



Using U.S. Leverage to Limit Instability in Fragile States

Executive Summary

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



For more information on this publication, visit www.rand.org/t/RRA250-2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available for this publication.

ISBN: 978-1-9774-0551-7

Published by the RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif.

© 2021 RAND Corporation

RAND® is a registered trademark.

*Cover: The colors are retired during a ceremony marking the end of the U.S. mission in Iraq in Baghdad on Dec. 15, 2011.
DoD photo by Erin A. Kirk-Cuomo.*

Limited Print and Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law. This representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for noncommercial use only. Unauthorized posting of this publication online is prohibited. Permission is given to duplicate this document for personal use only, as long as it is unaltered and complete. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of its research documents for commercial use. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please visit www.rand.org/pubs/permissions.

The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest.

RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.

Support RAND

Make a tax-deductible charitable contribution at
www.rand.org/giving/contribute

www.rand.org

KEY FINDINGS

- The United States has frequently been able to move fragile states toward better governance in the near term when U.S. and partner interests aligned or when the United States used its leverage (including conditions on military and economic assistance) and when all the prerequisites for leverage (clarity, observability, and strength of sanction) were in place.
- Outcomes were much less favorable when U.S. and partner interests diverged and the United States failed to use its leverage, or if one of the preconditions for leverage was absent.
- Although rates of success declined over longer periods, U.S. efforts were almost always at least partially successful when interests were aligned or when the United States had strong leverage.
- These results suggest that the United States can effectively support governance reforms in postconflict states by seizing on opportunities when partner interests align with those of the United States and effectively using its leverage when interests do not align.
- In many cases, the United States can at least secure partial reforms in an effort to buy time and local political support for the longer-term process of stabilization.

ABBREVIATIONS

ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
CAS	close air support
CTS	Counter Terrorism Service
INP	Iraqi National Police
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
MRE	mission rehearsal exercise
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PMU	Popular Mobilization Units
PSYOP	Psychological Operations

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 departed, Iraq again stood on the verge of collapse. In 2014, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) forces routed many of the forces of the Government of Iraq and seized control of large swaths of the country.

The success of ISIS prompted many critics of U.S. stabilization efforts to ask why these efforts fell apart so quickly. Observers had ready-made answers. They pointed to Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's narrow sectarian rule, which excluded the country's large Sunni minority, or the fact that many Iraqi leaders were more committed to retaining their personal power than to developing effective institutions.

The prescription for Iraq going forward appeared similarly obvious: broad-based governance that included all major politically relevant groups and institutionalized capacity-building consistent with the rule of law. Such an approach aligns with U.S. government guidance, which insists that stabilization of fragile states “must focus on local, national, and/or regional societal and governing dynamics, agents, and systems that lead populations toward inclusive, nonviolent settlement and agreement.”¹

While there is general consensus on the goals of stabilization, how to realize these goals is a more contentious issue—as is whether it is practical for the United States (or similar international entities) to use leverage to move fragile states toward better governance. To what extent do U.S. partners typically try to subvert this model of stabilization? Where U.S. and partner preferences diverge, how can the United States best incentivize its partners to undertake a desired course of action? How likely are such efforts at leverage to succeed, and what circumstances are most favorable for U.S. leverage?

RAND Arroyo Center recently conducted research to advance answers to all of these questions through a systematic review of 18 specific episodes in Iraq and Afghanistan.² We drew on hundreds of documents in English and Arabic, as well as interviews with senior White House officials, U.S. ambassadors to Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. generals who commanded in these countries, and numerous people at the working levels—the military officers, diplomats, and civil-society partners responsible for implementing U.S. policies on the ground. This executive summary is based on a longer RAND Corporation report: Stephen Watts, Jeffrey Martini,



An Afghan National Army (ANA) commando, right, conducts a key leader engagement with an Afghan village elder during a mission in search of insurgent weapon caches in Alahsang village, Wardak province, Afghanistan, March 6, 2012. ANA commandos conducted counterinsurgency operations throughout Afghanistan to provide stability in the region.

PHOTO: U.S. NAVY/MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 3RD CLASS SEBASTIAN MCCORMACK

Jason H. Campbell, Mark Toukan, and Inhyok Kwon, *Securing Gains in Fragile States: Using U.S. Leverage in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Beyond.*

The Challenge of Stabilization in Fragile States

The ability of the United States and other external entities to support good governance as a strategy of stabilization depends on the extent of agreement between the outside powers and local leaders on goals and on the ability of external actors to nudge their partners toward improved practices. Both can be challenging to achieve.

Postconflict countries are highly fragile. Wars often degrade the trust and institutions that hold back violence at the same time as they build the networks that have the capabilities and, sometimes, the incentive to return to war. 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

FIGURE 1
DURABILITY OF PEACE AND RISK OF CONFLICT RECURRENCE IN POSTCONFLICT COUNTRIES



SOURCE: RAND Arroyo Center calculations based on UCDP/PRIO data.



Georgian soldiers with Alpha Company, Special Mountain Battalion conduct a key leader engagement with village elders, role-played by civilians, during a mission rehearsal exercise (MRE) at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, February 13, 2014. A Georgian MRE is a combined training exercise in which U.S. and Georgian soldiers practice counterinsurgency, stability, and transportation operations in preparation for a deployment to Afghanistan in support of NATO.

PHOTO: DoD/SPC. JUSTIN DE HOYOS

low-intensity violence. If a country has experienced civil war, there is a very good chance it will experience further conflict within a generation.

At the same time, there are some reasons for optimism. Much of the recurrence in violence is of relatively low intensity (meaning between 25 and 1,000 deaths in a given year). Even after two decades, less than one-half of countries have returned to high-intensity conflict. As Figure 1 suggests, postconflict countries are susceptible to political instability but are not doomed to recurring bouts of intense violence.

Given the high risk of renewed violence, postconflict states may be dependent on external support to sustain peace or at least maintain violence at low levels. For democracies, such as the United States, seeking to stabilize such states at a reasonable cost, there are few viable alternatives to supporting broad-based and rule-bound governance. The decisive defeat and political exclusion of less-favored groups can be an attractive alternative to the messy compromises of broad-based political inclusion but is typically an elusive goal. Without the support of a broad political base, a partner government is unlikely to be able to sustain the reforms necessary to build capacity over a long period. Further, many 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 and less-intense conflicts when they do arise.³

At the same time, 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 constitute “good governance.” Political inclusion is often difficult because of the dynamics of coalition-building, uncertainties related to future violence, and legacies of suspicion and hatred left over from the previous conflict. Meanwhile, institutional capacity-building can be undermined by incentives for corruption and coup-proofing practices within the security services. Under such circumstances, it may be difficult to persuade these actors to adopt reforms or to offer sufficient positive inducements to sway the actors.⁴

If, as critics of stabilization efforts emphasize, local actors in these circumstances 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, it will make progress only if it uses leverage to ensure its partners’ compliance with U.S. goals and intermediate benchmarks.⁵ Such advice, however, contradicts current thinking in much of the development community, which has shifted away from using leverage to enforce a particular vision

of development to focus, instead, on facilitating local ownership of reforms.⁶ To adjudicate between the two camps, it is necessary to better understand the precise conditions under which leverage is possible.

Understanding U.S. Leverage

To address the issue of when U.S. leverage is possible, the researchers identified three steps necessary to support such an analysis:

- **Divergence of interests.** First, it is necessary to understand the extent of the divergence of interests between the external entity and the local partner. The greater the divergence of interests, the greater the leverage likely to be necessary to align interests.⁷
- **Influence strategy.** Second, it is necessary to understand the external partner’s strategy and the design of its conditions on its aid. When interests align, persuasion or inducement should be adequate to help galvanize reforms. When interests misalign, conditionality is likely to be necessary. When an external partner chooses an influence approach that is poorly aligned with the divergence of interests between the two states, failure is likely to result.
- **Conditions.** Finally, to translate assistance into leverage, external actors must meet three 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 they seek to obtain from their partners; and (3) the threatened sanction must be stronger than countervailing

influences arising from the partner’s domestic political situation and other diplomatic relations.

Table 1 provides definitions of the key elements of this framework.

Combining these elements, we derived four categories of influence events, with associated expectations about the likelihood of a successful outcome. Figure 2 depicts these categories, with the most likely conditions for success on the left (in green) and the least likely conditions for success on the right (in red).

Overview of U.S. Influence Events

We used this framework to analyze nine specific *influence events* in Iraq (since 2003) and nine events in Afghanistan (since 2001). An *influence event* is an event or series of events in which the United States attempts 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.⁸ This approach allowed us to acquire detailed data—including through participant interviews and foreign-language sources—on events that are inherently difficult to observe and measure. Table 2 summarizes the 18 events we analyzed. For each event, the table provides a brief description of the main goal of U.S. influence.

Table 3 provides a summary of the findings from the analysis of these 18 events. The table highlights the characteristics of the events—including alignment of interests, influence strategy used, and the conditions under which the strategy was carried out—as well as the short- and

FIGURE 2
CATEGORIES OF INFLUENCE EVENTS

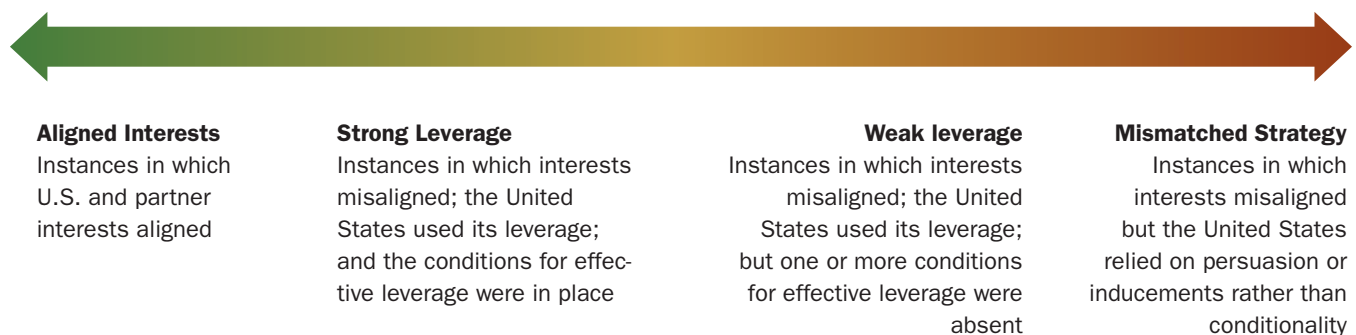


TABLE 1
ELEMENTS OF A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING LEVERAGE

ELEMENT	DEFINITION
Outcome	<p>The outcomes of interest are <i>inclusion</i> and <i>institutionalized governance</i>, which are measured in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Success</i>: The United States largely achieved its objectives—as defined by U.S. policymakers in relation to a particular interaction (or interrelated set of interactions) with the partner government. • <i>Partial success</i>: The United States achieved some important objectives but not others. • <i>Failure</i>: The United States achieved no more than ephemeral gains on any of its important objectives, or the partner took actions that undermined the objectives in practice to undo the reforms the United States desired. <p>Outcomes are assessed at two points in time: short term (within two to three years of the U.S. effort to influence its partners’ behavior) and long term (up to five years).</p>
Inclusion	<p><i>Inclusion</i> indicates meaningful opportunities for participation in the formulation and execution of policy.</p>
Institutionalized Governance	<p><i>Institutionalized governance</i> indicates the development of a government’s capacity to execute its policies consistent with the rule of law and the weakening of personalized rule.</p>
Leverage Structure	<p><i>Leverage structure</i> refers to the degree of alignment between interests and U.S. influence strategy.</p>
Interest Alignment	<p>For each event, U.S. partners are assessed as having a preference for (1) inclusive or institutionalized governance, (2) exclusive or personalized governance, or (3) a mixed preference. Depending on U.S. preferences, each event is categorized as a case of <i>aligned interests</i> or <i>misaligned interests</i>.</p>
Influence Strategy	<p>The U.S. approach to each event is categorized as one of (1) <i>persuasion and/or inducement</i>; (2) <i>soft conditionality</i> (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 with U.S. demands); or (3) <i>hard conditionality</i> (in which threats are explicit and ex ante, involving the withholding of assistance until conditions are met).</p>
Conditions for Leverage	<p>For each event, the conditions for leverage success (clarity of U.S. demands, observability of outcomes, and strength of threatened U.S. sanctions) are assessed as being mostly present (<i>high presence</i>) or mostly absent (<i>low presence</i>).</p>
Clarity	<p><i>Clarity</i> indicates the ability of U.S. officials to convey to their partners the behavior that the United States wants from the partners and the high priority the United States gives this behavior. Clarity may be undermined by intercultural miscommunication, failure of the United States to establish priorities, articulation of competing priorities by different elements of the U.S. government, or rapid shifts in goals or prioritization without sufficient efforts to convey these changes to partners.</p>
Observability	<p><i>Observability</i> indicates the ability of U.S. officials to observe whether the partner is complying with U.S. demands. Observability may be hampered by long-term or less-concrete goals, lack of physical access (e.g., to conflict-affected regions), or the volume of tasks required of the partner relative to the number of U.S. personnel present to observe compliance.</p>
Sanction Strength	<p><i>Sanction strength</i> indicates the conditional reward or benefit the United States is offering relative to the reasons local actors have for not implementing the desired reform.</p>

TABLE 2
SUMMARY OF INFLUENCE EVENTS

EVENT	MAIN GOAL OF U.S. INFLUENCE
Iraq	
Initial approach to Sadrists	To prevent Sadrists from being incorporated as legitimate actors in the 2003–2004 Iraqi political process while simultaneously avoiding open military confrontation with the movement.
Support to the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS)	To ensure that the CTS is representative of Iraq’s various ethnosectarian identity groups and operating in a rule bound manner.
Sons of Iraq program	To recruit a Sunni-Arab irregular force to combat the 2006 insurgency.
Rebluing of the Iraqi National Police (INP)	To reduce Shi’a sectarianism within the INP and transform the police from an auxiliary combat force—a so-called <i>green</i> role, due to the color of camouflaged uniforms—into a civilian or <i>blue</i> service by retraining units in human rights and respect for the rule of law.
Benchmarks for Sadrists	To depoliticize the Iraqi military chain of command in the lead-up to the surge and to stop interventions to head off U.S.-Iraqi joint operations against Shi’a militia groups, most notably Jaysh al-Mahdi in Sadr City.
Hydrocarbon law	To gain Iraqi government agreement for a hydrocarbon law formalizing the division of oil rents across regions, thus signaling the central government’s commitment to equitable revenue-sharing.
Maliki ouster (2014)	To replace the Iraqi Prime Minister (Maliki) in favor of a more inclusive-minded alternative.
National guard	To stand up a Sunni-Arab national guard that is representative of the local communities previously under the control of ISIS.
Close air support to Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs)	To relegate the PMUs—a volunteer force made up of more than 100,000 fighters—to a marginal role in the liberation of ISIS-held territory.
Afghanistan	
Bonn Conference	To ensure that the new Afghanistan government formed in 2001 was inclusive of the non-Taliban constituencies it would represent.
Abrogation of Karzai peace deal	To stem early (2001) Taliban inquiries for a ceasefire and potential conditional surrender to the new Afghan government and dissuade the newly appointed President Hamid Karzai from proceeding with peace overtures.
Early Afghan National Army (ANA) formation	To establish a new ANA that is not dominated by the Northern Alliance and instead representative of all Afghans.
Confronting warlords	To reduce the influence and power of Afghan warlords in 2003–2004 and build credibility for the new Afghan government and the Karzai administration.
Presidential election (2009)	To get President Karzai to agree to a second-round vote rather than accepting the contested results of the first-round 2009 Afghan presidential election.
Afghan Local Police (ALP)	To form and sustain locally recruited, quasi-official ALP forces to augment Afghan security forces.
Peace talks, Doha office	To convince President Karzai to permit a U.S.-Taliban bilateral dialogue in 2009 as a preliminary means of fostering a dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban.
Corruption—Ahmed Wali Karzai	To counter corruption in the Afghan bureaucracy by persuading President Karzai to replace his half-brother, Ahmed Wali, as head of the Kandahar Provincial Council.
Presidential election (2014)	To establish a power-sharing agreement in which both sides in the contested 2014 election agree to the formation of the National Unity Government.

TABLE 3
SUMMARY OF EVENT OUTCOMES

INFLUENCE EVENT	INTEREST ALIGNMENT	INFLUENCE STRATEGY	STRENGTH OF INDUCEMENT OR SANCTION	OBSERVABILITY OF OUTCOME	CLARITY	SHORT-TERM OUTCOME	LONG-TERM OUTCOME
Iraq							
Initial approach to Sadrists	Aligned	Inducements, persuasion	High	High	Low	Failure	Partial Success
Support to CTS	Aligned	Inducements, persuasion	High	High	Low	Success	Partial Success
Sons of Iraq program	Misaligned	Inducements, persuasion	Low	High	High	Success	Failure
Rebluing of INP	Misaligned	Hard conditionality	Low	High	High	Failure	Failure
Benchmarks for Sadrists	Misaligned	Hard conditionality	High	High	High	Partial Success	Partial Success
Hydrocarbon law	N/A	Soft Conditionality	Low	High	High	Failure	Failure
Maliki ouster	Misaligned, then aligned	Hard conditionality	High	High	High	Success	Success
National guard	Misaligned	Inducements, persuasion	Low	High	High	Failure	Failure
Close air support to PMUs	Misaligned	Hard conditionality	High	High	Low	Partial Success	N/A
Afghanistan							
Bonn Conference	Aligned	Persuasion, then soft conditionality	High	High	High	Success	Partial success
Abrogation of Karzai peace deal	Misaligned	Hard conditionality	High	Low	High	Failure	Failure
Early ANA formation	Misaligned	Soft conditionality	High	High	High	Success	Partial Success
Confronting warlords	Misaligned	Hard conditionality	High	High	High	Success	Failure
Presidential election (2009)	Misaligned	Persuasion, then soft conditionality	High	High	Low	Partial Success	Partial Success
ALP	Misaligned	Persuasion	Low	Low	High	Partial Success	Failure
Peace talks, Doha office	Misaligned	Persuasion	Low	High	High	Failure	Failure
Corruption—Ahmed Wali Karzai	Misaligned	Inducements, persuasion	Low	High	Low	Failure	Failure
Presidential election (2014)	Misaligned	Hard conditionality	High	High	High	Success	Partial Success

NOTE: Green shading indicates success or more propitious conditions for success; red indicates failure or more challenging conditions; and yellow represents intermediate categories.



President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan (right) speaks at a conference in Kabul as U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, looks on. (undated)

PHOTO: FLICKR/US EMBASSY KABUL AFGHANISTAN.

long-term outcomes of each event. Additional details of four of the cases are provided below. Full details of each episode can be found in the full report upon which this brief is based.

Characteristics of Influence Events

Researchers examined the overall characteristics of the influence events. With only 18 events, there are limits to the precision with which generalizations can be made about the outcomes of leverage even in these two countries, much less in stabilization contexts more broadly. Although the findings presented in this section and the next refer to specific proportions of influence events, these results 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*).

Partners Partially or Fully Embraced Inclusion or Institutional Capacity Building in Half of the Events in This Research

Many observers of U.S. stabilization efforts are highly pessimistic about the likelihood that U.S. and partner interests will coincide, especially about the likelihood that partner governments will embrace reforms to increase political inclusion or institutionalized governance. Our analysis of Iraq and Afghanistan suggests that these claims are not wrong but 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 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 short-sighted and self-defeating strategy and were quick to embrace more-inclusive politics under his successor, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi.

In our cases, U.S. partners in Iraq and Afghanistan preferred inclusive and/or institutionalized governance in four cases, and they had at least partial preferences for such governance in another five cases. Together, this accounts for one-half of all our cases, suggesting that the cynics may be overly skeptical of the opportunities for improved governance. As Figure 3 shows, interests between the United States and its partners aligned in only four of our 18 cases. But this understates the opportunities to pursue good governance because in some instances it was U.S. partners, not the United States itself, that preferred inclusion or institutionalization.

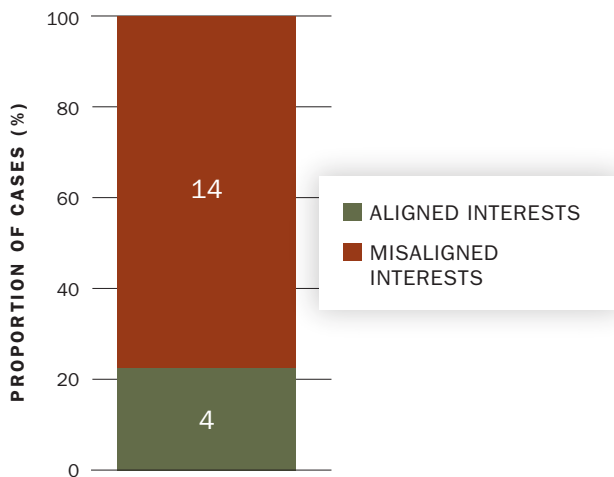
When local partners adopted preferences for inclusion or institutionalized and rule-bound capacity-building, they typically did so for pragmatic and self-interested reasons (as in the broader political coalitions in Iraq following Maliki’s ouster) rather than from some dedication to the ideal of a democratic society. But even partial and pragmatic support for these practices provides a point of entry for the United States and other external actors to nudge their partners toward at least “good enough” governance.⁹ 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.¹⁰

The United States Could Have Used Its Leverage More Often and More Effectively

Many critics of U.S. policy argue that the United States pursued a strategy of apolitical capacity-building, blind to the fact that its partners in Iraq and Afghanistan often had divergent interests that undermined U.S. objectives. Our analyses of Iraq and Afghanistan suggest that the United States could indeed 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, as was seen in the latter days of Afghan President Karzai’s government.

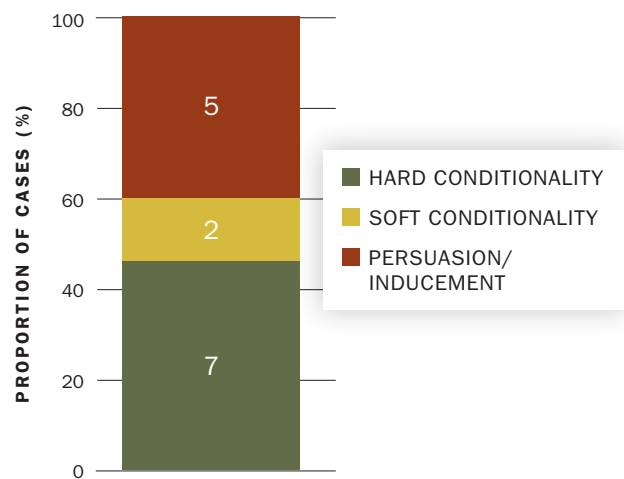
In the cases examined, when U.S. and partner interests aligned, the United States uniformly used persuasion and inducements to try to shape reforms and encourage further progress. When interests misaligned, however, the United States often applied its leverage. Figure 4 shows the number and percentage of cases of hard conditionality, soft conditionality, and persuasion or inducement, while

FIGURE 3
EXTENT OF INTEREST ALIGNMENT



NOTE: The numbers in this figure sum to 18 because, although in one case (the hydrocarbon law) the partner did not take a position in the relevant period and so is dropped from our analysis, in a second case (the ouster of Maliki), the government took two different positions over time and so is counted twice in our analysis.

FIGURE 4
USES OF LEVERAGE IN INSTANCES OF INTEREST MISALIGNMENT



NOTE: The numbers in the bar segments refer to the number of influence events represented. The numbers do not sum to 18 because only instances of interest misalignment are represented in this figure.

the vertical axis represents the proportion of the whole that each category comprises.

The Conditions Necessary for Effective Leverage Were Relatively Common

As discussed earlier, there are at least three conditions for effective leverage: clarity of the demand, observability of the outcome, and strength of the threatened sanction (or benefit). Perhaps surprisingly, these conditions existed relatively often in the events we studied.

Clarity

In general, U.S. officials were successful in communicating desired actions. In only five of the 18 events reviewed did the United States fail 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 that it set on these particular objectives. For example, in the case of U.S. efforts 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 the CTS within the Ministry of Defense, given the shortcomings in the effectiveness of that bureaucratic structure. To avoid the CTS's regressing to the standards of the regular Iraqi Army,

American interlocutors advocated for a hybrid system in which the CTS would have one foot in the Ministry of Defense 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 the CTS under his purview, which he duly exploited via the Office of the Commander in Chief. (See Box 1 for additional discussion of this case.)

Observability

The outcomes of interest to the United States were *almost uniformly observable*; in only two out of the 18 events we reviewed was the United States unable to monitor compliance with its preferences. Moreover, there was no evidence that a large military footprint was required for effective monitoring, and U.S. decisionmakers did not tend to swap easily observable, concrete actions for the more-important but more-difficult-to-observe processes of political reform.

Given the number of potential barriers to observability, why are the findings so optimistic? The analysis focused on the actions of local partners that were most important in shaping the trajectories of Iraq and Afghanistan. In focusing on these strategic-level actions, the 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



A U.S. Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Soldier with Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–Iraq conduct radio-in-a-box training with members of an Iraqi CTS PSYOP team.

PHOTO: U.S. ARMY/SPC. SARAH K. ANWAR

the capital or other areas easily accessible to foreigners, the bewildering number of contextual factors that might shape outcomes, and so on. Thus, one might expect the analysis to show relatively 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 to monitoring, the fact that the key strategic choices and actions of local partners were so easy to observe suggests that this requirement for leverage strategies should pose relatively few obstacles to effective implementation at the strategic level.

Strength of Inducement/Sanctions

In 11 of the 18 cases reviewed, the threatened sanction (or promised benefit) was found to be more important to the local partner than the cost associated with whatever action the external partner demanded. Of the three prerequisites for successful leverage, this one was the one most likely to be missing. Nonetheless, it is important not to understate the carrots and sticks the United States has available. The United States wielded important incentives even in relatively more challenging circumstances. For instance, U.S. threats were relatively strong in Afghanistan even when the insurgency was weak in the years after the Taliban's

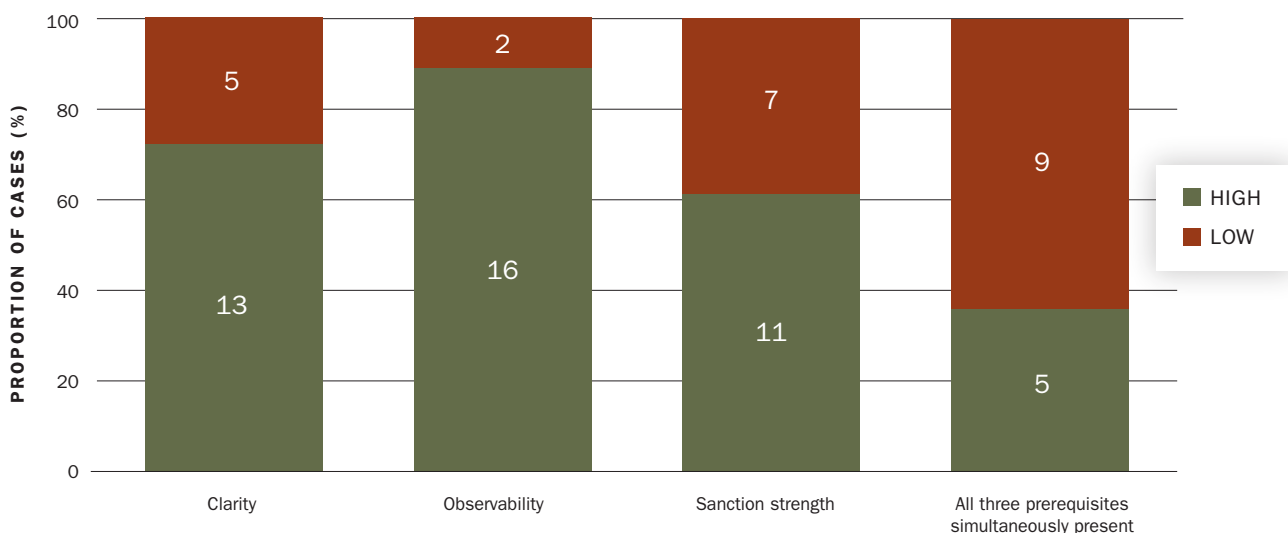
overthrow in 2001. Similarly, the United States was still a critical provider of support in Iraq even in years when hydrocarbon production and prices were high, providing the Baghdad government with alternative financial means. The United States enjoyed considerable sway in Iraq even when Tehran offered to advise and sustain irregular forces to counter ISIS.

Overall, as Figure 5 shows, all three conditions for effective leverage—clarity of U.S. demands, observability of the desired outcome, and strength of the threatened sanction—were simultaneously present in a little more than one-third of the 14 cases we reviewed in which the United States and its partner had misaligned interests (and, thus, the United States had incentives to use its leverage).

Success and Failure of Influence Attempts

Combining all the elements of the framework—interest alignment, the U.S. choice of influence strategy, and the conditions for leverage—improves understanding of the likely outcomes of U.S. attempts to influence its partners. The illustrative case studies in Boxes 1 through 4 provide a more-detailed view of how the various elements work together.

FIGURE 5
FREQUENCY OF CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LEVERAGE IN CASES WHERE INTERESTS ARE MISALIGNED



NOTE: The numbers in the bar segments refer to the number of influence events represented. The bar representing the presence of all three prerequisites includes only influence events in which interests were misaligned.

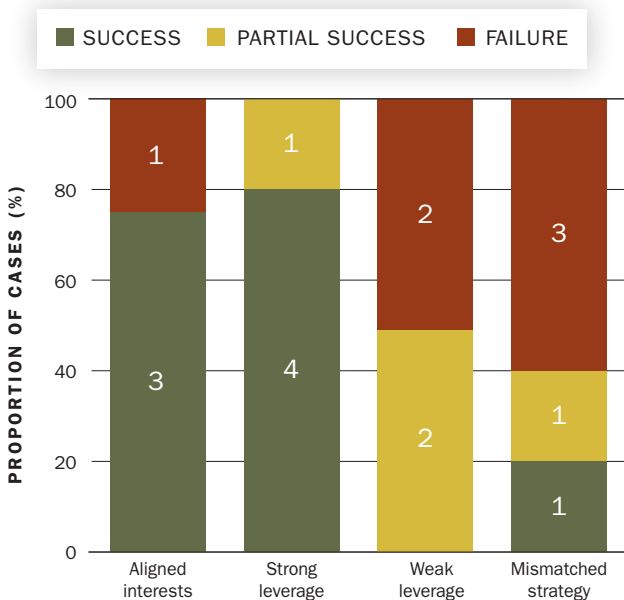
Short-Term Success Was Related to Interest Alignment and/or Strong Leverage

Figure 6 summarizes the proportion of U.S. influence efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan considered in this research 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* leverage), the United States was highly successful in the short term: Seven out of the nine cases reviewed here can be considered successes and only one was an outright failure. 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 with its partner, the outcomes were typically poor. In contrast with the prior two types of influence events, the latter types ended in failure in five of our nine cases. In the short term, U.S. leverage was a powerful tool when the necessary conditions were in place but often failed when they were not.

Aligned Interests and Strong Leverage Were Associated with Long-Term Success, While Weak Leverage or Mismatched Strategies Almost Uniformly Failed

The broad pattern seen for short-term events is similar over the long term. As Figure 7 shows, instances of aligned interests performed best, while instances of strong leverage performed only slightly less well. In contrast, cases of weak leverage or mismatched strategies were almost uniformly failures. As might be expected, rates of success declined when outcomes were observed over longer time horizons. The nearly uniform failure of weak leverage (three events) and inducement or persuasion in cases of misaligned interests (five events) is particularly sobering; of the nine events that fall in either of these two categories, only one was even partially successful. But even in the better-performing types of influence efforts, full success is rare. That said, in these nine cases, U.S. efforts were almost always at least partially successful. Such results stand in stark contrast to the expectations of leverage skeptics.

FIGURE 6
SHORT-TERM SUCCESS OF INFLUENCE ATTEMPTS



NOTE: The numbers in the bar segments refer to the number of influence events represented.

FIGURE 7
LONG-TERM SUCCESS OF INFLUENCE ATTEMPTS



NOTE: The numbers in the bar segments refer to the number of influence events represented. The long term outcome of one influence event was not assessed as the policy was intended to achieve a short term outcome only.



Sheik Abdullah Sami Obeidi, a Sunni Arab tribal leader, signs declaration of support for the Sons of Iraq program as U.S. Army COL David Paschel, the commander of 1st Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, looks on in Al Noor, Iraq, March 9, 2008. The Sons of Iraq was a security force composed of groups of local residents that help maintain security in their own villages and neighborhoods.

PHOTO: DoD/STAFF SGT. SAMUEL BENDET

Implications

By either working to support partners in cases of shared interests or using its leverage when those interests diverged and the prerequisites for leverage (clarity, observability, and strength of sanction) were in place, the United States was able to achieve relatively high levels of success. These circumstances represented nine of the 18 influence events, and the United States experienced only one outright failure in the short term in the nine cases, compared with seven instances of full success. As time passed, many cases of full success declined to partial success, but even in the longer term, there was only one instance of outright failure.

In contrast, when U.S. and partner interests diverged and when the United States failed to attempt to use its leverage, or if one of the preconditions for leverage was

absent, outcomes were much less favorable. These circumstances characterized another nine of the 18 cases; even in the short term, the majority of these cases (five) were outright failures. In the longer term, the United States almost uniformly failed to achieve its goals in these nine cases, achieving even partial success only once.

These results suggest that the United States can effectively support governance reforms in postconflict states by seizing on opportunities when partner interests align with those of the United States and effectively using its leverage when interests do not align. U.S. partners in these circumstances are unlikely to become model democracies. But in many cases, the United States can at least secure partial reforms in an effort to buy time and local political support for the longer-term process of stabilization.



An Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service instructor demonstrates how to disassemble and reassemble an MK-19 machine gun as part of the CTS advanced training near Baghdad, Iraq, Nov. 1, 2016. This training is part of the overall Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve building partner capacity mission to increase the capacity of partnered forces fighting ISIS.

PHOTO: U.S. ARMY/STAFF SGT. ALEX MANNE

BOX 1
BUILDING THE IRAQI COUNTERTERRORISM SERVICE (CTS)

INTEREST ALIGNMENT	INFLUENCE STRATEGY	STRENGTH OF INDUCEMENT OR SANCTION	OBSERVABILITY OF OUTCOME	CLARITY	SHORT-TERM OUTCOME	LONG-TERM OUTCOME
Aligned	Inducements, persuasion	High	High	Low	Success	Partial Success

Context

The U.S. military’s effort to build the CTS spans nearly the entire period of U.S. involvement in post-2003 Iraq. The bulk of the effort was led by U.S. Special Forces, which played a training and advisory role and, from 2004 to 2011, an accompanying role on CTS’s operations. The Special Forces also took the lead in 2014 after ISIS’s emergence to evaluate what remained of broader Iraqi Security Forces capabilities, of which the CTS is part.

Initially Aligned but Then Misaligned Interests

The United States and the Government of Iraq were initially aligned in their preferred approach to building the CTS as a representative, professional force that was loyal to the state rather than to an individual or political interest. The United States provided high-quality training and equipment to develop the force, and this inducement was highly sought after, given the technical proficiency the CTS was able to build via U.S. investment. This alignment endured until 2008, when Prime Minister Maliki began stacking the force in favor of his cosectarians and attempted to politicize the CTS’s command and control.

Strategy of Inducements and Persuasion

Initially, when U.S.-Iraqi interests were aligned, the U.S. approach of sufficing with inducements made sense because it faced a cooperative Iraqi counterpart. Later, Maliki took steps to increase the Shi’a majority composition of the force and 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 values. Although interests diverged, the United States refrained from adopting conditionality as a means of changing Maliki’s behavior.

While the U.S. preference for a nonsectarian, professional force was clear, Washington’s preference for the CTS’s reporting structure was ambiguous because it simultaneously sought to free the CTS from the bureaucratic constraints of the Ministry of Defense and sought to avoid a scenario in which the CTS operated as a praetorian guard. Maliki exploited that ambiguity, maneuvering to temporarily pull the CTS under his personal control. The United States also refrained from employing conditionality to try to change Maliki’s behavior.

Short-Term Success, with Partial Success Over the Long Term

Overall, the United States effort to build the CTS was a short-term success; the service emerged as the most representative and professional force in Iraq. In the long term, the CTS must still be judged as a partial success in that it retained these basic principles despite some regression during the later period of Maliki’s premiership. Indeed, the CTS has emerged as arguably the most professional of all the Iraqi Security Forces.



Nouri Kamil Mohammed Hasan al-Maliki (left) was Prime Minister of Iraq from 2006 to 2014. He was ousted from his position in part because of pressure from the United States. Haider Jawad Kadhim al-Abadi (right) replaced him in that role, serving as Prime Minister until 2018.

PHOTOS: AL-MALIKI-DoD/MASTER SGT. CECILIO RICARDO; AL-ABADI-DoD/D. MYLES CULLEN

BOX 2
REMOVAL OF MALIKI

INTEREST ALIGNMENT	INFLUENCE STRATEGY	STRENGTH OF INDUCEMENT OR SANCTION	OBSERVABILITY OF OUTCOME	CLARITY	SHORT-TERM OUTCOME	LONG-TERM OUTCOME
Misaligned, then aligned	Hard conditionality	High	High	High	Success	Success

Context

This event centers on political inclusion at a time of renewed conflict in Iraq. ISIS militants captured Mosul in June 2014, executing more than 1,000 Iraqi Security Forces members and conducting an even larger mass killing of Iraqi cadets in Tikrit later the same week. At this time, the Obama administration was reluctant to get dragged back into Iraq, and its reticence was amplified by the prospect that intervening on behalf of the Government of Iraq would be supporting the same Iraqi leaders who were unable to prevent the onset of the security crisis and who had played a precipitating role in it via their sectarian governance. U.S. officials opted to signal their opposition to Maliki by referring to the principles of inclusion and need for compromise and withholding any endorsement of Maliki, despite the fact that his party (State of Law) had won a plurality of seats in the Council of Representatives.

Ultimate Alignment of Interests

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. The U.S. position is best described as ex ante conditionality in that the U.S. 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.

Despite U.S. pressure, 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's offensive in al-Anbar province but before the group took Mosul, confirmed significant support for the embattled prime minister. However, Maliki's position eroded significantly when two leading members of the Shi'a bloc announced that they would not support Maliki to lead the next government. After Iraq formed a government headed by Abadi,

the Government of Iraq and Washington moved into a phase of interest alignment.

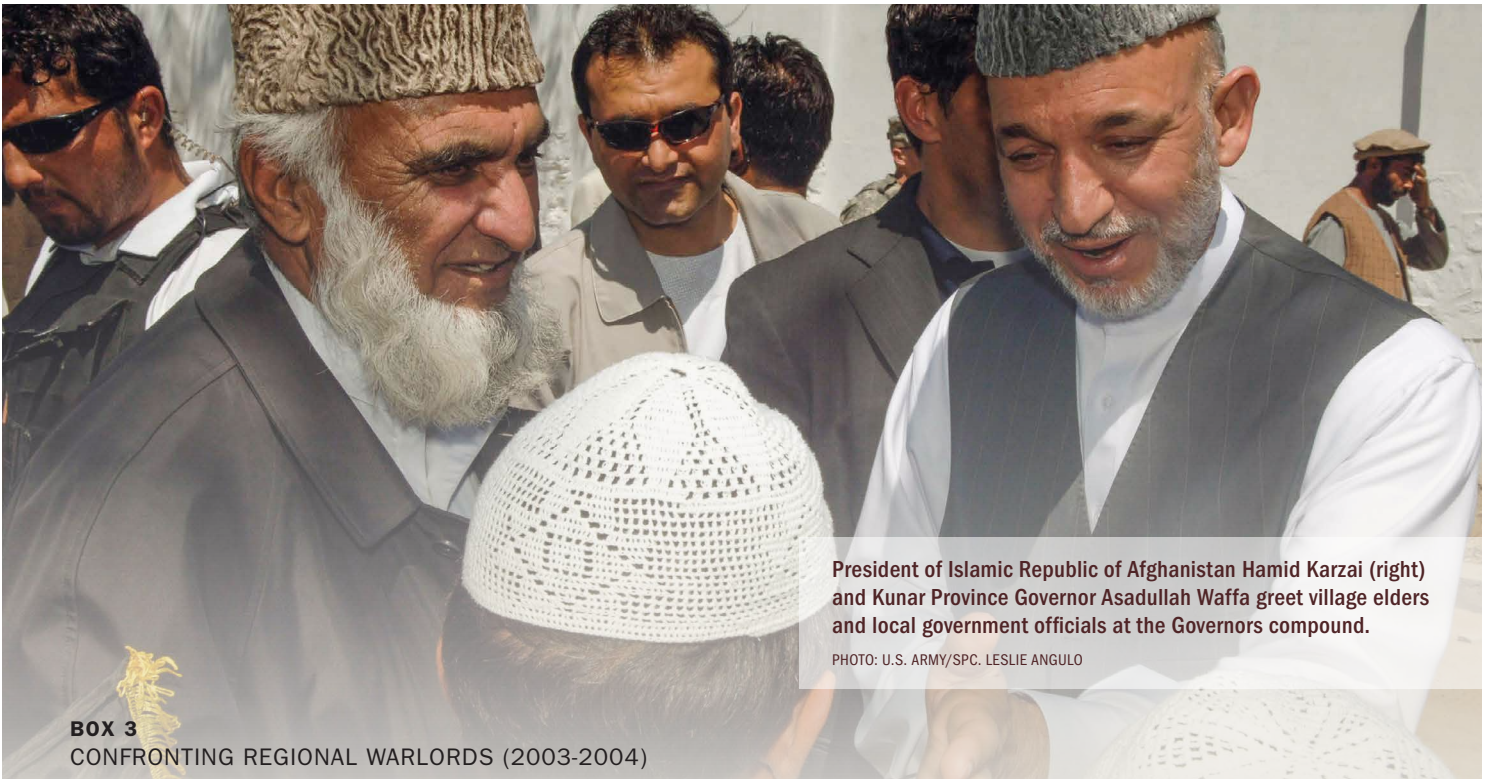
Strategy of Hard Conditionality

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 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. However, by that time, the negotiations to remove Maliki were nearing an end.

U.S. leverage ultimately proved to be successful for several reasons. That leverage was amplified by the fact that other actors with their own leverage supported similar steps: 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. The United States was also credible in threatening to withhold the military support Iraq needed, and this credibility was greatly enhanced by the fact that the United States had withdrawn from Iraq only three years previously. The scope of the insurgent threat in Iraq also incentivized compliance, and the United States brought critical capabilities that no other actor could provide.

Short- and Long-Term Success

The U.S. exercise of leverage was a success in both the short and the long terms because it led to the ouster of Maliki, which has endured through a second election cycle (in 2018). The U.S. role, when combined with the complementary efforts of 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 can do so even on matters of the highest importance to the local partner.



President of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai (right) and Kunar Province Governor Asadullah Waffa greet village elders and local government officials at the Governors compound.

PHOTO: U.S. ARMY/SPC. LESLIE ANGULO

BOX 3
CONFRONTING REGIONAL WARLORDS (2003-2004)

INTEREST ALIGNMENT	INFLUENCE STRATEGY	STRENGTH OF INDUCEMENT OR SANCTION	OBSERVABILITY OF OUTCOME	CLARITY	SHORT-TERM OUTCOME	LONG-TERM OUTCOME
Misaligned	Hard conditionality	High	High	High	Success	Failure

Context

The transitional phase following the establishment of the interim Afghan government augured a time of prosperity for several influential regional warlords, many of whom eagerly worked with the United States and other allied nations in pushing out the Taliban and hunting down the remnants of al-Qa’ida. In the wake of the military victory, many warlords took the opportunity to reconstitute their militias and reestablish dominance in their respective areas. A few were appointed to senior positions in the interim Afghan government, while others focused on rebuilding their personal fiefdoms and were appointed as provincial governors or regional military commanders in a nod to their influence.

Misaligned Interests

After adopting a duplicitous approach to engaging with both the burgeoning Afghan bureaucracy and the warlord class, senior U.S. leaders realized that hedging with each group would prevent achievement of a key strategic goal: the formation of an effective central government, including a national army. With the 2004 presidential election looming, the U.S. country team sought to demonstrate that President Karzai had both the reach to influence parts of the countryside and the clout to rein in some of the warlords.

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. Overall, Karzai viewed the modernization of the country as a longer-term goal and, in the nearer term, adopted a pragmatic approach of working tribal networks to build his own power base. Thus, while working with the United States to weaken the military and, to a lesser extent, political power of some warlords, he continued to appoint others to civilian positions and show favor to those with whom he had an established relationship.

Strategy of Hard Conditionality

In an effort to build credibility for the Karzai administration, the United States assisted in a series of targeted efforts, eventually including hard conditionality, to rein in key regional powerbrokers who had proven reluctant to cooperate with Kabul. Thus, seeing an opportunity in late 2003 to intervene under the auspices of assisting the nascent Afghan army, the United States did so with a significant show of force, which included the Afghan army and police forces, followed closely by U.S. military forces. The coalition stopped a skirmish between militias associated with Ismail Khan, the powerful governor of Herat, and rival Amanullah Khan, ultimately placing Amanullah Khan under house arrest and taking control of a tank park controlled by Ismail Khan.

This effort received nationwide attention 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. The coordinated effort to use Afghan and coalition military presence to dissuade rival warlords from fighting each other had positive repercussions in other areas, convincing other warlords to make concessions that led to the gradual disarmament of heavy weapons from these groups.

Short-Term Success, Long-Term Failure

These actions bolstered the bona fides of the Afghan national army and paved the way for a largely successful 2004 presidential election. However, in the longer term, this collection of successes was largely ad hoc and did not contribute to a more-comprehensive plan for building lasting, functional Afghan institutions, and the United States failed to stem the ability of warlords to subvert institutional development in support of parochial gains. The warlords maintained heavy influence over Afghan political and security institutions and hindered their development for years to come.



Several Afghanistan locals go over the election ballots before voting in the heavily anticipated Afghanistan elections in Barge Matal, Afghanistan, Aug. 20, 2009.

PHOTO: U.S. ARMY/STAFF SGT. CHRISTOPHER W. ALLISON

BOX 4
AFGHANISTAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (2009)

INTEREST ALIGNMENT	INFLUENCE STRATEGY	STRENGTH OF INDUCEMENT OR SANCTION	OBSERVABILITY OF OUTCOME	CLARITY	SHORT-TERM OUTCOME	LONG-TERM OUTCOME
Misaligned	Persuasion then soft conditionality	High	High	Low	Partial Success	Partial Success

Context

In the lead-up to the 2009 Afghan Presidential election, many in Washington had grown frustrated by the lack of progress of the Karzai administration in improving governance. Corruption remained rampant, and there was increasing evidence that Karzai and his inner circle were complicit. Karzai remained the favorite to win reelection but, unlike in 2004, would face formidable competition from competent candidates.

Misaligned Interests

The newly elected Obama administration was conflicted on how to deal with Karzai. The administration took numerous actions seemingly to pressure Karzai to clean up his government and deliver services to his people, although, as the election neared, the administration grudgingly supported Karzai. There was one notable exception, however: Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke sought to prevent Karzai's reelection and encouraged other qualified Afghans to run for the presidency.

Karzai and his inner circle appeared united in their belief that the United States wanted him out. Holbrooke's efforts also disappointed reform-minded officials in Karzai's inner circle, who wanted the president to step aside, take 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 key Afghans might convince Karzai to accept this.

Strategy of Persuasion Followed by Soft Conditionality

In the aftermath of what was universally viewed as a flawed election, the reaction to perceived U.S. efforts provided Karzai with greater cohesion among his inner circle and broader support among his fellow Pashtun constituents. The Obama administration turned to a Democratic senator to persuade Karzai to agree to a second-round vote. When persuasion failed, an escalation to soft conditionality on Washington's part resulted in his begrudging acceptance. In the end, however, the second round never materialized, and Karzai remained in office.

Partial Success but Also Negative Impacts in Both the Short and Long Terms

In the short term, U.S. actions prevented a collapse of the Afghan government and kept Karzai in office for a second term; however, the actions of senior U.S. officials leading up to and in the immediate aftermath of the vote created confusion among Afghan political leaders regarding U.S. intentions. This process would have a negative effect on U.S.-Afghan relations for the next five years. The 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 devolved into a fraudulent vote and the return of a president who now viewed the United States with contempt.

Policy Recommendations

The findings of this research suggest that, even in cases where its interests do not align with those of its partners, the United States can often influence its partners to enact the governance reforms required in U.S. guidance for stabilization. Doing so, however, requires the United States to design leverage strategies appropriate to the context. Decisionmakers must also remain realistic, defining success in appropriately modest and incremental terms. Beyond this top-level conclusion, however, we have also provided more-detailed guidance for practitioners.

Begin with Reasonable Expectations about the Meaning of “Consolidating Gains”

The findings suggest that external stabilization efforts can promote inclusion and institutionalized capacity-building and, ultimately, improve partners’ resilience. However, such improvements are often obtained at great cost and may not be adequate, in any case, to prevent renewed instability. Senior decisionmakers should begin with an 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 is the patience and room to maneuver of the leaders of U.S. partners. 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 while achieving immediate warfighting objectives, the United States must carefully prioritize where it will focus its leverage. When that prioritization is settled, hard 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 all interlocutors faithfully convey the message. 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, taking cultural factors into account, and considering the partner’s room to maneuver before deciding to use leverage.

Develop Frameworks and Capabilities for Monitoring Partner Compliance

We found 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 its partners. There is a particular need for developing leading (as opposed to lagging) indications and warnings that alert the United States to partner efforts to exclude identity groups or to 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.



U.S. Army CPT Mark G. Zwirgzdas, center, discusses operations with 9th Iraqi Army division leaders during an Iraqi security forces' offensive on an ISIS position near the western edge of Mosul, Iraq, March 19, 2017. Zwirgzdas is assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, serving under the Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve.

PHOTO: U.S. ARMY/STAFF SGT. JASON HULL

Carefully Select Sanctions for Noncompliance and “Side Payments” 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 its partners. By carefully mapping what the partner is seeking, the United States will be in the best position to advance its priorities while compensating the partner with side payments (e.g., aid on less-sensitive issues) 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 positions among their followers. Sanctioning noncompliance is the responsibility not only of senior officials and general officers but also of unit commanders operating in the field. Unit commanders can calibrate the amount of military assistance they provide to the partner based on the partner's commitment to principles it has agreed to, and these commanders often control the key assets (e.g., fires support, targeting packages) the partner seeks, increasing U.S. leverage.

Conclusion

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 Operation Inherent Resolve (the U.S. military operation in Iraq after 2014) than to the U.S. occupation of Iraq from 2003–2011. 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.

Endnotes

¹ 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*, Washington, D.C., 2018, more commonly known as the “Stabilization Assistance Review” or SAR. Such guidance is consistent with that issued by international organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

² Stephen Watts, Jeffrey Martini, Jason H. Campbell, Mark Toukan, and Inhyok Kwon, *Securing Gains in Fragile States: Using U.S. Leverage in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Beyond*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-A250-1, 2020.

³ Among the many relevant studies in this field, see 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; Lindsay Heger and Idean Salehyan, “Ruthless Rulers: Coalition Size and the Severity of Civil Conflict,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 51, 2007; and Håvard Hegre and Håvard Mokleiv Nygård, “Governance and Conflict Relapse,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 59, No. 6, 2013.

⁴ 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; Luigi Manzetti and Carole J. Wilson, “Why Do Corrupt Governments Maintain Public Support?” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 8, August 2007; James T. Quinlivan, “Coup-Proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East,” *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Fall 1999; Daniel L. Byman, “Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism,” *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Fall 2006.

⁵ See especially Walter C. Ladwig III, *The Forgotten Front: Patron-Client Relationships in Counterinsurgency*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017; 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; and Eli Berman and David A. Lake, eds., *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence Through Local Agents*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2019.

⁶ 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,” Paris, April 2007.

⁷ Walter Ladwig traces such “influence events” in his work on U.S. interventions in the Philippines, Vietnam, and El Salvador; see Ladwig, 2016 and 2017.

⁸ Berman and Lake, 2019.

⁹ See Merilee Grindle, “Good Enough Governance: Poverty Reduction and Reform in Developing Countries,” *Governance*, Vol. 17, No. 4, October 2004.

¹⁰ One of the pioneering studies on this theme is Dankwart Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1970. For a more recent discussion of the importance of slowly building “stocks” of good governance practices, see, for instance, Thomas Flores and Irfan Noorudin, *Elections in Hard Times: Building Stronger Democracies in the 21st Century*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

References

- Berman, Eli, and David A. Lake, eds., *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence Through Local Agents*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2019.
- Byman, Daniel L., “Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism,” *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Fall 2006, pp. 79–115.
- Flores, Thomas, and Irfan Noorudin, *Elections in Hard Times: Building Stronger Democracies in the 21st Century*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede, and Andrea Ruggeri, “Political Opportunity Structures, Democracy, and Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 2010, pp. 299–310.
- Grindle, Merilee, “Good Enough Governance: Poverty Reduction and Reform in Developing Countries,” *Governance*, Vol. 17, No. 4, October 2004, pp. 525–548.
- Hartzell, Caroline, and Matthew Hoddie, “Institutionalizing Peace: Power Sharing and Post-Civil War Conflict Management,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 47, No. 2, April 2003, pp. 318–332.
- Heger, Lindsay, and Idean Salehyan, “Ruthless Rulers: Coalition Size and the Severity of Civil Conflict,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 2, June 2007, pp. 385–403.
- Hegre, Håvard, and Håvard Møkleiv Nygård, “Governance and Conflict Relapse,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 59, No. 6, 2013, pp. 984–1016.
- Ladwig, Walter C., III, “Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency: U.S. Involvement in El Salvador’s Civil War, 1979–92,” *International Security*, Vol. 41, No. 1, Summer 2016, pp. 99–146.
- , *The Forgotten Front: Patron-Client Relationships in Counterinsurgency*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Manzetti, Luigi, and Carole J. Wilson, “Why Do Corrupt Governments Maintain Public Support?” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 8, August 2007, pp. 949–970.
- de Mesquita, Bruce Bueno, and Alastair Smith, “Leader Survival, Revolutions, and the Nature of Government Finance,” *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 54, No. 4, October 2010, pp. 936–950.
- , *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, Paris, 2005. As of May 2, 2020: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandacraagendaforaction.htm>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations,” Paris, April 2007. As of June 16, 2020: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/38368714.pdf>
- Quinlivan, James T., “Coup-Proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East,” *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Fall 1999, pp. 131–165.
- Rustow, Dankwart, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1970, pp. 337–363. As of May 12, 2020: https://www.jstor.org/stable/421307?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents
- 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*, Washington, D.C., 2018. As of May 2, 2020: <https://www.state.gov/reports/stabilization-assistance-review-a-framework-for-maximizing-the-effectiveness-of-u-s-government-efforts-to-stabilize-conflict-affected-areas-2018/>
- Watts, Stephen, Jeffrey Martini, Jason H. Campbell, Mark Toukan, and Inhyok Kwon, *Securing Gains in Fragile States: Using U.S. Leverage in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Beyond*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-A250-1, 2020.

About This Report

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.

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.

This research was conducted within RAND Arroyo Center's Strategy, Doctrine, and Resources Program. RAND Arroyo Center, part of the RAND Corporation, is a federally funded research and development center (FFRDC) sponsored by the United States Army.

RAND operates under a "Federal-Wide Assurance" (FWA00003425) and complies with the *Code of Federal Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects Under United States Law* (45 CFR 46), also known as "the Common Rule," as well as with the implementation guidance set forth in DoD Instruction 3216.02. As applicable, this compliance includes reviews and approvals by RAND's Institutional Review Board (the Human Subjects Protection Committee) and by the U.S. Army. The views of sources utilized in this study are solely their own and do not represent the official policy or position of DoD or the U.S. Government.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7, U.S. Army, for sponsoring this research and for providing constructive feedback during the course

of research. Because we conducted all interviews with currently serving uniformed military and civilian personnel on a strictly not-for-attribution basis, we cannot thank all of our interview subjects by name, but 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, including Ambassador Charles Ries, Ambassador James Dobbins, Javed Ali, and J. D. Williams. Finally, 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.

About the Authors

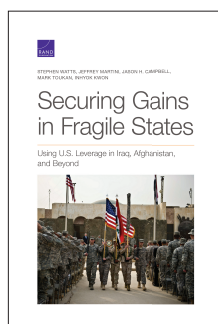
Stephen Watts is a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation and associate director of the Arroyo Center's Strategy, Doctrine, and Resources Program.

Jeff Martini is a senior Middle East researcher at the RAND Corporation with a background in conflict and stabilization.

Jason H. Campbell is a policy researcher with the RAND Corporation and has covered Afghanistan since 2007 as a researcher, deployed analyst, and Pentagon official.

Mark Toukan is an associate political scientist at the RAND Corporation, where his research focuses on international security, military training, and U.S. defense and foreign policy.

Inhyok Kwon is a former doctoral candidate at Pardee RAND Graduate School, and his research focused on developing countries, low-intensity conflict, and peace-keeping and stability operations.



Stephen Watts, Jeffrey Martini, Jason H. Campbell, Mark Toukan, and Inhyok Kwon, *Securing Gains in Fragile States: Using U.S. Leverage in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Beyond*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-A250-1, 2021.

To view this brief online, visit www.rand.org/t/RR-A250-2. The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. **RAND**® is a registered trademark. © RAND 2021.

Limited Print and Electronic Distribution Rights: This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law. This representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for noncommercial use only. Unauthorized posting of this publication online is prohibited. Permission is given to duplicate this document for personal use only, as long as it is unaltered and complete. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents for commercial use. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please visit www.rand.org/pubs/permissions.

