, which encompass persuasion, inducements, implied conditionality, *ex ante* conditionality, and *ex post* conditionality. In the table, we simplify these leverage strategies into three types:

- *persuasion/inducements*, in which the United States either offers positive material inducements with no indication of conditionality or merely seeks to persuade its partner without any positive or negative inducement of any kind
- *soft (ex post) conditionality*, in which the United States either implies penalties for noncompliance (but without any explicit

conditions) or presents sanctions that would be meted out only *ex post* (that is, the United States would offer material support in anticipation of partner compliance, with a promise that the support would be suspended if conditions had not been met by a certain deadline)

- *hard (ex ante) conditionality*, in which the partner must first undertake the desired behavior to avoid the sanction or receive the reward.

Notwithstanding this categorization, some author judgment was required to code this variable because what initially appears to be *ex ante* conditionality may have loopholes that water down the threat of sanction. For example, U.S. congressional action tying funding to partner compliance is significantly watered down when the President can exercise a national security waiver. In these types of instances, the case study author used discretion to adjust the coding to reflect the de facto rather than de jure form of leverage applied.

When different influence strategies were used in tandem—for instance when persuasion was combined with hard conditionality—we coded the more intrusive of the strategies employed (i.e., hard conditionality). Indeed, it can be assumed the United States government tried persuasion in all influence events reviewed, but the influence strategy will only be coded as persuasion if it was not supplemented by more-coercive forms of leverage.

The next three columns—importance of U.S. inducement/sanction to partner, the observability of the outcome, and the clarity of U.S. objectives—were coded by the case study authors according to their best judgment.

Conditions of Leverage Success: Strength of Inducement or Sanction, Observability, and Clarity

The next three columns—importance of U.S. inducement/sanction to partner, the observability of the outcome, and the clarity of U.S. objectives—were coded by the case study authors according to their best judgment. These are all conditions for the success of U.S. leverage efforts. The *strength of an inducement or sanction* is not an absolute

measure. Rather, it is relative to how foreign leaders weigh the cost of the sanction against the costs of compliance. For example, a threatened reduction of U.S. forces might appear to be a very strong sanction but would not be if the United States is demanding that the foreign leader make concessions that would leave him more vulnerable than the cost he would incur from the troop reduction.

Observability refers to the ability of U.S. officials to observe whether the conditions for material inducements or sanctions have been fulfilled. It is important to note that this factor varies according to the nature of the condition U.S. officials have imposed and to U.S. capabilities to observe that partner's behavior. The United States often lacks a clear understanding of partner behavior, especially outside large population centers. The United States may also lack a clear understanding of partner motives and why a partner is failing to deliver on previous promises. But many conditions are specified at a relatively high level, where it is easy (or easier) to observe partner compliance. When the United States specified that Maliki must be removed before it would commit to providing military assistance against ISIS, for instance, U.S. officials had no difficulty observing whether this condition was met. As conditions move down the scale from the strategic level toward the tactical level, they become increasingly difficult to observe. The case studies in this report, however, suggest that many of the most critical conditions for the success of U.S. efforts occur at sufficiently high levels that they can be observed even without a large U.S. presence on the ground.

Clarity refers to the ability of the partner to understand what the United States is demanding of it and the relative priority the United States places on the demand. In general, the higher the level at which a demand is voiced, the clearer the message about the relative importance the United States attaches to the demand. Requests made directly by the President of the United States are rare but carry considerable weight.

As with the other variables in the qualitative analysis, these factors are all summarized using simple dichotomous judgments. Additional information on the coding decisions is available in the narrative accounts provided in Chapters Three and Four. Interviews with U.S.

government officials and deployed military officers provided much of the information required, especially for the coding of observability of the outcome.

Outcomes

The final two columns in the tables treat the outcomes of the influence events. We have coded short-term outcomes (within three years) and long-term outcomes (beyond three years). The outcome refers to the extent to which the partner accepted the U.S. position on the relevant issue area(s). So, for example, the development of the Iraqi CTS is coded as a success if the force developed in a way that was representative of Iraq's ethnosectarian composition and operated in a professional, rule-bound manner. Other metrics for success—for example, the CTS' tactical proficiency—do not figure into our coding. Outcomes are coded as either a failure, partial success, or success at two points (*short term*, considered to be up to three years after the U.S. demand, and *long term*, considered to be between three and five years afterward) and based on our judgement of whether the partner acceded to the spirit of the U.S. position.

Preference Changes

In one influence event—the ouster of Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki—Iraqi preferences changed, from an initial situation in which the government's preferences were misaligned with those of the United States to a situation under his successor in which the government's preferences were aligned with U.S. objectives. Because Iraqi preferences changed at a pivotal point in the influence event and did so because of U.S. actions, we have counted this event as two different cases in our summary statistics—one in which preferences misaligned and another in which they aligned. This is the only event for which we adopted this counting practice.

Technical Background for Quantitative Analysis

This appendix serves as a technical accompaniment to the quantitative analysis in Chapter Six. It includes additional details on the data we compiled for the statistical tests, model specifications, tables with the full statistical results, and a variety of other additional information. The appendix begins with a summary of the data sources and methods. We then present tables of statistical results for the main models in the chapter. Along the way we present a variety of additional results that probe the sensitivity of the main findings to alternative modeling and measurement approaches. We conclude with a discussion of the limitations of the analysis and ways in which future work can build on the approach we outline here.

Data Sources

Measuring Political Inclusion and Peace Duration

The tests took the group-year as the unit of analysis.¹ We assessed the conditions under which the ethnic group is politically included after

¹ Note that the leverage variables are at the country level, while the main analysis is at the group level. The theoretical framework has implications at both levels. Leverage over post-conflict governments can target policies that affect all groups within a country or are otherwise agnostic as to specific groups. However, some policies are targeted at specific groups (e.g., policies in Iraq regarding inclusion of Sunnis), and some conflicts involve only one or a small number of ethnic groups. In our data, 77 percent of conflicts involve only one ethnic group. For these reasons—and because data on inclusion are at the group level—our analysis of postconflict inclusion is at the group level. The recurrence analysis is also at the group

fighting the government and the conditions under which the group returns to conflict with the government. Obviously, not all civil wars or insurgencies are fought around questions of ethnic identity, so using ethnic groups as our unit of analysis has some limitations. Even internal conflicts often considered ideological rather than ethnic, however, often have a strong ethnic component, so using these groups as our unit of analysis was a reasonable simplifying assumption.² The EPR dataset provided our data for political inclusion.³ The EPR project collects data on ethnic groups that they consider politically relevant. The data include groups when they are subject to state discrimination or when political leaders advance claims on their behalf at the national level. We did not include ethnic groups that either dominate or hold a monopoly on political power in the government because we are interested in groups that are potentially excluded from, and willing to fight for, representation at the national level.

For the first set of models, we analyzed what factors are most closely associated with the chances that an ethnic group previously engaged in civil conflict will be included in a postconflict government in a given year. These are groups that the EPR dataset codes as either junior or senior partners in the government in that year. To match ethnic groups with civil conflicts, we relied on the ACD-EPR dataset,⁴ which links ethnic groups in the EPR dataset to the UCDP/PRIO ACD on civil wars.⁵ Ethnic groups are coded as participating in a conflict if a rebel group makes a claim to fight on that group's behalf and if members of that group are recruited to fight in the rebel organization.

level. We controlled for a number of factors at the group level, and we present additional analysis of recurrence at the country level in later in this appendix.

² See Kalyvas, 2001. Note that, for an ethnic group to be included in our dataset, a rebel group must purport to fight on behalf of that group. Thus, even if a group is fighting in a conflict that is not considered ethnic at the macro level, rebel organizations in our analysis are still engaged explicitly on behalf of an ethnic group.

³ Vogt et al., 2015.

⁴ Wucherpfennig et al., 2012, pp. 79–115.

⁵ Gleditsch et al., 2002.

The second set of models looked at the duration of peace after an ethnic group has experienced a civil conflict with its government. The focus on peace duration flows from the framework presented in Chapter Two and the analysis in Chapters Three through Five; inclusive and capacity-building policies are ultimately geared toward stabilizing peace. The statistical tests in this chapter are necessarily at a coarser resolution than the qualitative analysis of Iraq and Afghanistan. The recurrence analysis thus has value as an additional testable implication of the theoretical framework.

The UCDP/PRIO ACD data code a conflict as recurring if an ethnic group participates in a conflict that generates at least 25 battle-related deaths in a given year and has been involved in a civil conflict with the government at any point in the past. For each ethnic group and each year, these models record whether an ethnic group experienced a renewed episode of conflict with the government. At least two years of peace must transpire between episodes of conflict for an episode of conflict to be counted as a recurrence, not just a continuation of the previous conflict episode.

Our baseline analyses used a lower battle-death threshold to code conflict recurrence for two reasons. First, this threshold is commonly used to categorize civil conflicts in the quantitative literature on conflict.⁶ Second, using a lower threshold yields substantially more variation on the dependent variable than using a higher battle-death threshold of 1,000. There are 63 episodes of conflict recurrence using the lower threshold, but only 34 episodes using the higher threshold. We include results here from models that use the higher threshold for coding the dependent variable.

Measuring External Leverage

Because leverage varies from situation to situation and because statesmen and -women often exercise leverage outside the public's view, it is impractical to measure leverage directly across large numbers of cases. Instead, we developed proxy measures of leverage. We developed two different sets of proxy measures. We used histories of support for a gov-

⁶ See, for example, Cederman et al., 2015; and Rustad and Binningsbø, 2012.

ernment in a previous conflict with an ethnic group to construct the first set. The second set of variables tracks various forms of postconflict aid, differentiating aid flows, when possible, by whether the sender had previously intervened in the conflict. Both measures capture various aspects of leverage relationships, as we will discuss.

The measures we present do not capture observed attempts at leverage over postconflict governments; rather, the measures capture structural conditions that would facilitate the use of leverage by former interveners. This is an important difference from the analysis of the Iraq and Afghanistan cases, in which we were able to more directly observe the objectives, conditions, and context for discrete attempts to use leverage. The measures and tests in this chapter are, thus, supplementary to the cases.

The first set of variables captures whether a state received support from an external state sponsor in its most recent conflict with the ethnic group in question. To code this variable, we rely on UCDP's External Support Dataset, which codes intervention in all conflicts in the UCDP/PRIO ACD from 1975–2009.⁷ Support includes troops, access to territory or to military or intelligence infrastructure, weapons, materiel, training, funding, and intelligence material. Although the period of the data necessarily limits the period of the analysis, we chose these data because they represent the most granular information available on external support in civil conflicts. The intervention history variables are binary, coded as 1 for each postconflict ethnic group-year if the government received support at any point in the last five years of its previous conflict with that group.⁸ As we discuss later, different variables are coded for different supporter types. As an additional

⁷ Höglbladh, Pettersson, and Themnér, 2011.

⁸ The ability of states to exercise leverage over target governments may vary depending on whether ethnic groups themselves have access to foreign support. Governments may be less willing to include groups that received foreign support in the previous conflict. Similarly, conflicts may be more likely to recur when groups can expect renewed support in the event of renewed hostilities. We ran the baseline models with a control for rebel intervention. This variable was constructed in the same manner as the government intervention history variables, using data from the UCDP External Support Dataset. Results do not change when including a rebel intervention control (results not shown).

robustness check that we report below, we code these variables as 1 if the government receives support in the final two years of a conflict.

We are particularly interested in support provided by wealthy democratic states because these are the ones most likely to adopt politically inclusive strategies of conflict resolution. Consequently, we distinguished whether the state sponsors during the conflict period were members of the OECD. This variable serves as a proxy for a relationship between wealthy, democratic states and postconflict governments that the former may use to press for inclusive politics and capacity-building measures.⁹ Our sample captured 115 unique progovernment interventions.¹⁰ This definition of intervention includes, for example, cases of training, materiel, and logistics support, such as what the United States gave the Guatemalan government during its civil war; French training and troops to the Chadian government in various conflicts; and U.S. weapons, logistics, and training support to Turkey in its conflict with the Kurdistan Workers Party. Note that we also display results that record any intervention history on behalf of the government, regardless of source.

We were unable to measure the magnitude of intervention for these variables (e.g., how many troops, the volume of materiel, and so on); by construction, they do not capture continued flows of support in the postconflict period. They are, thus, proxy indicators of a relationship between former supporters and recipient governments that the former may use to advocate for desired policy outcomes. We expect the geopolitical context of support to matter for how effectively external actors can exercise leverage over postconflict governments. During periods of intense international competition, such as during the Cold War, actors may care more about the alignment of their allies and partners than they care about how these actors govern themselves. External

⁹ If an OECD member state extended support to the state at any point in the final five years of the previous conflict, this variable is coded as 1 until the next episode of conflict involving the state and that ethnic group. Later in this appendix, we explore how the findings are affected by changing the threshold for inclusion to the final two years of a conflict.

¹⁰ This figure counts unique periods of support for a government that is experiencing at least one civil conflict. The figure counts the multinational interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan as one intervention each.

support for more-inclusive governance is therefore likely to be lower in such eras.¹¹ To account for the effect of geopolitical context, the leverage proxy variables enter into our models in an interaction with an indicator for the late Cold War period (1975–1991).

The second measure builds on the intervention history variables. We constructed a variable that records how much development assistance former OECD interveners provide target governments. To do this, we used data from the OECD on ODA.¹² ODA is development and some forms of humanitarian aid provided by official government agencies that targets economic development in the recipient country and is, to some extent, concessional. Unlike the first measure, which indicates the presence or absence of an intervention history, the ODA measure is more granular and tracks changes in the scale of development assistance across time. It is, thus, a potentially better indicator of the amount of leverage a former intervener can bring to bear in pushing for policy changes in the recipient country. The ODA measure is recorded in millions. We took the natural log of the ODA measure because the marginal effect of additional aid at higher levels is likely to have a relatively small effect on recipient states' policies. As a robustness check, we also report results from models that include ODA support from states that had not intervened in the previous conflict.

The final measure was constructed much the same way. We used data from SIPRI on bilateral arms transfers and matched the data to OECD interventions.¹³ SIPRI produces a common unit of measurement called a *trend-indicator value* to capture the total volume of arms transfers between states. This is a measure meant to facilitate comparison of the total capability—as opposed to the financial value—transferred to the recipient government. As with the aid variable, this measure tracks the magnitude of postconflict support. We expect that larger amounts of support should translate into greater leverage that the donor may be able to exercise over the policies of the recipient state. We included the natural log of the trend-indicator value measure, with

¹¹ For one empirical demonstration of this relationship, see Dunning, 2004.

¹² See OECD, undated.

¹³ For arms transfers data and details on coding rules, see SIPRI, 2020.

the expectation that the amount of leverage is subject to diminishing returns. Alongside arms transfers from former OECD interveners, we also included a variable that records all other arms transfers from non-OECD, non-former interveners.

Controls for Other Factors Influencing Inclusion and Conflict Recurrence

We had to account for a number of other factors to better estimate the effects of the leverage variables on the outcomes of interest. States may be more or less able to exercise leverage over postconflict governments, depending on the state's domestic context. The following are the control variables:

- **Group size:** This is the relative size of a minority group influences its ability to mobilize and make credible threats to extract concessions from the government in the form of power sharing. Similarly, larger groups should be the most likely to attempt to take control of the government.¹⁴ This variable is from the EPR dataset. It is the ethnic group's size as a proportion of the country's total population. We also controlled for the natural log of a state's population because more-populous countries are more likely to experience civil conflicts.
- **Regime type and political institutions:** More-democratic governments are more likely to allow opportunities for excluded minority groups to participate in governance at the national level. More-democratic governments may also be less likely to generate grievances that motivate renewed civil conflict. Less-democratic regimes, on the other hand, may be characterized by less-peaceful means of dispute resolution and fewer opportunities for inclusion.¹⁵ For regime type, we included the Polity score, a measure from -10 to 10 in which higher values indicate more-democratic

¹⁴ Cederman et al., 2015.

¹⁵ Hegre et al., 2001, pp. 33–48. However, the most autocratic regimes may exercise a level of control such that civil wars are less likely to recur. See Mason et al., 2011. To account for this possibility, we included the square of the measure of regime type.

systems.¹⁶ We also accounted for federal institutions. States with federal arrangements are more likely to include minorities in governance. Federal institutions may also serve to dampen motivations for conflict by allowing ethnic groups to exercise some measure of governance at a subnational level. Finally, we accounted for whether a group is accorded territorial autonomy. These groups may be more or less likely to experience renewed conflict with the government. On the one hand, autonomous groups may harbor less resentment as a result of exercising greater political control over their own territory. On the other hand, autonomous groups—especially those with a history of conflict with the government—may increase their aims from autonomy to secession.¹⁷

- **Economic development:** National wealth can reduce the risk of conflict by reducing dissatisfaction with the government or by increasing the opportunity costs of conflict.¹⁸ Measures of national wealth may also serve as proxies for the capacity of a state to prevent challenges to its authority. We included the natural log of a state's per capita gross domestic product (GDP).
- **Ethnic diversity and ethnic exclusion:** An ethnic group may be more likely to be included in national-level governance in more ethnically diverse countries because coalitions of groups may be necessary to effectively win and hold power. We included the ethnolinguistic fractionalization (ELF) index. This is a measure from 0 to 1 that estimates, for each country, the odds that two randomly chosen individuals come from different ethnolinguistic groups. We also accounted for how many ethnic groups in a country are excluded from central power; a group is counted as excluded if it lacks power at the national or regional level or

¹⁶ Monty G. Marshall and Ted Robert Gurr, "Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800–2013," College Park, Md.: Center for Systemic Peace, last updated June 5, 2014.

¹⁷ Data on federalism and territorial autonomy are from Cederman et al., 2015.

¹⁸ Collier and Hoeffler, 2004, pp. 563–595; Fearon and Laitin, 2003, pp. 75–90.

if the state actively targets it for discrimination.¹⁹ This count of excluded groups is from the EPR data.

- **History of conflict:** Groups that have more recently experienced conflict with the government are most at risk of returning to conflict with the government. Recent civil wars can deepen grievances and polarization, further degrade material conditions and lower opportunity costs for reengaging in conflict, and generate flows of weapons, individuals, and ideas that increase the risk of renewed conflict.²⁰ Governments are also more hesitant to extend power-sharing concessions to groups with which the governments were recently fighting. We account for temporal dependence in the baseline models by including a count of years since the prior conflict. To account for the possibility that the effects of previous conflicts may be nonlinear, we also conducted analysis that used cubic splines in place of a count of peace years.²¹

Table B.1 presents summary statistics for these control variables.

Modeling Approach

This section describes the modeling strategy we adopted to evaluate the association between measures of leverage and postconflict outcomes: political inclusion and the duration of postconflict peace. The sample covers the period from 1975 to 2009, and the ethnic-group year is the unit of analysis. For example, the Lebanese Shi'a in 2005 would identify a row in the dataset. All the outcomes of interest are binary: In a given year, a group is either included or not or experiences an episode of conflict or does not. We therefore used logistic regression to model these binary outcomes, controlling for the factors listed

¹⁹ Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, 2010, pp. 87–119.

²⁰ Walter, 2004, pp. 371–388.

²¹ Beck, Katz, and Tucker, 1998. The main results do not depend on the choice of peace years or splines, so we report only results with peace years in this appendix.

Table B.1
Summary Statistics

Statistic	<i>N</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	25th Percentile	75th Percentile	Maximum
Conflict onset	1,907	0.03	0.18	0	0	0	1
ODA (former interveners, logged)	1,988	2.29	6.13	0	0	0	22
All ODA (logged)	1,988	19.02	3.94	0.00	18.57	20.80	23.32
Arms transfers (former interveners, logged)	1,988	0.15	0.79	0	0	0	7
All arms transfers (logged)	1,988	0.88	1.93	0	0	0	9
Political inclusion	1,988	0.28	0.45	0	0	1	1
Government intervention history	1,988	0.29	0.45	0	0	1	1
OECD intervention history	1,988	0.11	0.31	0	0	0	1
Non-OECD intervention history	1,988	0.13	0.34	0	0	0	1
U.S. intervention history	1,988	0.09	0.29	0	0	0	1
Group size	1,988	0.20	0.26	0.0002	0.03	0.26	1.00
Polity score	1,988	0.10	6.40	-10	-7	6	10
Federal institutions	1,988	0.43	0.49	0	0	1	1
Territorial autonomy	1,988	0.13	0.34	0	0	0	1

Table B.1—Continued

Statistic	<i>N</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	25th Percentile	75th Percentile	Maximum
Excluded groups count	1,988	6.20	9.05	0	1	8.2	48
ELF	1,988	0.62	0.23	0.00	0.50	0.86	1.00
GDP per capita (log)	1,988	7.49	1.16	4.76	6.67	8.46	10.48
Population (log)	1,988	10.16	1.62	6.06	8.89	10.88	14.10
Peace years	1,988	10.77	8.60	1	3	16	34

earlier.²² After we dropped observations with missing data, the analysis contained 1,988 postconflict group-years for models that take political inclusion as a dependent variable. Models that take conflict recurrence as a dependent variable contained 1,907 observations. Because the sample includes unobservable characteristics that influence individual countries, we clustered standard errors at the country level in the baseline analysis.²³

Because we expect external states' leverage strategies to vary depending on geopolitical context, we included an interaction term between an indicator for the Cold War period and the leverage variables—intervention history on behalf of the government, postconflict development aid, and postconflict arms transfers to the government from former interveners. We present two different sets of models that use intervention history variables. In the first set, we differentiated between a history of intervention by OECD and non-OECD states. In the second set, we further differentiated OECD intervention histories by whether the United States had previously intervened in the conflict.²⁴

The following equation shows the model used for both the inclusion and conflict recurrence dependent variable:

$$Y_{i,t} = \alpha + \beta_{i,t}(\text{Leverage var.}) + \gamma_{i,t}(\text{Leverage var. Post - Cold War}) + \delta_{i,t}(\text{controls}) + \varepsilon_{i,t}.$$

²² Logistic regression and survival models are both used to evaluate conflict onset in the literature on civil war. Logistic regression allows more-straightforward evaluation of the effects of independent variables on the probability of binary outcomes. With proper accounting for duration dependence, logistic regression provides results similar to those of event history methods. (See Beck, Katz, and Tucker, 1998.)

²³ Results do not change when clustering errors at the level of the ethnic group.

²⁴ The first set of models codes an OECD intervention history if at least one OECD member state intervened on behalf of the government during the last five years of the previous conflict. The second set of models keeps the same coding for all OECD members except the United States, which receives a separate coding following the same rule. We accounted for the United States separately because it occupied a unique role—both during and after the Cold War—with regard to intervening and assembling intervening coalitions in civil conflicts across the globe.

We regress political inclusion or conflict recurrence for ethnic group i in year t on the leverage variable of interest, captured by the coefficient $\beta_{i,t}$. The variables are indicators of intervention histories or measures of aid or arms transfers on behalf of the government of ethnic group i in year t . We also include an interaction term with an indicator for the post-Cold War period. The total effect of a leverage variable on the outcome is thus captured in the coefficients $\beta_{i,t}$ and $\gamma_{i,p}$, and $\delta_{i,t}$ represents a vector of coefficients for the control variables discussed earlier. Because conflict recurrence is relatively rare and to help reduce bias arising from issues of separation in the data, we employed penalized likelihood estimation for all models.²⁵

For each set of models, we present an additional series of models that accounts for the fact that OECD interventions and flows of aid are not randomly applied to conflicts. We employed a technique that pairs postconflict observations that are similar on measurable factors but differ with respect to the leverage variable.²⁶ The intent of this method is to compare like cases so that we could best isolate the effect of structural leverage. These models used the same covariates as in the models in Chapter Six, with the addition of controls for characteristics of the previous conflict. We added controls for the outcome and intensity of the previous conflict, and the presence of peacekeepers. We accounted for whether the previous conflict ended in a peace agreement and whether the previous conflict ended in a government victory. To measure the intensity of the previous conflict, we used the average yearly estimate of battle-related deaths over the course of the conflict.²⁷ Finally, we included an indicator variable for the presence of any peacekeepers.²⁸

²⁵ Separation occurs whenever an independent variable (or ranges of values of an independent variable) perfectly predicts the outcome variable.

²⁶ Specifically, we used nearest-neighbor propensity score matching. See Sekhon, 2011.

²⁷ We used the high-end estimate from the PRIO Battle Deaths Dataset. See Bethany Lacina and Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Monitoring Trends in Global Combat: A New Dataset of Battle Deaths," *European Journal of Population*, Vol. 21, June 2005.

²⁸ Peacekeeping data are from Mark Mullenbach, "Third-Party Peacekeeping Missions," Vers. 3.1, Harvard Dataverse website, 2017.

Results

We now turn to a discussion of the results, beginning with the main results from Chapter 6. We include the full set of controls in these tables; to economize on space, we report results only for the main variables for the additional sensitivity analyses. Table B.2 shows the results using political inclusion as the dependent variable.

Model 1 includes a variable that captures whether the government received support from any state in its previous conflict with the

Table B.2
Determinants of Political Inclusion for Postconflict Ethnic Groups,
Intervention History Models

	Dependent Variable: Political Inclusion	
	Model 1	Model 2
Pro-government intervention history	−3.42*** (0.36)	
Pro-government intervention history × post-Cold War	3.54*** (0.85)	
Pro-government OECD intervention history		−2.85*** (0.37)
Pro-government OECD intervention history × post-Cold War		3.15*** (0.83)
Pro-government non-OECD intervention history		−2.63*** (0.46)
Pro-government non-OECD intervention history × post-Cold War		2.63*** (0.92)
Post-Cold War	−0.04 (0.67)	−0.08 (0.65)
Group size	−0.64 (1.16)	−0.62 (1.16)
Polity score	0.004 (0.04)	0.004 (0.04)
Excluded groups count	−0.57*** (0.17)	−0.56*** (0.17)

Table B.2—Continued

	Dependent Variable: Political Inclusion	
	Model 1	Model 2
ELF	1.98 (1.41)	1.93 (1.43)
Federal institutions	1.35** (0.63)	1.39** (0.63)
GDP per capita (log)	−0.26 (0.29)	−0.26 (0.29)
Population (log)	0.01 (0.23)	0.01 (0.23)
Peace years	0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
Constant	0.81 (2.17)	0.78 (2.19)
Observations	1,988	1,988
Log likelihood	−761.24	−760.67
Akaike information criterion	1,546.48	1,549.34

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country.

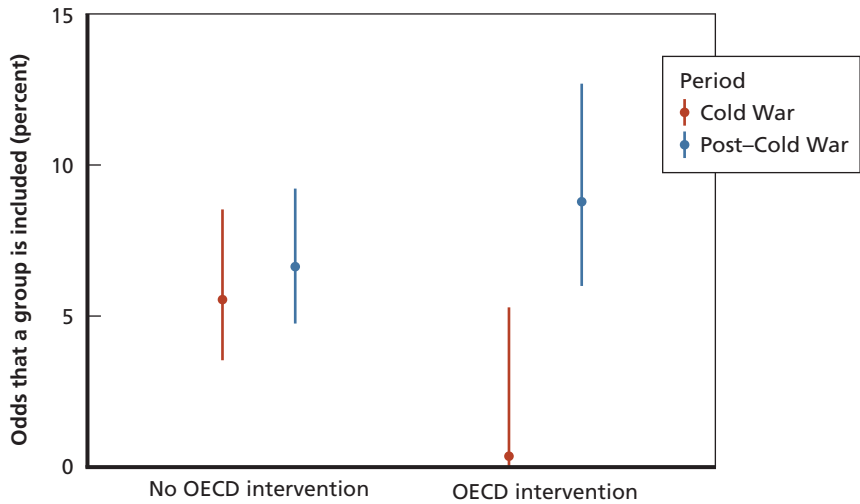
ethnic group. The coefficient for this variable captures the effect of intervention history during the Cold War, indicating the intervention history was associated with less inclusive outcomes during the period. The coefficient for *Pro-government intervention history* $\times$ *post-Cold War* captures the interaction between intervention history and the post-Cold War period. The results indicate that groups in such states are more likely to be included, although only in the post-Cold War period.

Model 2 breaks out the intervention history variable into the type of supporting state: OECD and non-OECD interveners. As above, the coefficients for the intervention history variables capture their effect during the Cold War, while the coefficients associated the interaction term ($\times$ post-Cold War) capture their effect in the post-Cold War

period. The interaction term with the post-Cold War period indicates that groups in such states are more likely to be included, though only in the post-Cold War period. The results remain the same in this model, indicating that a history of support from both groupings is associated with more inclusive outcomes. However, the results tabulated later in this appendix suggest that the same cases in which governments are supported by non-OECD states are not less likely to experience conflict recurrence. Furthermore, these intervention history variables are the coarsest of the leverage variables; they reflect cases in which a relationship between previous interveners and postconflict governments *may* persist and provide the former with opportunities to exercise leverage. The results using more granular measures of leverage increase our confidence that the type of supporter has important effects on postconflict outcomes.

To illustrate how substantively important a history of OECD intervention is for the inclusion of ethnic groups, Figure B.1 displays

Figure B.1
Effect of OECD Intervention History on Probability a Group is Politically Included in Postconflict Governments



NOTES: The bars indicate uncertainty over the predicted probability from the model. The predictions are derived from model 1 in Table B.2.

the predicted probability that a group will be included in a postconflict government. The figure breaks down predictions by period and whether the state had received support from an OECD member in the previous conflict. The figure uses model 1 in Table 6.1 to simulate predicted probabilities and uncertainty around them by repeatedly sampling from the variance-covariance matrix of all parameters in the model. The predicted probability that a group will be included when the state received OECD support is 8.4 percentage points higher after the end of the Cold War. By contrast, there is no significant difference between rates of political inclusion in states that did not receive OECD support across periods. This finding is consistent with the expectation that geopolitical context influences the ability of states to generate leverage over client states.

The coefficient for non-OECD interventions in the post-Cold War period is also positively and significantly associated with inclusion. Recall that these are measures of *structural* leverage rather than discrete attempts to use leverage by external actors. The result for non-OECD intervention histories may be a false positive of sorts; just as exclusionary outcomes are bound to occur where conditions favor the use of leverage, inclusionary outcomes will occur in less-favorable contexts. Results from the analysis that uses statistical matching suggest this may be the case. The coefficient for non-OECD intervention history in the post-Cold War period is insignificant when observations are matched on histories of non-OECD intervention.²⁹

Table B.3 presents results from the matching analysis. Note that there are fewer observations in these models due to the additional covariates (conflict outcome, conflict intensity, and peacekeeper presence) that contain missing data. The matching analysis takes observations that received the treatment—OECD intervention history—with observations that did not and pairs them so that they have similar observed values for a set of control variables.³⁰ This creates a sample of observations that are balanced on factors that may make them more likely to have received OECD intervention in the first instance. This

²⁹ Results not shown.

³⁰ We use nearest-neighbor matching in the MatchIt package for R.

Table B.3
Determinants of Political Inclusion for Postconflict Ethnic Groups,
Intervention History Models with Matching

	Dependent Variable: Political Inclusion	
	Unmatched Model	Matched Model
Pro-government OECD intervention history	-3.20*** (0.61)	-3.39*** (0.65)
Pro-government OECD intervention history × post-Cold War	1.87** (0.95)	3.13*** (0.76)
Post-Cold War	0.20 (0.86)	-1.97** (0.80)
Pro-government non-OECD intervention history	-1.71*** (0.61)	-1.78* (1.01)
Pro-government non-OECD intervention history × post-Cold War	-0.12 (1.22)	1.89 (1.29)
Group size	-2.27 (1.54)	-3.23** (1.37)
Polity score	0.10* (0.05)	0.12* (0.07)
Polity score squared	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)
Excluded groups count	-0.63*** (0.11)	-0.88*** (0.22)
Peacekeeper presence	0.31 (0.72)	-0.33 (0.98)
Previous conflict intensity	0.44* (0.25)	0.38 (0.25)
Peace agreement	0.80 (0.66)	1.24 (0.93)
Government victory	1.00* (0.55)	1.11** (0.45)
ELF	4.14*** (1.47)	2.61 (1.71)
Federal institutions	0.96	0.99

Table B.3—Continued

	Dependent Variable: Political Inclusion	
	Unmatched Model	Matched Model
	(0.86)	(0.74)
GDP per capita (log)	−0.25	−0.23
	(0.26)	(0.24)
Population (log)	−0.32	−0.44
	(0.22)	(0.27)
Peace years	0.02	0.07***
	(0.03)	(0.02)
Constant	0.79	4.65
	(3.10)	(3.35)
Observations	1,528	674
Log likelihood	−420.15	−215.56
Akaike information criterion	878.29	469.13

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country.

approach helps ensure that model estimates are comparing cases that are as similar as possible.

We matched cases using the following factors: ethnic fractionalization, (log) population, (log) GDP, count of excluded groups, whether a country has a federal system, the mean yearly battle death estimate of the prior conflict, whether the prior conflict ended in a peace agreement, whether the government was victorious, and whether there is a peacekeeping operation present in the country. The estimate for OECD intervention histories remains positive and significant in the matched model. Furthermore, the size of the coefficient is in line with results in Table B.2.

Table B.4 presents models that use different forms of postconflict assistance as the leverage variables. The results for development assistance reinforce the finding above that OECD support is significantly associated with greater political inclusion after the end of the Cold War. Aid from former interveners has a positive and significant statistical association with greater rates of political inclusion in the post–Cold

Table B.4
Determinants of Political Inclusion for Postconflict Ethnic Groups, Aid and Arms Transfer Models

	Dependent Variable: Political Inclusion	
	Model 1	Model 2
Postconflict OECD aid	−0.49*** (0.12)	
Postconflict OECD aid × post–Cold War	0.61*** (0.19)	
Postconflict OECD weapons		−0.42*** (0.10)
Postconflict OECD weapons × post–Cold War		−0.10 (0.22)
Post–Cold War	−0.02 (0.55)	0.26 (0.48)
Non-OECD arms transfers		0.04 (0.10)
Non-OECD arms transfers × post–Cold War		−0.09 (0.11)
Group size	−0.56 (1.12)	−0.64 (1.21)
Polity score	0.01 (0.04)	0.003 (0.04)
Excluded groups count	−0.56*** (0.17)	−0.56*** (0.17)
ELF	1.93 (1.45)	1.96 (1.39)
Federal institutions	1.37** (0.64)	1.15* (0.64)
GDP per capita (log)	−0.26 (0.29)	−0.22 (0.30)
Population (log)	−0.004 (0.21)	0.03 (0.23)
Peace years	0.03 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)

Table B.4—Continued

	Dependent Variable: Political Inclusion	
	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	0.80 (2.14)	0.24 (2.26)
Observations	1,988	1,988
Log likelihood	-765.18	-764.73
Akaike information criterion	1,554.37	1,557.46

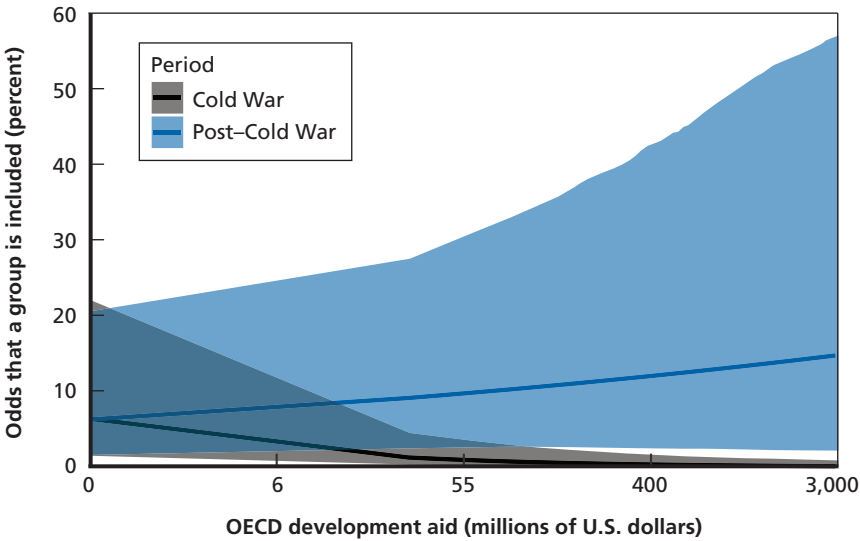
NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country.

War period. The opposite is true during the Cold War, when OECD interventions were associated with less inclusive policies. The measure for arms transfers from former OECD interveners is statistically associated with less inclusion during the Cold War, but this relationship shows no significant relationship either way after the Cold War. The number of group-years in states receiving arms transfers from OECD states is much lower than those receiving aid,³¹ so there are likely significant differences between the types of states that receive arms transfers and those that just receive development or humanitarian aid from former interveners.

These results for the aid measure increased our confidence in the earlier results that use a measure of intervention history. The latter is just an indicator of a relationship that states might use to generate leverage. The aid measure reflects an active relationship between former interveners and postconflict states. It further captures resource flows that grant states a concrete ability to generate leverage. Figure B.2 displays predictions from model 2 of how postconflict aid from former OECD interveners influences the probability that an ethnic group is included in a postconflict government. The figure shows that ethnic groups are most likely to be included when former OECD interveners grant greater amounts of aid to postconflict governments. This is only true after the

³¹ In 87 group-years, the state receives arms transfers; in 244 group years, the state receives aid, and 28 percent of aid years are also arms transfer years (68/244).

Figure B.2
Effect of Aid from Former OECD Interveners on Probability a Group is Politically Included in Postconflict Governments



NOTES: The line indicates the model's prediction that a group will be included in a postconflict government. The shaded area indicates uncertainty over the predicted probability from the model. The predictions are derived from model 2 in Table B.4. The x-axis is on a log scale.

Cold War; greater aid flows are associated with *less* inclusion during the Cold War. The size of the effect is substantial: The predicted probability that a group will be included increases by 175 percent. The baseline probability of inclusion (i.e., in the absence of aid) is 6.3 percent. This increases to a probability of inclusion of 14.7 percent when aid reaches its historically observed maximum value. The model's expectations of a group being included across periods are also significant, with inclusion 11 percentage points more likely after the Cold War at the highest levels of development aid. Magnitude of support clearly matters but is subject to diminishing returns; there are large increases in inclusion as support increases from the lowest levels, while the effect tapers off at the highest levels.

Taken together, these results are consistent with wealthy, democratic countries having some ability to exercise leverage over postcon-

flict governments with respect to including ethnic groups. They are also consistent with the claim that geopolitical context serves to constrain or enable the exercise of these levers of influence; during the Cold War competition, political inclusion does not appear to have been prioritized by interveners or aid donors. There are no clear differences in the timing of support in these modes; support given both during and after conflicts showed associations with higher rates of inclusion.

To make sure that arbitrary coding decisions regarding the timing of support given during the previous conflict were not driving the results presented here, we also ran the analysis using only interventions in the last two years of the previous conflict. The results are in Table B.5. As with all the additional sensitivity analysis in this appendix, the table includes only the main variables of interest to economize on space. While the statistical significance of the interaction of previous OECD interventions and the post–Cold War period is somewhat weaker, the result for non-OECD interventions loses significance at conventional levels. This increases our confidence that the link between intervention histories and inclusion in the post–Cold War era is more due to OECD interveners.

The baseline analysis clusters standard errors at the country level. Unobserved characteristics of ethnic groups are also important to account for. Table B.6 presents results that cluster standard errors at the level of the ethnic group, the unit of analysis. The choice of how to cluster standard errors does not substantially change the results from the baseline models.

The results connecting aid to postconflict inclusion include only support from former OECD interveners. We also conducted the analysis in Table B.7, using all development assistance and arms transfers, regardless of whether the sender had intervened in the prior conflict. The results suggest that aid, even from nonintervening OECD states, can still have a beneficial effect on postconflict inclusion. Arms transfers remain insignificant in these models. To get a sense of whether support from former interveners has an influence beyond what a non-intervening state might exercise, the next section, “Conflict Recurrence,” looks at how these same factors influence the duration of peace after civil wars.

Table B.5
Determinants of Political Inclusion for Postconflict Ethnic Groups,
Intervention Restricted to Last Two Years of Previous Conflict

	Dependent Variable: Political Inclusion	
	Model 1	Model 2
Pro-government intervention history	-2.85*** (0.37)	
Pro-government OECD intervention history		-1.46** (0.58)
Post-Cold War	-0.13 (0.67)	0.04 (0.61)
Pro-government non-OECD intervention history		-1.44** (0.66)
Pro-government intervention history × post-Cold War	3.26*** (0.73)	
Pro-government OECD intervention history × post-Cold War		1.93* (1.06)
Pro-government non-OECD intervention history × post-Cold War		1.07 (0.66)
Constant	0.66 (2.25)	0.85 (2.40)
Observations	1,988	1,988
Log likelihood	-763.34	-762.59
Akaike information criterion	1,550.68	1,553.18

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country. Control variables omitted from table.

Although these statistical results suggest that external leverage may indeed be a significant factor in influencing the political trajectory of postconflict states—moving from the minimum to the maximum of aid more than doubles the likelihood of inclusion relative to the baseline—they also provide an important dose of realism. While aid is associated with a much higher likelihood of political inclusion than would be the case without aid, political inclusion in postconflict contexts is still relatively rare.

Table B.6**Determinants of Political Inclusion for Postconflict Ethnic Groups, Standard Errors Clustered on the Ethnic Group**

	Dependent Variable: Political Inclusion	
	Model 1	Model 2
Pro-government intervention history	-3.42*** (0.36)	
Pro-government OECD intervention history		-2.85*** (0.37)
Post-Cold War	-0.04 (0.52)	-0.08 (0.51)
Pro-government non-OECD intervention history		-2.63*** (0.40)
Pro-government intervention history × post-Cold War	3.54*** (0.59)	
Pro-government OECD intervention history × post-Cold War		3.15*** (0.57)
Pro-government non-OECD intervention history × post-Cold War		2.63*** (0.80)
Constant	0.81 (2.02)	0.78 (2.02)
Observations	1,988	1,988
Log likelihood	-761.24	-760.67
Akaike information criterion	1,546.48	1,549.34

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country. Control variables omitted from table.

Finally, Table B.8 presents models in which postconflict states are matched on observables. For comparison, the table also includes unmatched models. Postconflict aid from OECD interveners remains positively and significantly associated with inclusion after the Cold War. Unlike in Table B.4, postconflict arms transfers now have a positive estimated association with inclusion in the matched model. This should be taken with a grain of salt; matching substantially reduced

Table B.7
Determinants of Political Inclusion, Models Include Aid and Arms Transfers from Noninterveners

	Dependent Variable: Political Inclusion	
	Model 1	Model 2
All postconflict OECD aid	−0.24 (0.16)	
All postconflict weapons		0.01 (0.10)
Post–Cold War	−3.43*** (0.84)	0.22 (0.48)
All postconflict OECD aid × post–Cold War	0.68*** (0.15)	
All postconflict weapons × post–Cold War		−0.12 (0.11)
Constant	4.24* (2.43)	0.21 (2.26)
Observations	1,988	1,988
Log likelihood	−742.04	−770.56
Akaike information criterion	1,508.07	1,565.11

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country.

the sample size. The results, however, provide additional confidence that structural leverage is associated with more inclusive outcomes.

Conflict Recurrence

This section presents results from models that test how the same set of factors—intervention histories, aid and weapon flows—influence the probability that ethnic groups return to conflict with the state. Table B.9 shows the results using measures of intervention history

The picture here is more mixed than the relationship between leverage variables and political inclusion. OECD intervention history has no significant association with the risk of conflict recurrence. The

Table B.8
Determinants of Political Inclusion for Postconflict Ethnic Groups, Aid and Arms Transfer Models with Matching

	Dependent Variable: Political Inclusion			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Model type	Unmatched	Matched	Unmatched	Matched
Postconflict OECD aid	-0.57*** (0.21)	-0.48 (0.31)		
Postconflict OECD aid × post-Cold War	0.56** (0.26)	0.58** (0.29)		
Postconflict OECD weapons			-0.26** (0.11)	-1.83*** (0.30)
Postconflict OECD weapons × post-Cold War			-0.04 (0.15)	0.98*** (0.24)
Post-Cold War	-0.39 (0.91)	-1.18 (1.32)	-0.17 (0.89)	0.46 (0.45)
Non-OECD arms transfers			0.12 (0.12)	1.32*** (0.20)
Non-OECD arms transfers × post-Cold War			-0.12 (0.13)	-0.04 (0.16)
Group size	-1.45 (1.57)	-1.94 (1.75)	-1.35 (1.61)	-3.17** (1.38)
Polity score	0.10** (0.05)	0.07 (0.09)	0.10* (0.05)	0.20*** (0.03)
Polity score squared	-0.02 (0.01)	-0.001 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)
Excluded groups count	-0.63*** (0.14)	-0.85*** (0.28)	-0.61*** (0.13)	-1.06*** (0.12)
Peacekeeper presence	0.36 (0.77)	-0.33 (0.98)	0.34 (0.75)	-2.87*** (0.73)
Previous conflict intensity	0.29 (0.20)	0.04 (0.47)	0.25 (0.20)	1.85*** (0.19)
Peace agreement	0.52 (0.58)	1.44 (1.03)	0.50 (0.60)	5.19*** (0.96)

Table B.8—Continued

	Dependent Variable: Political Inclusion			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Government victory	0.67 (0.56)	1.92*** (0.66)	0.69 (0.58)	2.10*** (0.37)
ELF	4.11** (1.80)	0.90 (1.78)	4.03** (1.68)	12.30*** (1.61)
Federal institutions	1.46* (0.84)	−0.77 (1.25)	1.50* (0.85)	8.35*** (1.01)
GDP per capita (log)	−0.21 (0.30)	−0.78* (0.46)	−0.19 (0.30)	0.39*** (0.11)
Population (log)	−0.29 (0.24)	−0.29 (0.34)	−0.29 (0.24)	−1.61*** (0.28)
Peace years	0.06* (0.03)	0.09** (0.04)	0.06** (0.03)	−0.04** (0.02)
Constant	0.65 (3.46)	8.46* (5.00)	0.57 (3.43)	−9.56*** (2.29)
Observations	1,528	474	1,528	166
Log likelihood	−443.42	−168.81	−443.16	−11.82
Akaike information criterion	920.85	371.62	924.32	61.64

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country.

second model in the table suggests that a history of OECD intervention makes recurrence less likely during the post–Cold War period but finds no relationship with conflict recurrence after the Cold War. U.S. intervention history shows a modestly strong statistical association with longer peace duration after the Cold War. Results did not substantially differ when we restricted the set of former interveners to include only states involved in the last two years of the conflict (Table B.10).

We also performed the analysis using a higher battle death threshold for coding conflict recurrence.³² Table B.11 shows the results. Here, only non-OECD intervention histories have a statistically significant

³² The higher threshold requires 1,000 battle-related deaths over the course of a conflict to be counted as a new conflict episode.

Table B.9
Determinants of Conflict Recurrence for Postconflict Ethnic Groups,
Intervention History Models

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence	
	Model 1	Model 2
Inclusion	-0.96** (0.40)	-1.02** (0.40)
Autonomy	0.52 (0.45)	0.62 (0.44)
Post-Cold War	0.66 (0.43)	0.98** (0.39)
Pro-government intervention history	-0.73 (0.53)	
Pro-government intervention history × post-Cold War	0.77 (0.65)	
Pro-government OECD intervention history		-1.00*** (0.25)
Pro-government OECD intervention history × post-Cold War		0.56 (0.46)
Pro-government U.S. intervention history		0.40 (0.33)
Pro-government U.S. intervention history × post-Cold War		-0.73* (0.40)
Pro-government non-OECD intervention history		-0.57** (0.27)
Pro-government non-OECD intervention history × post-Cold War		-0.04 (0.52)
Group size	1.79 (1.53)	1.01 (1.52)
Group size squared	-2.63 (1.73)	-1.97 (1.72)
Polity score	-0.05* (0.02)	-0.05** (0.03)
Polity score squared	0.003 (0.01)	0.004 (0.01)

Table B.9—Continued

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence	
	Model 1	Model 2
Excluded groups count	−0.03** (0.01)	−0.03** (0.01)
Federal institutions	−0.13 (0.32)	−0.20 (0.40)
GDP per capita (log)	0.02 (0.14)	−0.03 (0.14)
Population (log)	0.19** (0.10)	0.12 (0.11)
Peace years	−0.10*** (0.02)	−0.10*** (0.02)
Observations	1,907	1,907
Log likelihood	−250.07	−248.90
Akaike information criterion	526.15	531.79

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country. Control variables omitted from table.

association with an increased risk of conflict recurrence after the Cold War. The coefficients on the interaction terms with OECD and U.S. intervention histories are insignificant. As noted earlier, using the higher battle-death threshold to code conflict recurrence almost halves the number of recurrences in the sample, so these results should be interpreted with some caution.

The results from these tests are largely consistent with the findings on inclusion. The most precise measures of OECD leverage—aid and arms transfers from prior interveners—are positively related to more-durable peace in the post–Cold War period. The results using the coarser intervention history measures are more mixed. After the Cold War, only U.S. intervention history has a positive estimated effect on peace duration, while OECD intervention history has a positive effect during the Cold War but not after.

One possibility for why U.S. and not OECD intervention histories have a positive effect on peace duration is that the types of con-

Table B.10

**Determinants of Conflict Recurrence for Postconflict Ethnic Groups,
Intervention Restricted to Last Two Years of Previous Conflict**

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence	
	Model 1	Model 2
Post–Cold War	0.44 (0.40)	0.74** (0.36)
Pro–government intervention history	–0.41 (0.52)	
Pro–government OECD intervention history		–0.39 (0.30)
Pro–government U.S. intervention history		0.59 (0.40)
Pro–government non-OECD intervention history		–0.30 (0.32)
Pro–government intervention history × post–Cold War	0.54 (0.61)	
Pro–government OECD intervention history × post–Cold War		0.49 (0.44)
Pro–government U.S. intervention history × post–Cold War		–0.79* (0.44)
Pro–government non-OECD intervention history × post–Cold War		–0.48 (0.52)
Constant	–4.61*** (1.62)	–3.20* (1.75)
Observations	1,935	1,935
Log likelihood	–252.98	–250.78
Akaike information criterion	531.95	535.56

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country. Control variables omitted from table.

flicts in which the United States intervenes are systematically different. As discussed in the previous section, intervention history variables are coarse measures of the underlying mechanisms of interest. We were not able to account for how OECD states select states in which to

Table B.11
Determinants of High-Intensity Conflict Recurrence, Intervention History Models

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence, High-Intensity	
	Model 1	Model 2
Post–Cold War	–0.70 (0.51)	–0.55 (0.57)
Pro–government OECD intervention history	–0.47 (0.65)	–1.14* (0.59)
Pro–government non-OECD intervention history	–1.92*** (0.40)	–1.83*** (0.41)
Pro–government U.S. intervention history		–0.09 (0.78)
Pro–government OECD intervention history × post–Cold War	0.42 (0.73)	1.12 (0.83)
Pro–government non-OECD intervention history × post–Cold War	1.88** (0.76)	1.63* (0.88)
Pro–government U.S. intervention history × post–Cold War		–0.41 (0.60)
Constant	–8.89*** (2.81)	–8.16** (3.35)
Observations	742	742
Log likelihood	–108.26	–107.52
Akaike information criterion	246.53	249.04

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country. Control variables omitted from table.

intervene. This matters for evaluating the evidence presented here and may potentially explain the mixed results. If OECD states are selecting states in which to intervene for strategic reasons related to inclusion or stability, our inferences might be off. For example, OECD states may systematically intervene in harder cases, that is, in states that are more prone to experience civil war recurrence. If this is the case, results suggesting no relationship between OECD intervention and peace

duration—or even a negative relationship—may be misleading. For a fuller picture, we turned to results that use more granular measures of postconflict support.

Table B.12 shows the results of pairing intervention histories with cases without such histories. The results are inconsistent with the results in Table B.9. In the post–Cold War period, U.S. intervention history is not associated with longer peace duration, and OECD inter-

Table B.12
Determinants of Conflict Recurrence for Postconflict Ethnic Groups,
Intervention History Models with Matching

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence	
	Model 1	Model 2
Model type	Unmatched	Matched
Inclusion	–0.72 (0.44)	–0.70 (0.58)
Autonomy	0.70* (0.40)	0.42 (0.56)
Post–Cold War	0.96** (0.45)	0.34 (0.40)
Pro–government OECD intervention history	–1.11*** (0.29)	–2.50*** (0.52)
Pro–government OECD intervention history × post–Cold War	0.28 (0.43)	1.27*** (0.46)
Pro–government U.S. intervention history	0.73** (0.34)	0.22 (0.45)
Pro–government U.S. intervention history × post–Cold War	–0.80 (0.51)	–0.42 (0.67)
Pro–government non-OECD intervention history	–0.37 (0.31)	0.25 (0.63)
Pro–government non-OECD intervention history × post–Cold War	–0.18 (0.51)	–1.28* (0.73)
Group size	1.82 (1.66)	0.08 (1.46)

Table B.12—Continued

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence	
	Model 1	Model 2
Group size squared	–2.59 (2.05)	–1.52 (1.96)
Polity score	–0.04* (0.02)	0.002 (0.03)
Polity score squared	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Excluded groups count	0.01 (0.02)	0.15** (0.06)
Peacekeeper presence	–0.41 (0.33)	–0.30 (0.30)
Previous conflict intensity	–0.14 (0.13)	0.02 (0.10)
Peace agreement	–0.58 (0.39)	–0.64* (0.36)
Government victory	–1.54*** (0.45)	–1.17*** (0.36)
Federal institutions	–0.65* (0.36)	0.22 (0.45)
GDP per capita (log)	–0.22* (0.13)	–0.30* (0.17)
Population (log)	0.02 (0.11)	–0.34** (0.15)
Peace years	–0.08*** (0.02)	–0.09*** (0.02)
Constant	–0.10 (1.59)	3.39 (2.29)
Observations	1,477	630
Log likelihood	–221.96	–110.25
Akaike information criterion	489.91	266.49

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country.

vention histories are now associated with a greater risk of recurrence. These results use a different sample but lead us to the same conclusion as Table B.9: OECD intervention history does not seem to be associated with greater peace duration.

Table B.13 shows the results that use postconflict support variables. The results here suggest a relationship between postconflict support from OECD states and longer peace duration more strongly

Table B.13
Determinants of Conflict Recurrence for Postconflict Ethnic Groups, Aid and Arms Transfer Models

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence	
	Model 1	Model 2
Inclusion	−1.04** (0.41)	−1.13*** (0.40)
Territorial autonomy	0.47 (0.39)	0.58 (0.40)
Postconflict OECD aid	0.26** (0.13)	
Postconflict OECD aid, post–Cold War	−0.36*** (0.13)	
Postconflict OECD weapons		0.13 (0.12)
Postconflict OECD weapons, post–Cold War		−0.39** (0.15)
Post–Cold War	0.91*** (0.33)	0.97** (0.41)
Non-OECD arms transfers		0.17** (0.08)
Non-OECD arms transfers, post–Cold War		0.005 (0.10)
Group size	2.42* (1.41)	2.60* (1.44)
Group size squared	−3.17*	−3.23**

Table B.13—Continued

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence	
	Model 1	Model 2
	(1.62)	(1.57)
Excluded groups count	−0.01 (0.01)	−0.01 (0.01)
Federal institutions	−0.23 (0.46)	0.08 (0.40)
GDP per capita (log)	−0.02 (0.13)	−0.10 (0.12)
Population (log)	0.16 (0.10)	0.10 (0.10)
Peace years	−0.10*** (0.02)	−0.11*** (0.02)
Constant	−4.47*** (1.68)	−3.60** (1.59)
Observations	1,907	1,907
Log likelihood	−247.91	−247.24
Akaike information criterion	521.82	524.48

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country.

than the results in Table B.9. Greater flows of support from OECD interveners to postconflict governments are associated with enduring peace (model 1, Table B.13). Intervention history variables reflect the *possibility* rather than the reality of a continued relationship between former interveners and postconflict governments; the aid and weapon-transfer variables reflect both the existence and the scale of such relationships. These results also strongly support the expectation that the source of assistance matters for postconflict outcomes. Only support from OECD states is associated with greater peace duration. While we were unable to gather data on non-OECD aid flows, non-OECD arms transfers are negatively associated with peace duration during the Cold War and show no significant relationship in the post–Cold War period.

Unlike the results using intervention history variables, these results remain the same using the higher battle-death threshold for coding conflict recurrence. Table B.13 presents these results. Table B.14 contains results that use all aid, again to investigate whether aid from former interveners is more often associated with better postconflict outcomes than aid from other donor states. The coefficient on the interaction between postconflict aid from all OECD states is less statistically significant and indicates a somewhat weaker substantive relationship between aid the probability of conflict recurrence. The results are thus inconclusive as to whether aid from former interveners is more often

Table B.14
Determinants of High-Intensity Conflict Recurrence, Aid and Arms Transfer Models

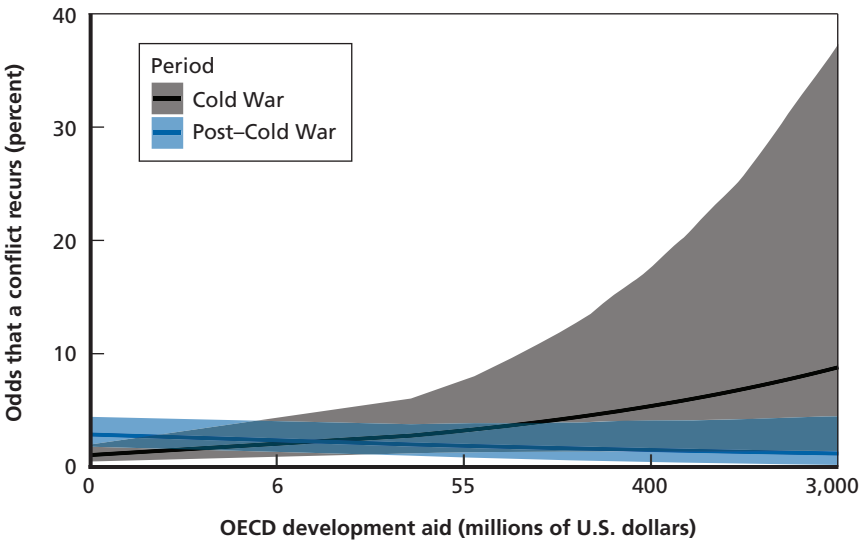
	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence, High Intensity	
	Model 1	Model 2
Postconflict OECD aid	0.08 (0.13)	
Postconflict weapons		0.17 (0.14)
Post–Cold War	–0.08 (0.43)	–0.15 (0.39)
Postconflict OECD aid, post–Cold War	–0.28** (0.11)	
Postconflict OECD weapons, post–Cold War		–0.58*** (0.15)
Constant	–9.26*** (2.08)	–9.64*** (2.18)
Observations	742	742
Log likelihood	–107.43	–108.00
Akaike information criterion	240.85	242.00

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country. Control variables omitted from table.

associated with a lower risk of conflict recurrence than is aid from other OECD member states.

Figure B.3 illustrates the predictions from model 1 in Table B.13 for how aid from former OECD interveners influences the probability that an ethnic group returns to conflict. The figure shows that conflict recurrence becomes less likely when former OECD interveners grant greater amounts of aid to postconflict governments. As with inclusion, this is true only after the Cold War. Greater aid flows were associated with a higher risk of conflict recurrence during the Cold War. The effect size is substantial in the post–Cold War period: Increasing the amount of aid from 0 to its sample maximum reduces the predicted risk that conflict recurs in any given year by 62 percent, from 3.9 percent to 1.5 percent. Aid appears to have had a different effect between periods as well. At the highest levels of aid, the predicted probability

Figure B.3
Effect of Aid from OECD Interveners on Conflict Recurrence

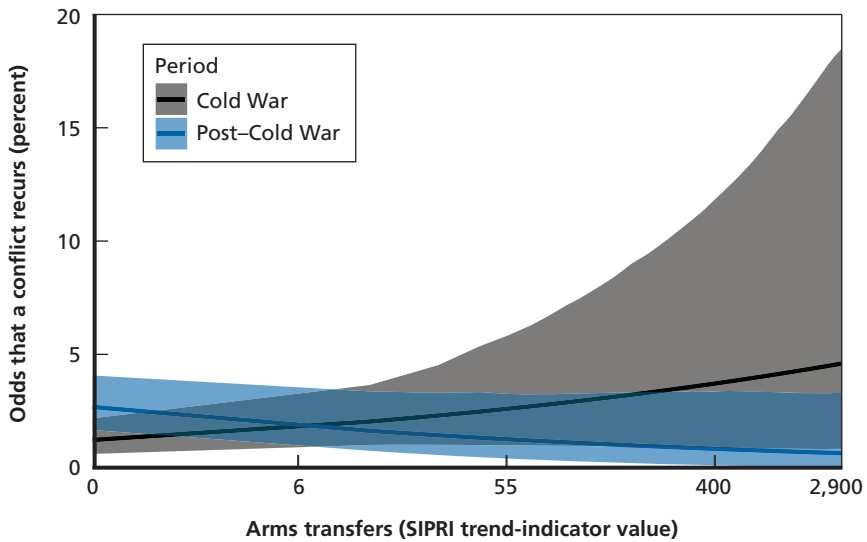


NOTE: The line indicates the model's prediction for the risk that a conflict will recur. The shaded area indicates uncertainty over the predicted probability from the model. The predictions are derived from model 1 in Table B.13. The x-axis is on a log scale.

of recurrence is about 8.5 percentage points higher during the Cold War.³³

Models that use arms transfers as a measure of leverage suggest the same relationship with conflict recurrence. Figure B.4 displays predictions of the risk of conflict recurrence from model 2 of Table B.13. The figure shows that peace is more likely to endure as former OECD interveners increase arms transfers to postconflict governments. As with all the results for political inclusion, this relationship is evident only after the Cold War. Groups in states receiving the maximum level of arms transfers have a predicted risk of conflict recurrence 79 percent

Figure B.4
Effect of Arms Transfers from OECD Interveners on Conflict Recurrence



NOTE: The line indicates the model's prediction for the risk that a conflict will recur. The shaded area indicates uncertainty over the predicted probability from the model. The predictions are derived from model 2 in Table B.13. The x-axis is on a log scale.

³³ Note, however, that the wide uncertainty around the estimate indicates that there are very few cases with a high amount of aid that also experience conflict recurrence during the Cold War. Furthermore, there is a substantial area of overlap in the uncertainty around the estimates, indicating that the effect of aid may not be different across the two periods.

lower than in states that do not receive transfers.³⁴ Increasing transfers has the opposite effect on conflict recurrence during the Cold War, when it negatively affected peace duration. The magnitude and timing of support show clear relationships with postconflict stability in these models. Greater volumes of development aid and arms transfers both decrease the risk of conflict recurrence, although subject to diminishing returns. Notably, measures of support given *during* conflicts show weak or nonexistent relationships with postconflict stability; only measures of postconflict aid demonstrate a stabilizing effect.

One potential concern with these results is that the relationship between arms transfers and conflict risk reflects an increase in military capacity purely rather than military capacity being put in service of a particular political strategy. Unfortunately, it is difficult to observe political strategies across large numbers of interventions. Again, however, we can differentiate between assistance from the democratic members of the OECD and assistance from other states, which may be less inclined to policies that incorporate some level of support for inclusion and rule-bound improvements in capacity. We performed the same analysis in model 2, Table B.13, but included all arms transfers (i.e., from non-OECD states as well as OECD members). The results are in Table B.15. The statistical association between arms transfers and conflict recurrence disappears in model 2.

This finding suggests that military assistance by itself—and any concomitant increases in partner military capacity—is not sufficient to stabilize partner states. The lack of an association between non-OECD arms transfers and conflict recurrence after the Cold War suggest that differences in the political strategies underlying the military assistance also play a role. The effect of support type thus seems to be linked to the provider of the support. The same caveats from the discussion of aid and conflict recurrence apply here: There is substantial uncertainty around the estimated effect of arms transfers during the Cold War.

Table B.16 presents results from matching observations with and without aid flows from former interveners. Both aid and arms transfers

³⁴ The predicted risk of conflict recurrence at the minimum level of transfers is 3.6 percent while the risk at the maximum is 1 percent.

Table B.15
Determinants of Conflict Recurrence, Models Include Aid and Arms
Transfers from Noninterveners

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence	
	Model 1	Model 2
All postconflict OECD aid	−0.23*** (0.08)	
All postconflict weapons		0.15** (0.08)
Post–Cold War	−0.64 (0.51)	0.84** (0.41)
All postconflict OECD aid × post–Cold War	0.23* (0.12)	
All postconflict weapons × post–Cold War		−0.05 (0.10)
Constant	−3.09* (1.73)	−3.67** (1.61)
Observations	1,935	1,935
Log likelihood	−251.33	−251.82
Akaike information criterion	528.66	529.64

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country. Control variables omitted from table.

from former OECD interveners have a positive association with peace duration after the Cold War in the matched and unmatched models. This suggests that the results are not simply a function of OECD states targeting easier cases with postconflict aid flows. Taken together, these results suggest a pacifying effect of resource flows from former OECD interveners to postconflict governments in the post–Cold War era.

Table B.16**Determinants of Conflict Recurrence for Postconflict Ethnic Groups, Aid and Arms Transfer Models with Matching**

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Model type	Unmatched	Matched	Unmatched	Matched
Inclusion	-0.54 (0.41)	1.51** (0.60)	-0.69* (0.42)	-0.77 (0.57)
Territorial autonomy	0.63 (0.40)	0.38 (0.95)	0.73* (0.40)	-0.90** (0.40)
Postconflict OECD aid	0.12 (0.09)	0.26** (0.11)		
Postconflict OECD aid × post-Cold War	-0.23*** (0.09)	-0.30*** (0.12)		
Postconflict OECD weapons			0.18** (0.08)	-0.08 (0.07)
Postconflict OECD weapons × post-Cold War			-0.39*** (0.10)	-0.24* (0.14)
Post-Cold War	0.88** (0.37)	1.00 (0.74)	1.17*** (0.39)	2.08*** (0.66)
Non-OECD arms transfers			0.18*** (0.06)	0.39*** (0.08)
Non-OECD arms transfers × post-Cold War			-0.002 (0.08)	-0.53*** (0.10)
Group size	2.35 (1.49)	-3.70 (2.85)	3.45** (1.39)	36.37*** (3.29)
Group size squared	-3.06 (1.91)	4.62 (3.38)	-3.96** (1.69)	-51.44*** (4.60)
Polity score	-0.05** (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.02)	0.05* (0.02)
Polity score squared	0.005 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)
Excluded groups count	0.01 (0.01)	0.07 (0.09)	0.03* (0.01)	-0.17*** (0.07)

Table B.16—Continued

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Peacekeeper presence	−0.24 (0.39)	−0.63 (0.46)	−0.18 (0.37)	−2.26*** (0.27)
Previous conflict intensity	−0.17 (0.12)	0.33 (0.21)	−0.19 (0.12)	1.21*** (0.13)
Peace agreement	−0.47 (0.39)	−0.27 (0.58)	−0.72* (0.37)	0.43 (0.40)
Government victory	−1.53*** (0.41)	−0.91* (0.50)	−1.59*** (0.40)	−4.50*** (0.31)
Federal institutions	−0.75** (0.32)	1.22 (0.93)	−0.33 (0.30)	−5.03*** (0.53)
GDP per capita (log)	−0.15 (0.12)	0.002 (0.42)	−0.33*** (0.12)	−0.34*** (0.11)
Population (log)	0.16 (0.10)	0.08 (0.19)	0.03 (0.11)	0.66*** (0.12)
Peace years	−0.07*** (0.02)	−0.06** (0.02)	−0.07*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)
Constant	−2.15 (1.46)	−7.68*** (2.89)	−0.24 (1.44)	−19.07*** (2.22)
Observations	1,477	446	1,477	156
Log likelihood	−223.65	−60.04	−221.17	−17.55
Akaike information criterion	485.30	158.07	484.34	77.09

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country.

Additional Sensitivity Analysis

Level of Analysis

As discussed in Chapter Six, the statistical analysis is conducted at the group level. For models that use inclusion of postconflict ethnic groups, this is by necessity. While the recurrence analysis is also best done at the group level, we analyzed recurrence at the country level as well. The results are in line with the findings at the group level for the

intervention history models (compare Table B.9). Table B.17 suggests an even stronger conflict-reducing association with OECD interventions.³⁵ Table B.18 gives the results for a model that uses postconflict aid from previous OECD interveners as a proxy for leverage. Again, the

Table B.17
Determinants of Conflict Recurrence at the Country Level

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence	
	Model 1	Model 2
Post–Cold War	–0.37 (0.55)	–0.23 (0.54)
Pro–government intervention history	–0.79 (0.67)	
Pro–government OECD intervention history		1.04 (0.94)
Pro–government non-OECD intervention history		–1.19* (0.71)
Pro–government intervention history × post–Cold War	–0.28 (0.79)	
Pro–government OECD intervention history × post–Cold War		–2.61** (1.19)
Pro–government non-OECD intervention history × post–Cold War		–0.44 (0.69)
Constant	–1.17 (1.50)	–0.33 (1.54)
Observations	766	766
Log likelihood	–222.79	–217.33
Akaike information criterion	467.57	460.66

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country. Control variables omitted from table.

³⁵ Note that this model does not include U.S. intervention histories because of statistical separation; variation in the dependent variable by U.S. intervention history and period was insufficient to produce an estimate.

Table B.18
Determinants of Conflict Recurrence at the Country Level, Aid Models

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence
Postconflict OECD aid	0.98*** (0.15)
Post–Cold War	–0.61 (0.45)
Postconflict OECD aid, post–Cold War	–1.01*** (0.18)
Constant	–2.73 (1.93)
Observations	729
Log likelihood	–217.63
Akaike information criterion	457.26

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country. Control variables omitted from table.

results from a country-level analysis are consistent with results from the group level.³⁶

Contextual Factors Influencing Leverage

We explored an additional proxy measure for leverage by coding histories of prorebel intervention. We constructed a variable that indicates whether rebels received any intervention in the last five years of a conflict. In line with the framework, the expectation is that governments facing greater threat will be more responsive to external leverage targeted at policy change. The models in Tables B.19 and B.20 replicate those in Chapter Six, substituting rebel intervention history for an indicator for the Cold War. The expectation was that the interaction term between leverage variables (e.g., OECD intervention history, aid, and so on) would be positively associated with inclusion and peace duration.

³⁶ Note that arms transfers are not included in these models because of statistical separation.

Table B.19**Replication of Models in Table 6.1, Substituting Rebel Intervention History for the Post–Cold War Period Indicator**

	Dependent Variable: Political Inclusion	
	Model 1	Model 2
Models 2 and 3, Table 6.1		
Postconflict OECD aid	0.30 (0.22)	
Postconflict OECD weapons		0.60* (0.36)
Rebel intervention history	0.37 (0.63)	0.26 (0.59)
Postconflict OECD aid × rebel intervention history	−0.35 (0.26)	
Postconflict OECD weapons × rebel intervention history		−1.24*** (0.38)
Non-OECD arms transfers × rebel intervention history	3.70 (3.66)	3.97 (3.79)
Observations	1,718	1,718
Log likelihood	−585.47	−587.03
Akaike information criterion	1,196.94	1,200.06
Model 1, Table 6.1		
Pro–government intervention history	0.23 (0.58)	
Pro–government OECD intervention history		0.56 (0.78)
Pro–government non-OECD intervention history	0.74 (0.92)	0.60 (0.86)
Rebel intervention history		−0.45 (1.05)
Pro–government intervention history × rebel intervention history	−1.09 (1.09)	
Pro–government OECD intervention history × rebel intervention history		−1.41 (1.22)

Table B.19—Continued

	Dependent Variable: Political Inclusion	
	Model 1	Model 2
Pro-government non-OECD intervention history × rebel intervention history		0.24 (1.36)
Non-OECD intervention history × rebel intervention history	3.59 (3.74)	3.85 (3.89)
Observations	1,718	1,718
Log likelihood	−587.83	−586.03
Akaike information criterion	1,201.67	1,202.07

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country. Control variables omitted from table.

Table B.20
Replication of Models in Table 6.2, Substituting Rebel Intervention History
for the Post-Cold War Period Indicator

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence	
	Model 1	Model 2
Models 6 and 7, Table 6.2		
Postconflict OECD aid	0.04 (0.06)	
Postconflict OECD weapons		0.20** (0.10)
Rebel intervention history	0.32 (0.38)	0.19 (0.38)
Postconflict OECD aid × rebel intervention history	−0.32* (0.18)	
Postconflict OECD weapons × rebel intervention history		−0.51*** (0.12)
Observations	1,674	1,674
Log likelihood	−195.86	−196.87
Akaike information criterion	421.72	423.75

Table B.20—Continued

	Dependent Variable: Conflict Recurrence	
	Model 1	Model 2
Model 5, Table 6.2		
Rebel intervention history	0.18 (0.45)	0.44 (0.42)
Pro-government intervention history	0.09 (0.45)	
Pro-government OECD intervention history		1.02** (0.48)
Pro-government U.S. intervention history		0.02 (0.37)
Pro-government intervention history × rebel intervention history	−0.23 (0.62)	
Pro-government OECD intervention history × rebel intervention history		−1.91*** (0.61)
Pro-government U.S. intervention history × rebel intervention history		−0.34 (0.58)
Observations	1,674	1,674
Log likelihood	−198.61	−195.49
Akaike information criterion	427.22	424.99

NOTES: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors clustered on country. Control variables omitted from table.

Tables B.19 and B.20 show the results for these models. The results here are mixed but provide tentative support for the findings in Chapter Six. Arms transfers from OECD states are associated with greater inclusion when there is a history of rebel support, but the OECD intervention history and OECD aid variables show no such relationship. The results for conflict recurrence are more consistent. All the relevant leverage variables—OECD intervention history and aid and arms transfers from the interveners—show a positive, significant association with peace duration when rebels have previously received support.

Discussion and Future Work

In this concluding section, we discuss some limitations of the analysis and implications for future research. One of the primary limitations of this analysis is its focus on ethnic groups as the unit of analysis. We made this choice because available data allowed us to match intervention into conflicts and postconflict concessions to specific groups involved in the conflicts. Of course, postconflict inclusion and capacity-building are also important issues in nonethnic civil conflicts. For example, political inclusion has been an important aspect of resolving Colombia's conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (also known as FARC). Future research could extend the analysis to include armed groups that do not have an explicit ethnic dimension.

We were unable to explicitly observe the attempts of former interveners to use leverage over postconflict governments to adopt specific policies. It is unlikely that a large-*n*, country-year approach is appropriate to test the more granular aspects of the theory. Future work could use machine-coded event data to examine how conflict and cooperation between previously warring parties responds to the use of carrots and sticks by former interveners.³⁷ Data are available to facilitate this sort of analysis at the daily level.³⁸ A viable medium-*n* approach might use data on the implementation of specific provisions of peace agreements to trace how interactions between third parties and postconflict government influence implementation.³⁹

A central implication of the analysis is that geopolitical context is an important factor that mediates states' ability to exercise leverage over postconflict governments. We were only able to include the late Cold War in the analysis because of the time frame for which granular

³⁷ See Joshua S. Goldstein, Jon C. Pevehouse, Deborah J. Gerner, and Shibley Telhami, "Reciprocity, Triangularity, and Cooperation in the Middle East, 1979–97," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 45, No. 5, October 2001, for an early example of this kind of approach.

³⁸ For example, the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System releases daily data on conflict and cooperation between a range of state and substate political actors.

³⁹ Data sources suitable for this purpose include the Peace Accords Matrix and the Peace Agreement Database Project.

intervention data were available. Future work could extend the analysis forward (up to 2017) and back (to 1946) to check the sensitivity of these results with less-granular intervention data.⁴⁰ Furthermore, there is variation in geopolitical environment *within* the periods examined in this analysis. Geopolitical competition does not vary just across the Cold War and post-Cold War eras but also across space and time within these periods. The intense geopolitical competition in the Middle East does not characterize the situation that most states and interveners confront in Sub-Saharan Africa or Latin America. Future work could use measures that capture variation in geopolitical context across both space and time. For example, measures that track the number and nature of rivalries or the density of militarized disputes between states or nearby major powers could provide insights into how geopolitical context influences the ability of third parties to exercise leverage.

Finally, the postconflict aid data that we used covered development assistance only from OECD member states. To better evaluate the importance of sponsor characteristics for postconflict policy adoption, future work should incorporate aid data that covers a longer period and includes non-OECD ODA aid flows.⁴¹

⁴⁰ For example, the UCDP/PRIO ACD contains information on troop interventions on behalf of governments and rebel groups.

⁴¹ The AidData project, for example, has project-level data from 1947–2017 that includes flows that do not meet the criteria for ODA, and flows from non-OECD countries.

Abbreviations

ACD	Armed Conflict Dataset
ALP	Afghan local police
ANA	Afghan National Army
AQI	al-Qa‘ida in Iraq
AWK	Ahmed Wali Karzai
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CAS	close air support
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CJTF-OIR	Combined Joint Task Force for Operation Inherent Resolve
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
CTC	Counterterrorism Command
CTS	Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service
DDR	disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
ELF	ethnolinguistic fractionalization
EPR	Ethnic Power Relations
GAO	U.S. Government Accountability Office

GDP	gross domestic product
GoI	Government of Iraq
IEC	Independent Election Commission
IGC	Iraqi Governing Council
INP	Iraqi National Police
IOC	international oil company
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISCI	Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISOF	Iraqi Special Operations Forces
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
KH	Kata'ib Hezbollah
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MoD	Ministry of Defense
MoI	Ministry of Interior
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NUG	National Unity Government
OCINC	Office of the Commander-in-Chief
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom

OIR	Operation Inherent Resolve
PMF	popular mobilization forces
PMU	popular mobilization units
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SOF	special operations forces
SRAP	Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UN	United Nations
USSF	U.S. Special Forces (U.S. Army)

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The U.S. experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan and the resulting U.S. military doctrine emphasize the need for the United States to consolidate the gains it has realized on the battlefield. Recognizing this need, however, is much easier than understanding the measures necessary to succeed. Both U.S. decisionmakers and a variety of analysts have generally agreed that broad-based, inclusive governance and institutionalized capacity-building consistent with the rule of law are the long-term goals for stabilizing fragile states. The conditions under which these goals are realistic and how to realize them are much more contentious. This report describes research intended to advance at least partial answers to these questions, including a framework to help better understand when we expect U.S. leverage to be successful in nudging partners toward better governance practices. While there is no panacea for the difficulties of stabilizing countries after conflicts, this research offers guidance on how the United States might improve the odds of securing such hard-won gains and evidence to suggest that—at least under the right circumstances—it can do so.

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