

Dædalus

Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences

Fall 2017

Civil Wars & Global Disorder: Threats & Opportunities



Karl Eikenberry & Stephen D. Krasner, guest editors

with James D. Fearon

Bruce D. Jones & Stephen John Stedman

Stewart Patrick · Martha Crenshaw

Paul H. Wise & Michele Barry

Sarah Kenyon Lischer · Vanda Felbab-Brown

Hendrik Spruyt · Stephen Biddle · William Reno

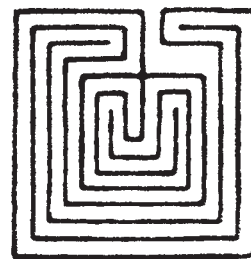
Aila M. Matanock & Miguel García-Sánchez

Barry R. Posen



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“Civil Wars & Global Disorder: Threats & Opportunities”

Volume 146, Number 4; Fall 2017

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Inside front cover: Janso Issa, *Aleppo*, 2017. © 2017 by Janso Issa. Janso Issa, a Kurdish-Syrian refugee, arrived in Nova Scotia on November 7, 2016, with his wife, Himo Hussin, and their young daughters, Mavie and Melly. Born in 1974 in Al-Hasakah in Northern Syria, Janso fled the Syrian Civil War and made his way to Lebanon, where he and Himo registered as United Nations refugees. Janso worked throughout Lebanon and Qatar, taking on artistic commissions. He has received numerous commendations for his art from the ministries of culture in Syria and Lebanon. Janso and his family have been sponsored by Crichton Park Friends of Refugees in Dartmouth, which is supporting the family for their first year in Canada. Janso's work can be seen at www.jansoisso.ca.

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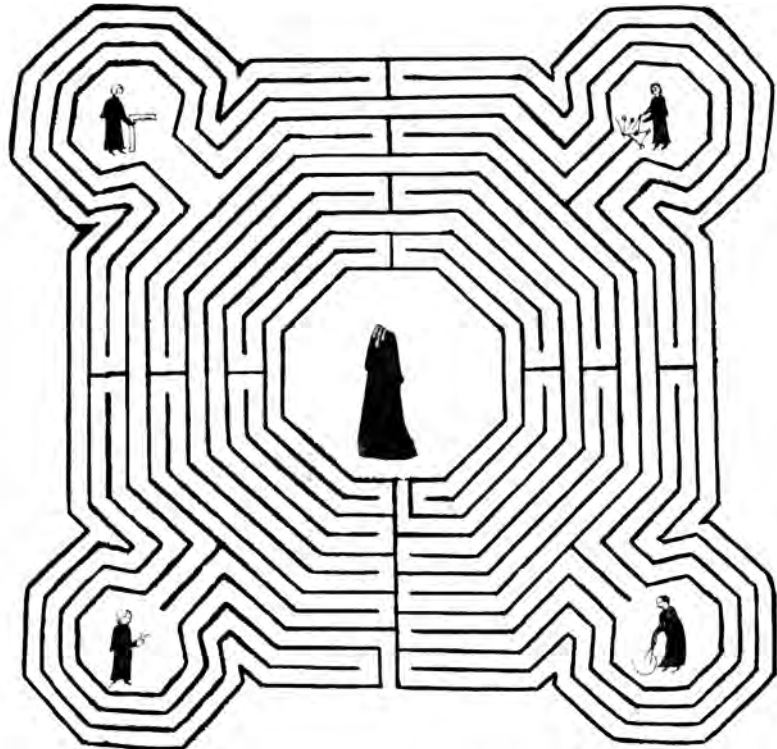
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Dædalus

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The pavement labyrinth once in the nave of Reims Cathedral (1240), in a drawing, with figures of the architects, by Jacques Cellier (c. 1550–1620)

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Dædalus Fall 2017
Issued as Volume 146, Number 4

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Arts & Sciences, 136 Irving Street, Cambridge MA
02138. Phone: 617 576 5085. Fax: 617 576 5088.
Email: daedalus@amacad.org.

Library of Congress Catalog No. 12-30299.

Dædalus publishes by invitation only and assumes
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The views expressed are those of the author(s) of
each article, and not necessarily of the American
Academy of Arts & Sciences.

Dædalus (ISSN 0011-5266; E-ISSN 1548-6192) is
published quarterly (winter, spring, summer, fall)
by The MIT Press, One Rogers Street, Cambridge
MA 02142-1209, for the American Academy of
Arts & Sciences. An electronic full-text version
of *Dædalus* is available from The MIT Press.
Subscription and address changes should be ad-
dressed to MIT Press Journals Customer Service,
One Rogers Street, Cambridge MA 02142-1209.
Phone: 617 253 2889; U.S./Canada 800 207 8354.
Fax: 617 577 1545. Email: journals-cs@mit.edu.

Subscription rates: Electronic only for non-
member individuals – \$51; institutions – \$154.
Canadians add 5% GST. Print and electronic
for nonmember individuals – \$57; institutions –
\$193. Canadians add 5% GST. Outside the United
States and Canada add \$24 for postage and han-
dling. Prices subject to change without notice.
Institutional subscriptions are on a volume-year
basis. All other subscriptions begin with the
next available issue.

Single issues: \$15 for individuals; \$38 for insti-
tutions. Outside the United States and Canada,
add \$6 per issue for postage and handling. Prices
subject to change without notice.

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submitted to journals-cs@mit.edu. Members of
the American Academy please direct all ques-
tions and claims to daedalus@amacad.org.

Advertising and mailing-list inquiries may be
addressed to Marketing Department, MIT Press
Journals, One Rogers Street, Cambridge MA
02142-1209. Phone: 617 253 2866. Fax: 617 253 1709.
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CCC, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers MA 01923.

Printed in the United States by The Sheridan
Press, 450 Fame Avenue, Hanover, PA 17331.

Newsstand distribution by Ingram Periodicals
Inc., 18 Ingram Blvd., La Vergne TN 37086.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Dædalus*,
One Rogers Street, Cambridge MA 02142-1209.
Periodicals postage paid at Boston MA and at
additional mailing offices.

The typeface is Cycles, designed by Sumner
Stone at the Stone Type Foundry of Guinda CA.
Each size of Cycles has been separately designed
in the tradition of metal types.

Introduction

Karl Eikenberry & Stephen D. Krasner

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*(*See endnotes for complete contributor biographies.)*

Civil wars run deep through our historical narratives, shaping the political and social consciousness of people in developed countries around the world: Japan, Russia, Spain, China, Mexico, and the United States, to mention only a few. But intrastate conflicts are not merely features of the past. Today, there are some thirty active civil wars, ranging from Afghanistan and Syria to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the average duration of conflict increasing over the past twenty years.¹ Most civil wars have broken out in states with limited material capabilities. Major powers have sometimes, but not always, become involved in these conflicts, something that happened less often in the past. Many of these contemporary civil wars are the sources of immense human suffering and regional insecurity, some giving rise to mass exodus and uncontrollable refugee spillover.

Nevertheless, foreign-policy practitioners and scholars alike disagree on the actual risks that high levels of intrastate violence pose to major powers and global stability. They also disagree about the extent to which external powers can influence the trajectories of these conflicts, or improve governance in areas that have been afflicted by civil war. Worldviews matter. Realists generally focus on threats associated with interstate rivalries, while liberal internationalists place more emphasis on the risks created by downstream effects and the erosion of norms that underpin the order they seek to maintain.² Of course, for all, contingency and the particulars also matter.

Some analysts believe that states suffering from civil strife can at least be put on a path to greater inclusivity and security; others believe that the best external actors can do is to prevent the spread of violence and chaos across state borders.

The essays that make up this issue of *Dædalus* and the upcoming Winter 2018 issue are the culmination of an eighteen-month American Academy of Arts and Sciences project on Civil Wars, Violence, and International Responses. The project participants have examined in depth the intellectual and policy disagreements over both the risks posed by intrastate violence and how best to treat it.

As the project's codirectors, we should note that our own perspectives on the potential impact of civil wars and appropriate international policy responses were deeply influenced by Al Qaeda's attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, and its aftermath.

As Karl Eikenberry relates:

That morning, American Airlines Flight 77, hijacked and piloted by terrorists, crashed into the Pentagon below my office located on the building's outer ring. The flight's passengers and crew perished in a jet-fuel inferno that simultaneously killed 125 civilian and military personnel on the ground and consumed part of the building. To that point, my knowledge of Afghanistan was limited. What I knew was, for the most part, based upon study during the Cold War of mujahideen tactics against the occupying Red Army and the fact the Taliban regime was hosting Osama Bin Laden and his murderous terrorist organization. But subsequent to that morning, my career path, like those of many of my colleagues, changed dramatically.

After almost three decades of operational and political-military assignments in China and East Asia, I would spend most of the next ten years in senior civilian and military positions related to the Afghanistan conflict (twice as a commander of coalition military

forces, as the U.S. ambassador, and as the deputy chairman of the NATO Military Committee in Brussels).

*Karl
Eikenberry
& Stephen D.
Krasner*

As conditions in the country slowly deteriorated and various policy approaches were validated or discredited, my understanding of the Afghan civil war and my recommended strategic responses changed.

As both a military commander and ambassador, I became directly acquainted with a variety of threats to Afghan stability, and to the extended region and beyond: international terrorism, massive narcocriminality, refugees (much later contributing to a populist backlash in parts of Europe), contagious disease (the reemergence of polio along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border), and potentially dangerous regional and major-power competition involving Pakistan, India, Iran, Russia, China, and the United States.

The difficulty of policy solutions became more painfully evident with each passing year. Building political and government institutions that incorrectly assumed shared national identities and rule-of-law norms proved problematic. Security assistance programs floundered due to the divergent interests of the principal (the leaders of the international military forces) and the agent (the commanders of the Afghan army and police forces and the civilian Afghan leadership).³ Enthusiastic advocates of development projects designed to rapidly expand the reach of the central government across the country were often defeated by geography, lack of knowledge, and local preferences for autonomy. Sincere and tireless efforts to achieve unity of effort among the major external actors – the United Nations, the European Union, NATO, and the United States – and to agree to a common plan of action with the Afghan government produced disappointing results due to the prohibitive transaction costs involved. In this, Afghanistan, I came to recognize, was not a unique case. The problems that afflicted that nation were shared by many other pol-

ities, including where external military intervention has been minimal.

Stephen Krasner recounts:

I arrived at the State Department a little more than a week before the 9/11 attacks. I had spent almost all of my professional life in academia and I was looking forward to exposure to the policy world. Like others, I expected that the administration of George W. Bush would be focused on domestic issues. The attacks on 9/11 changed all of that. Like my colleagues in the Policy Planning Bureau of the State Department, I looked on in disbelief as commercial airliners struck the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. I was commuting by bicycle and, by the time I left the State Department, smoke was already pouring out of the Pentagon. I biked over to the Potomac near the Memorial Bridge, which was as close as I could get. I did not know that the plane had struck the Pentagon near the office of my former student, then Brigadier General Eikenberry. I subsequently worked at the National Security Council, primarily on the Millennium Challenge Account, a new foreign assistance program, returned to Stanford, and then, when Condoleezza Rice became Secretary of State, arrived back at the Department as the Director of Policy Planning in 2005. It was then already clear to me that the Bush administration was committed to an ambitious state-building program that sought to address the root causes of terrorism by putting the countries of Afghanistan, the broader Middle East, and above all, Iraq, on the path to consolidated democracy.

It has become painfully evident over the last decade that this admirable objective was unreachable; that the path to Denmark, to consolidated democracy and high per capita income, is out of reach for many countries. Countries afflicted by civil conflict, such as Afghanistan and especially Iraq, sometimes precipitated or exacerbated by the engagement of major external powers, may need generations to establish stable inclusive po-

litical systems. Major powers and the international order could be upended by developments in war-torn countries in remote parts of the world. But different civil wars had different consequences. As the essays in these two volumes demonstrate, some consequences are more important than others and the opportunities for external state builders are limited.

With time for reflection, distance from Central and South Asia (both of us are now at Stanford University), and the opportunity to engage with leading scholars who have thought and written much about civil wars and policy responses, we attempted to place the Afghanistan conflict in a global context. We drew three conclusions.

First, before 9/11, the impact of civil strife in remote regions of Central Asia or the Middle East and North Africa on wealthy industrialized nations was unclear, despite several attempts by Al Qaeda to attack the United States. After 9/11, there was no longer any question about the potential scale and horror of the consequences.

Under certain circumstances, civil wars can threaten regional stability and prove dangerous to the major powers. Contagion, proxy warfare, and even black swan events are real possibilities, but estimating probabilities and assigning risks is art, not science. The complexity of the problem, however, should not lead policy-makers to ignore and dismiss the potential threats. During the height of the Cold War, mock travel posters in the United States depicted the annual May Day military parade in Moscow's Red Square with the wry words: *The Soviet Union... Visit Us Before We Visit You*. In the case of Afghanistan, Al Qaeda, enjoying sanctuary provided by a Taliban regime that held the upper hand in a bloody, protracted civil war, visited the United States first – with shocking results.

Moreover, while the short-term costs of intervention and treatment measures are

easy to calculate, the potential long-term costs of inaction are not, as the Rwandan genocide and still unfolding Syrian tragedy demonstrate.

Second, intervening powers usually fail when they ignore local political realities and set unrealistically ambitious goals. This is true not only for the most extreme cases in which the intervening actor uses extensive military force, but also for other efforts at state-building pursued with less-intrusive instruments, such as foreign aid or technical assistance. The promulgation of a well-written constitution and democratic elections do not spontaneously create the institutions and norms needed to change self-interested political behavior. Commanders of an army trained and equipped by foreign forces will often not share their patron's view of who constitutes the immediate and most dangerous threat. The notion that political and economic modernization can be sped up through surges of military forces and increased levels of foreign aid is akin to a farmer believing that ever larger applications of fertilizer and doses of water will invariably increase crop yields and bring harvest day nearer.

Third, ironically, the extreme difficulty of finding a solution in Afghanistan and several other conflicts in the Middle East has obscured an important fact: over the past thirty years, many externally brokered negotiated political settlements to civil wars, monitored and enforced through UN or regional-force peacekeeping operations, have achieved stability and security at relatively low cost. Security does not necessarily lead to the path of better governance and consolidated democracy. But the policy choice for those in capitals to make is not binary – invasion and occupation or nothing at all – it is determining what is feasible and realistic. Since the end of the Cold War, the international community has, in some cases, devel-

oped and applied treatment regimes that have lowered levels of intrastate violence and set the conditions for gradual political and economic development.⁴ Such development might or might not take place, but in some instances, external actors have at least been able to provide greater security. Disillusionment with failed U.S.-led state-building efforts in the first decade of this century has risked undermining less-expensive, more-limited and -tailored approaches that can produce modest results if the local circumstances are right. Security, especially if local actors recognize that they are in a hurting stalemate and accept the help of trusted third parties, is easier to provide than better governance and democracy.

Thus, with the support of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, we designed a study of civil wars that was, in part, motivated by our own experiences and research. The study encompasses self-contained civil strife, as well as conflicts involving the commitment of foreign military forces.

This enterprise has drawn upon the collaborative and iterative efforts of some thirty-five U.S. and international participants whose diverse academic and professional backgrounds include political science, global health, diplomacy, development, the military, and the media. Although the essays they have contributed to these two issues of *Daedalus* have to varying degrees been informed by our group's conversations during workshops at the House of the Academy in Cambridge and at Stanford University, the authors' works reflect their own analyses and ideas. Their essays contain a significant number of cross-references, but these do not imply intellectual consensus.

We organized our inquiry by addressing three overarching questions:

- 1) What is the scope of intrastate conflicts and civil wars, and to what extent is this attributable to domestic or international factors?

2) What types of threats emanate from state civil wars that might jeopardize U.S. and global security?

3) What policy options are available to the United States, major and regional powers, and the international community to deal with such threats?

This first volume, “Civil Wars & Global Disorder: Threats & Opportunities,” comprises two sections: “Civil Conflicts: Contexts & Risks” and “The Difficulty of Solutions.” The essays describe the nature and causative factors of civil wars in the modern era, examine the security risks posed by high levels of intrastate violence, and explore the challenges confronting external actors intervening to end the fighting and seek a political settlement.

The second volume, appearing as the Winter 2018 issue of *Dædalus*, is titled “Ending Civil Wars: Constraints & Possibilities” and also consists of two parts: “Norms & Domestic Factors” and “Policy Prescriptions.” The essays in this collection consider the impediments to ending wars of internal disorder when norms such as national identity or commitment to rule of law are not shared by contending elites, or when rebels are fighting for a transnational, divine cause and not simply the seizure of state power. The remaining essays focus on the “what to do” and offer a variety of recommendations to policy-makers. The volume concludes with our own reflections on the risks and possible treatments of civil wars.

The boundaries between the two volumes and sections, of course, are not exact. Almost all authors write about risks, the difficulty of solutions, and policy prescriptions. Given the complexity and interconnectivity of the topics discussed, and the need to give authors sufficient latitude to develop fully their arguments, we avoided fixation on typology. Still, for the most part, the main themes of each essay align with the sections in which they appear.

Our project will continue beyond the publication of the Fall 2017 and Winter 2018 issues of *Dædalus*. Beginning in October 2017, contributing authors will participate in a series of public discussions at U.S. institutions of higher learning and think tanks, dialogues with U.S. government and international organizations, and workshops in countries that have experienced (and are still experiencing) civil wars. In fact, the project’s case studies – Sri Lanka, Ethiopia and its use of buffer zones, the Western Balkans, and Colombia – and the rich analyses our authors draw from conflicts in the Middle East and Africa are shaping our international engagement agenda. The feedback acquired during these various activities will later serve as the basis for a policy-prescriptive occasional paper published under the auspices of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Before briefly introducing the essays in this volume, a comment on the major insights gained from the deliberations of the project participants over two gatherings and from the essays they prepared. As indicated above, we did not seek to reach a consensus, but instead to categorize the issues (risks, policy prescriptions, and implementation) and encourage diverse analysis from different academic and professional perspectives. Nevertheless, our major debates – ending in both agreements and disagreements – often related to four questions, some previously alluded to.

First, is intrastate warfare increasing in scope and does it threaten international security? The proliferation of civil wars spearheaded by militant jihadists in the greater Middle East cautions against making sweeping generalizations about global trends. At the same time, there is something new here: not since the Cold War have we experienced rebels in many countries avowedly inspired by a coherent transnational ideology. Operating with unprec-

edented access to social media and digital recruitment, their reach is truly global in nature. Moreover, as Tanisha Fazal explains in her contribution to the second volume, insurgents fighting for a divine cause are quite different from those who fight to seize control of a state so that they can enjoy the perquisites that come with sovereignty.

At the same time, while the consequences of today's and future civil wars do not rise to the level of existential threat associated with contemporary warfare between major powers with nuclear arsenals, there are many plausible scenarios that could pose grave risks to denizens in far-flung parts of the world. Transnational terrorists can effectively terrorize. We have seen that unanticipated large migrant flows contribute to a declining commitment to open and inclusive political orders in liberal democracies. Religionist rebels demonstrating alternatives to the current world political system inspire adherents in their self-proclaimed caliphates and beyond. Lethal pandemics can spread across borders from a war zone in which there is no capable government with which to partner, with the only alternatives being border quarantine or direct intervention, both of which require a massive and intrusive military intervention. However, the vexing problem for policy-makers is that these possibilities all emerge from contingencies that cannot be predicted with any degree of confidence. Effectively planning for low-probability or black-swan events is problematic and politically difficult to justify to taxpayers.

Second, how will the continuing diffusion of economic wealth and the changing tides of globalization impact the willingness of and ways in which major world and regional powers respond to civil wars? If geopolitical spheres of influence reminiscent of the nineteenth-century European-dominated international order or the Cold War era reemerge, then we can anticipate more regionally tailored respons-

es. Such a development might come with both opportunities and risks. The greater interest and enhanced ability of regionally powerful state actors to respond to political crises in their own neighborhood might generate more indigenous solutions with credible enforcement mechanisms.

However, regional powers can only be effective if more distant major powers are supportive. If major powers defend different sides in a civil war, they can preclude the emergence of battlefield deadlocks that can facilitate negotiated settlements. The will for collective action necessary to mount even modest United Nations peacekeeping missions might decrease. Barry Posen points out in his essay in this issue that, as the distribution of power becomes more multilateral, norms of political mediation and peacekeeping to deal with civil wars developed since the late 1980s may be abandoned. This possibility is suggested by the fragmented and generally anemic international response to the Syrian tragedy.

Third, to what degree is the success of foreign interventions in countries that are torn by civil strife dependent on the alignment of interests of external actors with those of national elites? As cited earlier, our own experiences have led us to conclude that this is the central but most underappreciated problem faced by external actors desperate to find local power brokers able and willing to adopt their policy agenda.

Political elites in poorer countries torn by civil war are almost always members of exclusive orders; their primary objective is to stay in power. This requires the care for and feeding of those who provide them with essential support. Most important, they must have enough command over those who control the instruments of violence so that they cannot be overthrown. Political leaders in exclusive or rent-seeking orders are focused on avoiding the loss of status, prestige, money, and even life anticipated after their removal from office.

Introduction These leaders will regard efforts to hold free and fair elections, for instance, or to eliminate corruption as existential threats. Even more-modest policies, like reforming customs services, which are often revenue sources for elites in exclusive orders, might be resisted.⁵

This generates a difficult conundrum for external powers that only have leverage if domestic elites share the same objectives or are highly dependent on foreign assistance that external actors can credibly threaten to withdraw. In practice, key objectives are infrequently shared; and while foreign aid dependency is often the case, threats to terminate such aid are rarely credible. Realistic third-party policy options usually consist of a menu of bad choices fraught with risks. Successful policy must begin with recognition that there are limited opportunities for external state-building.

Fourth and last, when and how is it possible to end high levels of intrastate violence on terms that deliver sustainable physical and economic security, and a modicum of political freedom to the majority of the population? External actors might often be faced with painful trade-offs. This question is addressed in almost all essays found in our two volumes of *Dædalus*, and especially in the next issue.

As noted earlier, recent U.S. and collective failures to treat adequately the most severe cases should not lead to an abandonment of remedies proven to deal effectively with less-acute maladies. There are proven policy options short of neglect. There may be opportunities to create islands of excellence, especially in areas of limited statehood.⁶ Prioritized and sequenced building of institutions leading to more accountable political systems is possible under some conditions.⁷ Yet, in many cases, it might be impossible to establish political systems that are accountable to a large part of the population. Reaching the destination of “good enough gover-

nance” may disappoint those unrealistically hoping to quickly arrive in Denmark, but is much preferable to the permanent state of vulnerability and lawlessness that characterizes swaths of countries afflicted by large-scale intrastate violence. The extent to which relatively low-cost strategies have reduced the worst excesses of civil war over the past three decades is not generally well understood.

This issue of *Dædalus* opens by examining how civil conflicts are situated in the current international system and identifying major associated risks. James Fearon’s essay provides a comprehensive overview of the problem of civil war in the post-1945 international system. With meticulous use of empirical evidence, he describes global patterns and trends over the whole period, and then sketches an explanation for the spread of civil war up to the early 1990s and the partial recession since then. He argues that the United Nations and major-power policy responses since the end of the Cold War have contributed to the subsequent decline in the outbreak of civil wars.

However, as Fearon writes, “the spread of civil war and state collapse within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region over the last fifteen years has posed one set of problems that the current international policy repertoire cannot address well, and highlights a second, deeper problem whose effects are gradually worsening and for which there does not appear to be any good solution within the constraints of the present UN system.” The first problem is that compared with conflicts in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America, civil war and state collapse in MENA more directly affect the major powers, and possibly international peace and security more broadly. Moreover, MENA conflicts resist the standard treatment model of mediation, third-party peacekeeping operations, and aid programs. The second problem,

manifestly evident in the U.S. experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, is that third-party efforts to build functional and self-sustaining states following state collapse due to civil war, misrule, or invasion have mainly been failures. Fearon provides an excellent foundation for the subsequent essays in both volumes.

In their contribution, Bruce Jones and Stephen Stedman contend that there is no global crisis of failed states and civil wars. Instead, they argue that the particular crisis in the greater Middle East has disrupted stability in that region and has had three repercussions for today's international order: hundreds of thousands of refugees seeking asylum in Europe, where immigration politics have fed the failure of international humanitarian cooperation; the success of ISIS in conquering parts of Syria and Iraq, its ability to metastasize in countries far away from the fighting, and its capacity to inspire terrorist attacks in Europe; and the failure of the major powers and international institutions to manage the conflicts, with external military intervention supporting indiscriminate wars of attrition.

They maintain that the civil wars of the Middle East and the failure of the international order have contributed to a narrative of failing global cooperation. Jones and Stedman believe that this narrative has fueled but is not the cause of the greater threat to international order: populist backlash in the United States and Europe.

Stewart Patrick's essay is the first in a series of contributions that investigate specific threats that emanate from states that have collapsed or are experiencing or recovering from large-scale violence. Patrick persuasively writes that sweeping characterizations of states mired in civil wars as existential threats to the United States and broader global security are not warranted. He notes that under certain circumstances, countries experiencing or recovering from internal conflict can generate negative "spillovers"

of significant concern – including terrorism, crime, humanitarian crises, and infectious disease – and, as Syria shows, can undermine regional stability.

Patrick suggests that the connection between internal disorder and transnational threat is highly contingent on an array of factors and conditions. Patrick's non-exhaustive list of these includes "the nature and capabilities of the governing regime, the presence of 'alternatively governed' spaces, the nature of the underlying conflict and its duration and intensity, the existence of illicit commodities in high international demand, the country's geographic location and integration into the world economy, and the influence of powerful external state actors." He concludes that it is the moral considerations – the "suffering of strangers" more than any spillover – that should motivate U.S. and global concern with war-torn states.

Writing on the interrelationships between civil wars and terrorism, Martha Crenshaw posits that when rebels employ terrorism, civil wars can become more consequential and harder to resolve. Since the 1980s, jihadism has mobilized rebels and secessionists, outside entrepreneurs, foreign fighters (and their funders and trainers), and organizers of transnational and domestic terrorism. Crenshaw argues that "these activities are integral to the jihadist trend, representing overlapping and conjoined strands of the same ideological current, which in turn reflects internal division and dissatisfaction within the Arab world and within Islam."

She notes, however, that jihadism is neither unitary nor monolithic. Her essay carefully traces the competing power centers and divergent ideological orthodoxies encompassed by jihadism, beginning with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. And because different jihadist actors emphasize different priorities and strategies – they disagree, for example, on whether the

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Introduction “near” or the “far” enemy should take precedence – the relationship between jihadist terrorism and civil war is far from constant. Crenshaw also highlights the major policy implications of this reasoning. She writes that as jihadists suffer military defeats in civil wars, they may revert increasingly to transnational terrorism, with potential negative feedback loops: “Terrorism against outside powers can provoke military intervention, which not only intensifies civil war, but also sparks more terrorism against occupying forces, their local allies, and their home countries.” She poses the critical question: can powerful states resist terrorist provocation?

Paul Wise and Michele Barry, both medical doctors with extensive field experience in violence-prone developing countries, analyze the relationship between epidemics and intrastate warfare. Their discussion is premised on the recognition that infectious pandemics can threaten the international order, and that state collapse and civil wars may elevate the risk that pandemics will break out.

They identify three related mechanisms of central concern: “1) the possibility that civil wars can elevate the risk that an infectious outbreak with pandemic potential will emerge; 2) the chance that civil wars can reduce outbreak surveillance and control capacities, resulting in silent global dissemination; and 3) the potential for infectious outbreaks emerging in areas plagued by civil conflict to generate complex political and security challenges that can threaten traditional notions of national sovereignty and create pressure for international intervention.” Wise and Barry elucidate one of the most important conclusions of this project: that civil wars increase the probability for global pandemics, and that global pandemics are a challenge that even the most developed countries, with the most advanced health care systems, ignore at their own peril.

In her essay, Sarah Kenyon Lischer examines how one tragic output of civil war – large-scale displacement crises – can become deeply enmeshed in the politics, security, and economics of the conflict. She details how refugee and internally displaced populations can exacerbate concerns about regional destabilization. With the Syrian civil war, for example, the neighboring host states of Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon bear the brunt of the refugee crisis, while European states seek to prevent further encroachment by Middle Eastern asylum seekers.

Lischer asserts that policy-makers should not view host state security and refugee security as unrelated or opposing factors. Rather, refugee protection and state stability are linked: “Risks of conflict are higher when refugees live in oppressive settings, lack legal income-generation options, and are denied education for their youth. The dangers related to the global refugee crisis interact with many other threats that emanate from civil wars and weak states, such as fragile governments, rebel and terrorist group activity, and religious or ethnic fragmentation.”

Vanda Felbab-Brown explores the often oversimplified relationship between organized crime, illicit economies, violence, and international order. In analyzing the range of possible responses by states and the international community to the nexus of criminal economies and civil wars, insurgencies, and terrorism, her essay highlights how “premature and ill-conceived government efforts to combat illicit economies can have counterproductive effects and hamper efforts to suppress militancy.” She adds that flawed policy approaches can themselves generate international spillovers of criminality. Felbab-Brown emphasizes the complexity of the relationship between transnational criminality and civil wars, noting that the conflict-crime nexus can involve “defeating militants without

suppressing illicit economies, suppressing crime and illicit economies without ending conflict, and state co-optation of illicit economies.”

The second half of this volume highlights the difficulties of devising and effectively implementing responses to the threats identified in the preceding essays. Hendrik Spruyt contends that adherence to Westphalian principles, in which authority is defined territorially, has contributed to the decline of interstate war. That war makes the state and the state makes war is a logic of state-building that does not apply in many contemporary situations. Conversely, applying Westphalian principles and norms to states that gained their independence since 1945 has contributed to the frequency and intensity of civil conflicts. A fundamental problem is that the norms of Westphalian sovereignty, which protect the geographic integrity of the state, are in tension with the inability of many states to effectively govern their own territories. Spruyt examines how the norms of self-determination, non-interference, and *uti possidetis* (that newly recognized states should maintain inherited, colonial borders), in particular, provide poor guidelines for responding to civil wars. Rather, Spruyt argues that the character of the combatants’ challenge to fundamental Westphalian principles should guide policy responses. For example, civil wars seeking concessions by the extant government warrant a different treatment from secessionist civil wars. This perspective illustrates how, in some contexts, the international legal regime may choose to break with the principle of *uti possidetis*, with partition being the most effective solution to a conflict; if partition, which usually requires the acceptance of all affected parties, is impossible, federalism may be the best available alternative.

Stephen Biddle analyzes the use of “small-footprint” security force assistance (SFA) to attempt to stabilize weak states,

which has emerged as an alternative to U.S. ground-force commitments. He finds that effective SFA is much harder to implement in practice than often assumed, and less viable as a substitute for large unilateral troop deployments. He makes a strong case that for the United States, in particular, the achievable upper bound is usually modest, and even this is possible only if policy is intrusive and conditional, which it rarely is.

Biddle builds his argument on the understanding of SFA as a principal-agent relationship: “The conditions under which the United States provides SFA commonly involve large interest misalignments between the provider (the principal) and the recipient (the agent), difficult monitoring challenges, and difficult conditions for enforcement: a combination that typically leaves principals with limited real leverage and that promotes inefficiency in aid provision.” Overcoming these challenges is not impossible, but the combination of necessary conditions has not been a common feature of U.S. security force assistance in the modern era, nor is it likely to become so in the future: “U.S. policy-makers can design SFA programs to be intrusive and conditional, but it is much harder to create political interest alignment and this is often absent.”

Will Reno’s essay looks into the persistent conflict and prolonged state institutional collapse that lead to what he terms “fictional states” and “atomized societies.” He focuses on the domestic factors that cause some states to break down. This phenomenon, he explains, is rooted in decades of personalist rule and the failure of mid-twentieth-century state-building projects, problems long considered particular to sub-Saharan Africa. Reno notes, however, that developments in parts of the Middle East and Central Asia show that this connection between a particular type of authoritarian rule and state failure, which produces a distinctive type of multisided warfare,

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Introduction is not exclusive to Africa. Like Spruyt, he points to the tensions between the accepted norms of the Westphalian system and the logic of poor governance, contributing to civil wars in many polities.

Aila Matanock and Miguel García-Sánchez provide a different regional perspective, examining the 2016 Colombian popular plebiscite and the unique challenges posed by ending war with a negotiated settlement. Conflicts increasingly occur in democratic states, and voters have sometimes been directly involved in the process in an effort to overcome elite divisions. Yet, as Matanock and García-Sánchez point out, according to evidence from the 2016 popular plebiscite in Colombia, which sought direct voter approval of a peace process between the government, leftist guerrilla groups, and right-wing paramilitary bands, referenda and other tools of direct democracy seem to amplify elite divisions, and therefore may not be useful mechanisms to strengthen peace processes. They postulate that focusing instead on traditional elite-led negotiations that seek to satisfy each faction may have a higher chance of producing signed settlements that both sides will adhere to. However, the Colombian case also suggests some alternative forms of inclusivity, which could increase the legitimacy of the process and thereby improve the odds of successful implementation.

Concluding this volume, Barry Posen asks how a multipolar system might complicate future international management of civil wars. He describes how the “policy science” of civil wars, which emerged in the early 1990s, included deeply embedded assumptions about the nature of the international political system: “It was taken for granted that the United States would remain the strongest power by a wide margin, and that it would lead a liberal coalition that included virtually all the other strong states in the world.” Posen observes that now, though the United States is likely to

remain much more powerful than its global competitors, several consequential powers have emerged to challenge U.S. leadership and produce a multipolar system.

Further, as the top of the international system begins to even out, the influence of middle powers may also grow. He suggests that “this new constellation of power seems likely to magnify disagreements about how states suffering civil wars should be stabilized, limit preventive diplomacy, produce external intervention that will make for longer and more destructive wars, and render settlements more difficult to police.”

As mentioned above, the next issue of *Dædalus*, forthcoming in winter 2018, is titled “Ending Civil Wars: Constraints & Possibilities” and will include our project’s remaining essays.

ENDNOTES

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¹ See James D. Fearon, "Civil War & the Current International System," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017).

² The authors thank Barry Posen for this insight.

³ The authors draw from Stephen Biddle in using the principal-agent construct to describe the problem.

⁴ See Richard Gowan and Stephen John Stedman, "The International Regime for Treating Civil War, 1988 – 2017," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).

⁵ Stephen Krasner, "Why We Need Foreign Aid," *The American Interest*, June 19, 2017, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2017/06/19/need-foreign-aid/>.

⁶ See Thomas Risse and Eric Stollenwerk, "Limited Statehood Does Not Equal Civil War," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).

⁷ See Clare Lockhart, "Sovereignty Strategies: Enhancing Core Governance Functions as a Postconflict & Conflict-Prevention Measure," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).

Civil War & the Current International System

James D. Fearon

Abstract: This essay sketches an explanation for the global spread of civil war up to the early 1990s and the partial recession since then, arguing that some of the decline is likely due to policy responses by major powers working principally through the United Nations. Unfortunately, the spread of civil war and state collapse to the Middle East and North Africa region in the last fifteen years has posed one set of problems that the current policy repertoire cannot address well – for several reasons, conflicts in this region are resistant to “treatment” by international peacekeeping operations – and has highlighted a second, deeper problem whose effects are gradually worsening and for which there does not appear to be any good solution within the constraints of the present UN system. That is, for many civil war-torn or “postconflict” countries, third parties do not know how to help locals build a self-governing, self-financing state within UN-recognized borders or, in some cases, any borders.

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This essay provides an overview of the problem of civil war in the post-1945 international system. I first describe global patterns and trends over the whole period, and next sketch an explanation for the spread of civil war up to the early 1990s and the partial recession since then. There is reasonable evidence that United Nations and major-power policy responses since the end of the Cold War have contributed to the global decline in civil war since the early 1990s. However, the spread of civil war and state collapse to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in the last fifteen years has posed one set of problems that the current policy repertoire cannot address well, and has highlighted a second, deeper problem whose effects are gradually worsening and for which there does not appear to be any good solution within the constraints of the present UN system.

The first problem is that compared with conflicts in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America, civil war and state collapse in the MENA region more directly

affect the major powers, and possibly international peace and security more broadly. Third-party peacekeeping operations and a panoply of associated aid programs have been deployed to “treat” civil war–torn countries elsewhere, with a measure of success. In most cases, however, it will be impossible to apply this treatment model in the MENA region due to higher costs and other obstacles related to nationalism, the transnational jihadi movement, and the intensity of conflict among the region’s biggest powers.

The second problem is that third-party efforts to build effective, self-sustaining states in countries where states have collapsed due to civil war, misrule, or invasion have mainly been failures. This is painfully evident in the U.S. experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq. To some degree, it appears to generalize to the experience of postconflict peacekeeping operations and foreign aid efforts in a number of low-income countries outside of the MENA region. Third parties do not know how to bring about the construction of self-governing states that can support themselves financially within UN-approved boundaries.

A common misconception is that the contemporary prevalence of civil war is largely a post–Cold War phenomenon. Figure 1 shows that the number of civil wars in progress each year increased steadily throughout the Cold War, already reaching levels in the 1980s greater than at present. There was a rapid increase around the time of the end of the Soviet Union, a spike that contributed to the perception that widespread civil war was a new, post–Cold War international problem. But after reaching a high point of forty-eight ongoing wars in 1992, the prevalence of civil war has actually declined quite a bit, leveling out over the last fifteen years between the high twenties and low thirties.

The UN state system expanded a great deal over this whole period, but we see ba-

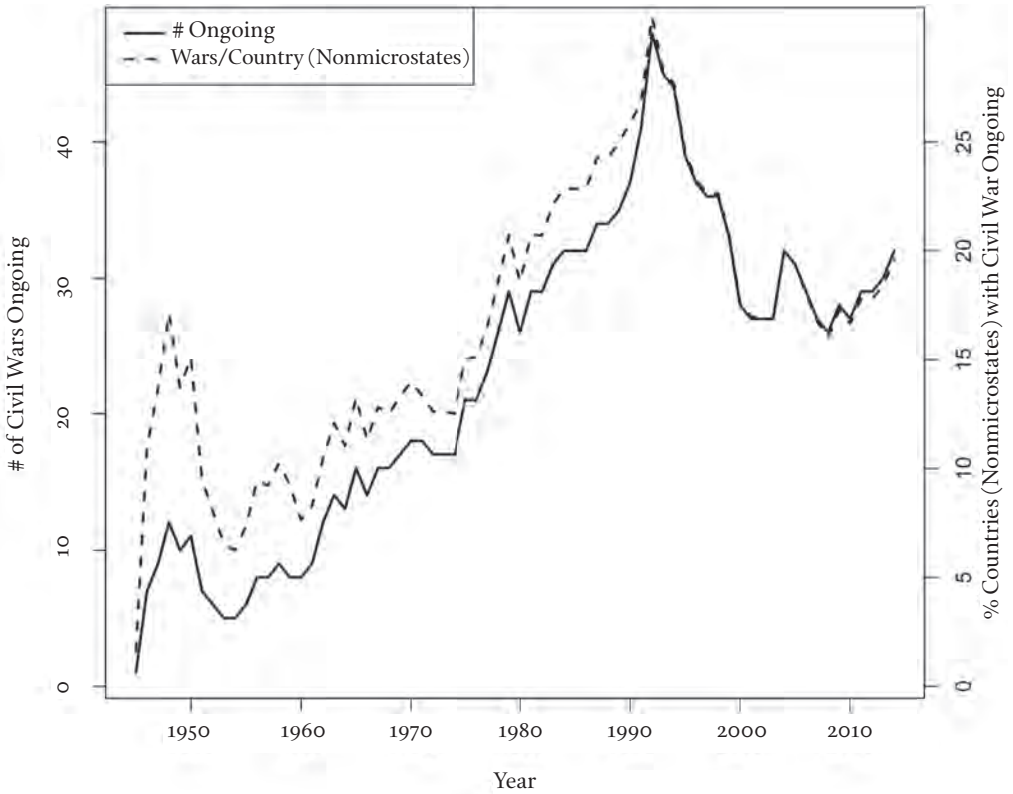
sically the same trends if we consider the share of independent countries with civil wars (the dotted line and right axis in Figure 1, calculated omitting microstates that had populations smaller than half a million in the year 2000). It is also clear from these data that “prevalence” is the right word. Major civil conflict has affected roughly one in six nonmicrostates each year since 2000 and almost one in five today; at the peak in 1992, it was nearly one in three.¹

Figure 2’s panels break down the trends by region. These mirror the global pattern for the two most conflict-prone regions, Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, and also for Latin America. The most striking exception is the MENA region, which roughly mirrors the other high-conflict regions until around 2003, but has seen a large increase from three wars in 2002 to twelve ongoing wars in 2014.² All other regions had major declines in civil conflict after the early 1990s.

From the steady increase after 1945 shown in Figure 1, one might suppose that civil wars were breaking out more frequently over time. This is not so. Civil wars have begun over the whole period at a rate of about 2.2 new conflicts per year on average, with at best a very slight trend downward.³ The reason for the impressive increase in prevalence up to the early 1990s is that the rate at which civil wars have *ended* has been consistently lower, averaging 1.77 per year. Suppose that each morning you pour a random amount of water into a tank and then remove a different random amount of water in the afternoon, with the average amount going in greater than the average amount coming out. The tank will gradually fill up. This same sort of dynamic is behind the gradual increase and the contemporary prevalence of civil war in the post-1945 international system.

A related implication is that the average duration of civil wars in progress has increased over time. The international system has been accumulating long-running con-

Figure 1
Civil Wars by Year, 1945 – 2014



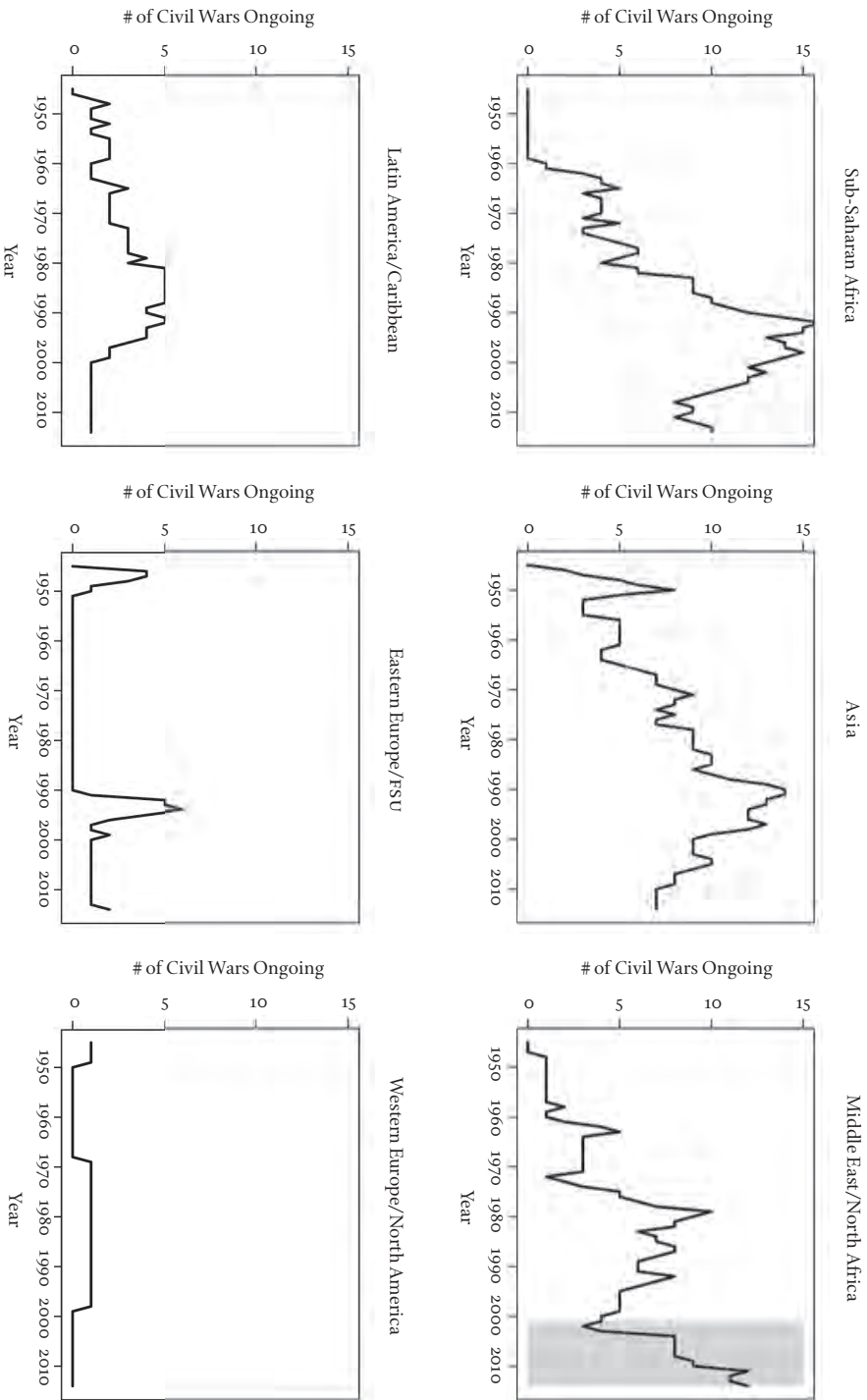
Source: Updated version of the civil war list described in James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review* 97 (1) (February 2003): 75–90. Available at <http://fearonresearch.stanford.edu/>.

flicts. Figure 3 shows that the average duration of civil wars in progress is currently greater than twenty years, reflecting some very long-running, intractable conflicts in Afghanistan, Myanmar, the Philippines, India, Turkey, and Somalia, among others. Even median durations of wars in progress have climbed to remarkably high levels: it was nineteen years in 2010 and fourteen years in 2014 (the recent fall mainly reflecting the entry of a number of new conflicts in the wake of the Arab Spring).

Three final observations concern types of civil conflicts. The proportion of civil wars

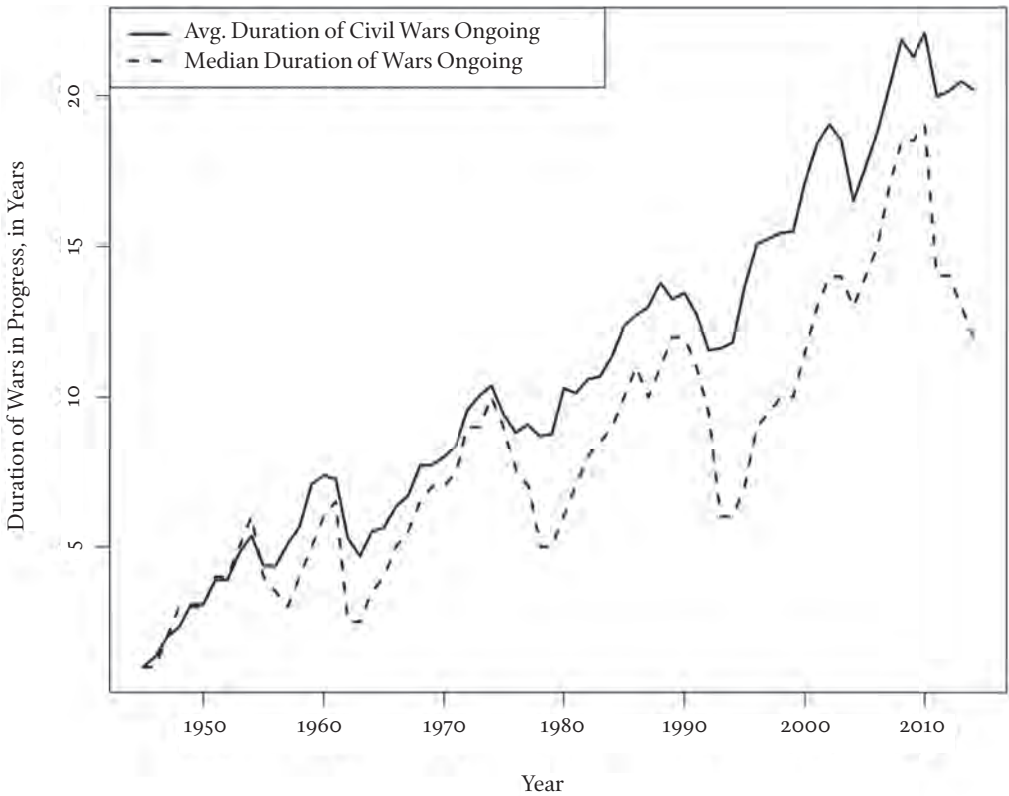
in which rebels have aimed to capture the central government, as opposed to winning greater autonomy or regional secession, has been fairly stable since the 1960s, varying without clear trend between 50 and 60 percent. The proportion in which the combatants have been organized primarily along ethnic rather than ideological lines has increased somewhat over the whole period since World War II, from around 60 percent in the early years to around 70 or 75 percent since the end of the Cold War.⁴ A much more striking change has been the remarkable increase in the share of conflicts

Figure 2
Civil Wars by Year and Region, 1945 – 2014



Source: Author's coding, available at <http://fearonresearch.stanford.edu/>.

Figure 3
Accumulation of Long-Running Conflicts, 1945 – 2014



Source: Author's coding, available at <http://fearonresearch.stanford.edu/>.

that involve avowedly jihadist rebel groups, from around 5 percent in 1990 to more than 40 percent in 2014 (see Figure 4).

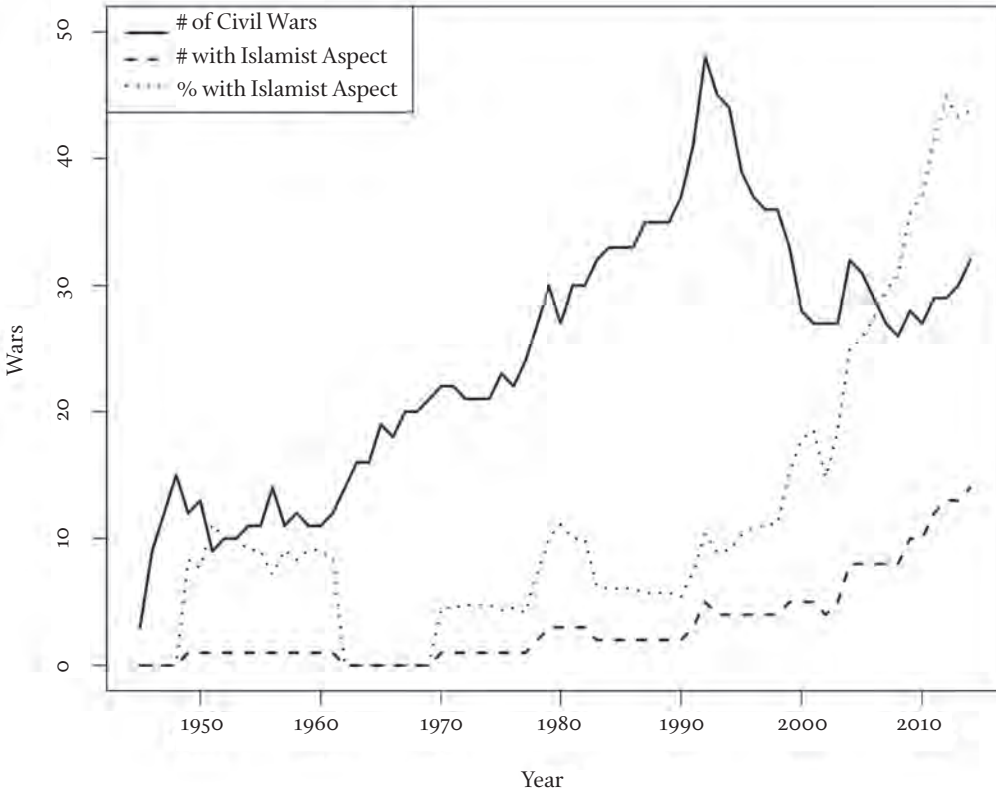
The spread and prevalence of civil war in the post-1945 UN system is related to the persistent gap between the rates at which civil wars have broken out and ended. But why have civil wars been easier to start than to end? This section sketches a two-part answer. First, decolonization produced an international system in which most states are former colonies with weak state structures and good conditions for guerrilla warfare or competing local militias. Second, these

forms of armed conflict can be highly robust, so that civil wars are hard to end militarily. And they are also hard to end politically because stable power-sharing agreements between armed groups are extremely difficult to arrange within states.

On June 26, 1945, when the UN Charter was signed, there were sixty-four independent states, fifty of which joined that day. As a result of successive waves of decolonization and the breakups of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the UN system has tripled to 193 member states at present. We have an international system composed of many relatively small and administratively,

Figure 4
Growth in Wars with a Significant Jihadi Presence, 1945 – 2014

James D.
Fearon



Source: Author's coding, available at <http://fearonresearch.stanford.edu/>.

financially, and politically weak states. The median UN member today has a population of about 8.1 million, a bit smaller than New Jersey's and more than one million fewer than that of the Chicago metropolitan area. Considering the 167 nonmicrostates, the median country has a population of 10.7 million; (approximate) examples include Somalia, Bolivia, and Haiti. Half of all UN member states are former colonies that gained independence since 1960, and more than two-thirds gained independence after 1945.

The colonial powers built state apparatuses in their colonies primarily to facil-

itate cash crop and natural resource extraction via a capital city, a few roads, and a port where possible. Administration often barely extended to rural peripheries. With the backstop of imperial militaries removed by decolonization, the option to try to use force to capture political control either at the center of a new state or in a region became more attractive for ambitious or abused would-be rebel groups. Postindependence leaders have – most of the time successfully – used state revenues and offices to buy supporting coalitions, reducing the risk of coup attempts and rebellions. But positive shocks to the relative strength

of potential rebels versus a central government sometimes occur. These shocks create windows of opportunity to try to seize power or at least get an armed organization over a threshold of military viability against what are often chronically weak government forces.⁵

For example, the collapse of the Gaddafi regime in Libya in 2011 led to a flow of arms and fighters to northern Mali, providing a positive shock to insurgent capabilities that, in combination with postcoup weakness of the government in Bamako, made for civil war onset. In Iraq, the U.S. invasion and destruction of Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime created a power vacuum and motivating principle for multiple armed groups to form and seek local or, looking to the longer run, national control. In Syria, the mass demonstrations sparked by the Arab Spring created a window of opportunity for the formation of armed rebel groups, spurred on by the aggressive repression of an Assad regime that saw no prospects for stable and safe power-sharing with a moderate opposition.

Once an armed rebel group gets over the threshold of military viability in a developing country with good conditions for insurgency, civil war can be extremely difficult to end. Civil wars end either by military victory or with a power-sharing agreement. The latter may take the form of greater regional autonomy provisions in the case of autonomy-seeking rebel groups, or the sharing of political and military positions by explicit agreement, or an electoral process in the case of wars fought over a central government.

In civil wars fought over a central government, stable power-sharing deals are hard to reach and implement in the absence of long-term, credible third-party commitments to enforce them.⁶ Each side has good reason to fear that the other would try to grab full control any chance it got and then use the full power of state forces against an

effectively disarmed and exposed losing side. For example, the heart of the problem in the Syrian war has been that Assad and his supporters realistically fear that diluting their control of the Syrian military in any power-sharing deal would create an unacceptable risk of genocide against them: even relatively moderate Sunni opposition figures cannot credibly commit that greater opposition power would not unintentionally head in the direction of control by more extreme factions. Likewise, if opposition forces were to agree to a deal with Assad that gave them no real hold in the state's military, Assad could not credibly commit not to use the military to punish and secure himself against future trouble from current opposition forces.

Power-sharing deals as means to end autonomy-seeking civil wars are more feasible because powers can be divided between territorially distinct central and regional institutions. Even so, central government fears that regional rebels would escalate autonomy demands from their stronger position and institutional base can make autonomy-seeking civil wars difficult to end via negotiated settlement.

These considerations help to explain a depressing regularity: A large majority of center-seeking civil wars since 1945, and about half of the autonomy-seeking conflicts, have ended by military victory rather than with significant negotiated power-sharing deals.⁷ Further, military victories, the alternative to power-sharing deals, are usually hard to come by when the mode of fighting is either guerrilla warfare or conflict among urban and semiurban militias in the context of largely collapsed central governments. Some of the strongest and most competent militaries in the world have struggled with guerrilla conflicts without much success. It is not surprising that less well-financed militaries with much worse command-and-control problems would struggle even more and

cause even more killing of noncombatants, which can in turn help insurgents with their recruitment efforts.

How have other states and nonstate actors responded to the spread of civil war and the concomitant weakening of formal state structures? There was hardly any collective response until the end of the Cold War “unfroze” the UN Security Council. In the 1990s, the Security Council rapidly assumed the role of the main international institution for coordinating major power and international community responses to the newly discovered – or newly actionable – problem of civil war.

Figure 5 plots the number of UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) in the field each year. It shows a rapid increase from an average of less than four per year before 1989 – the year of the Namibian PKO UNTAG, which began an era of cooperation among the five permanent members of the Security Council on PKOs – to an apparent steady state of around seventeen missions per year since 1993. Most of the PKOs before 1989 were deployed to facilitate ceasefires or other agreements ending interstate wars, whereas since then, almost all PKO mandates have addressed peacekeeping or “peacemaking” in civil war-torn countries.

Peacekeeping operations can be understood as a central part of an “international regime” that has developed since around 1990 to address the problem of civil war in the UN system.⁸ Their central logic is to try to make power-sharing arrangements – usually including postconflict elections – more feasible by providing third-party monitoring and enforcement capability to address credible commitment problems, like those outlined in the last section. Peacekeeping forces have deployed to oversee and monitor disarmament processes, to help implement postconflict elections, and often implicitly to provide security guarantees for new governments and former com-

batants. In some cases, peacekeeping operations began as or morphed into military operations against rebel groups, on behalf of a flimsy peace agreement or an extremely weak formal state (for example in Cambodia, Bosnia, Sierra Leone, and Mali).

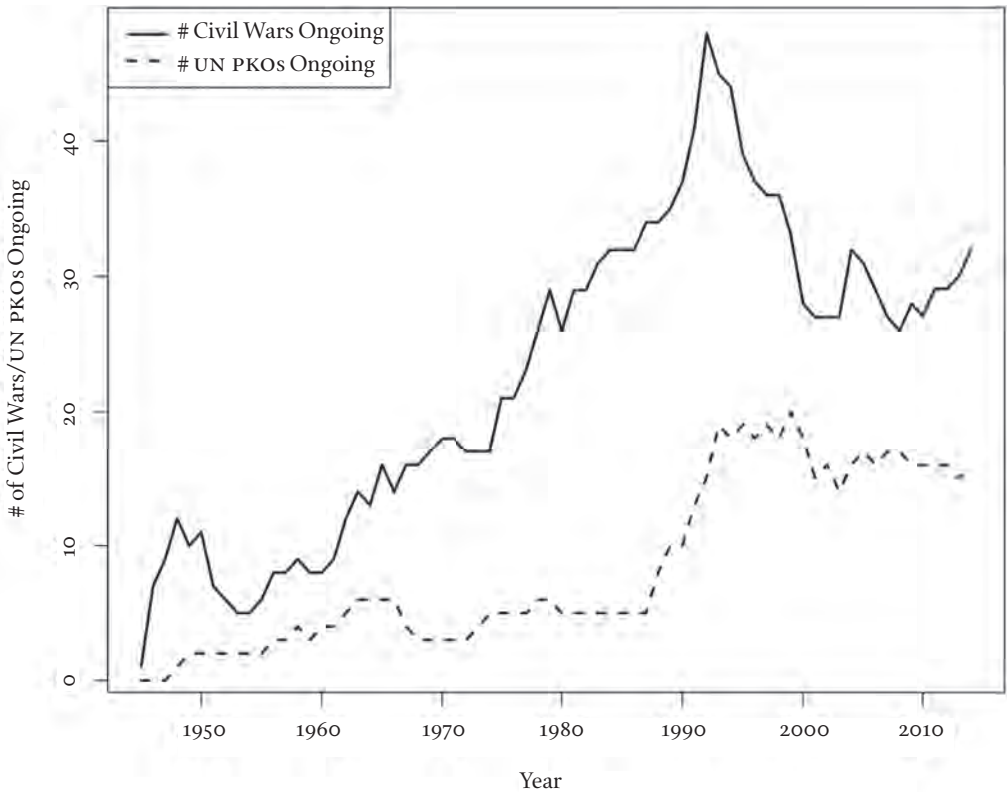
The international regime for civil war goes well beyond PKOs, however. They are supported and supplemented by the work and money of a host of intergovernmental, regional, and nongovernmental organizations, aid agencies, donor conferences, and election monitoring and human rights organizations – all with programming and intervention theories developed for civil war-torn and “postconflict” countries. International norm entrepreneurs have also been active and somewhat successful in this area, as illustrated by the UN General Assembly’s vote to accept the responsibility to protect doctrine in 2005, and the development of a system of international criminal tribunals and courts focused on human rights abuses and crimes committed mainly in or around civil wars.

The PKO-based international regime for the “treatment” of civil wars has been roundly criticized for (what are argued to be) a number of high-profile and disastrous failures. Notably, in Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Eastern Congo there have been massacres, even genocide, under the noses of inadequately manned or mandated PKO troops. PKO personnel have moreover repeatedly engaged in sexual exploitation and abuse of locals and, in Haiti, caused a deadly cholera epidemic.⁹

At the same time, there is a strong case that, overall, the “PKO-plus” treatment has done a great amount of good for relatively small cost. Although they get much less media attention, quite a few missions are plausibly judged as largely or even highly successful. A number of studies have found that even though PKO missions on average go to relatively hard cases for maintaining postconflict peace, PKO treatment is asso-

James D. Fearon

Figure 5
Civil Wars and UN PKOs by Year, 1945 – 2014



Source: Author's coding, available at <http://fearonresearch.stanford.edu/>.

ciated with significantly longer peace duration after conflict.¹⁰ While it is difficult to be sure, it is plausible that a nontrivial amount of the post-1992 decline in civil war seen in Figure 1 is due to the UN system's response through PKOs and related interventions.¹¹ A remarkable 41 percent of the civil wars that have ended since 1991 (twenty-one out of fifty-one) have had UN PKOs. This does not mean that the PKO (and associated postconflict aid regime) caused or secured a durable peace in each case. But the evidence from comparisons of similar "treated" and untreated cases suggests that PKOs probably lower conflict recurrence

and may increase the feasibility of peace deals that would be less likely without the third-party monitoring and enforcement instruments of the broader regime.¹²

Obviously, though, all is not well. Far from it, and the problems are deeper and more varied than can be gauged simply by charting the number and magnitude of ongoing civil wars. In this section, I briefly characterize two issues. One is an intractable problem that has become increasingly evident over time. The second is a relatively new cluster of problems associated with the spread of civil war and state col-

lapse to the Middle East and North Africa region indicated in Figures 2 and 4.

First, while the PKO-plus regime has had some success at fostering peace agreements and making them more durable, third-party efforts to build effective, self-sustaining states in countries where states collapsed due to civil war, misrule, or invasion have mainly been failures. This is most clearly illustrated by the U.S. attempts at third-party state-building in Iraq and Afghanistan. In both, U.S. or U.S.-backed invasions destroyed the existing regimes and structures of government, such as they were. In Iraq, the United States attempted to install a democracy that would share power between predominantly Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish parties. Elections, coalition politics, and foreign influences gave control of the top offices to politicians from the majority Shia sect, who feared that genuine power-sharing with Sunnis (for example, in army leadership and the incorporation of Sunnis who had fought against Al Qaeda in Iraq) would open the door to coups or other types of subversion. The Shia-led government excluded Sunni politicians and rank and file to a degree that favored ISIS's successful conquest of Mosul and much of Western Iraq by the end of 2014. In effect, the Shia governments have preferred exclusion, peripheral Sunni insurgency, and reliance on Iranian-allied militias to the more risky course of power-sharing at the center.

Despite years of training by the United States and many billions of dollars invested, the formal Iraqi army performed terribly after the U.S. withdrawal, completely disintegrating in the face of the ISIS attack on Mosul in June 2014 and losing Ramadi, Falluja, Tikrit, Hit, and other cities to relatively small numbers of ISIS fighters. In Afghanistan, the United States and NATO have tried to build capable army and police forces for even longer – fifteen years – again with disappointing results. Continued U.S. military support appears necessary just to maintain

a costly stalemate with the Taliban. Without this support, it is likely that either the government in Kabul would fall or Afghanistan would return to the Taliban-versus-northern-armed-groups civil war of the mid-1990s. Politically, the United States has provided third-party backing for a power-sharing arrangement between competing factions (President Ashraf Ghani and “Chief Executive” Abdullah Abdullah), but the government has been largely dysfunctional.¹³ The formal, UN-member Afghan state would be unable to survive financially without massive foreign backing: between 70 and more than 90 percent of government revenue comes from foreign aid.¹⁴

The present Afghan state is, in effect, a ward of “the international community.” To varying degrees, this is true of what may be an increasing number of UN member states. One rough indicator is the increasing duration of peacekeeping operations. For UN PKOs addressing civil wars, the average duration increased from two years for operations in the field as of 1991 to eleven years for operations in the field as of 2014. In other words, PKOs tend to “hang around,” unable to leave without unacceptable risk of returning to, or worsening of, armed conflict. Another rough indicator is dependence on foreign aid, measured by comparing total aid receipts to total central government expenditure. On average, from 2004 to 2014, for at least one in five UN member states, aid receipts equaled at least half of all government expenditures (whether we consider all states or only nonmicrostates). Looking only at the countries in the World Bank's “low-income” category for 2014, median aid dependence was a remarkable 86 percent. This suggests that in at least half of these low-income countries, more than half of all (intended) spending on nonmilitary public goods has come from taxpayers in OECD countries.¹⁵ Not surprisingly, many of the most aid-dependent countries are either postconflict or mired in conflict.

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For example, states at or near the top of the list include Liberia, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sierra Leone, the Central African Republic, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Nicaragua, Mozambique, Chad, and Mali.

Higher-income UN members can continue to pay to maintain the semblance of statehood according to UN norms in low-income and civil war-torn countries. Hopefully, in some cases, these subsidies will no longer be needed because state-building will eventually occur. But in other cases, it may be that the construction of capable and effective state institutions can only be carried out by locals – third parties simply do not know how or cannot do it – in processes that will be bloody, slow, and will not necessarily produce functioning states that operate exactly within current UN-recognized borders. Recall that this was the case historically for state-building in most of today’s major powers.¹⁶

In sum, while there is a good argument that the PKO-plus regime has been a moderately effective and relatively low-cost means of addressing the spread of civil war in the UN system, the regime has no good answer to the long-term question of how third parties can reliably foster the building of capable, not-awful states in civil war and postconflict settings.

The second major problem stems from the spread of civil war and state collapse into the Middle East and North Africa over the last fifteen years. These are regions in which internal conflict has particularly large negative externalities for the major powers, but also where the PKO-plus treatment regime is difficult and often impossible to apply.

Although the roots are deeper, the rise of civil war and state collapse in the MENA region began in earnest after 9/11, with the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq sparking civil (and anti-invader) wars in both countries (see Figure 2). In Yemen,

war between the Houthis in the north and the government in Sanaa broke out in 2004, the same year that Pakistan saw one insurgency restart in Baluchistan and another begin in the form of the Pakistani Taliban. The conflicts have continued, escalating in Yemen with the addition of a war in the south involving the local Al Qaeda branch and southern separatists. Following uprisings in the Arab Spring, Libya and Syria collapsed into major wars while in Egypt, a lower-level insurgency developed in the Sinai.

In contrast to civil wars in Africa and the mainly relatively small separatist conflicts in Asian countries, civil war and state collapse in the MENA region has much larger bad consequences for European states and, arguably, for “international peace and security” (the Security Council’s formal charge). Exhibit A is the Syrian war and the rise of the Islamic State in eastern Syria and western Iraq. The massive refugee disaster raises risks of contagion of civil war and state collapse to other states in the region, and has played into the growing pressures on European democratic politics and norms. The war has also led to dangerous escalations of the Saudi-Iranian cold war and U.S.-Russian conflict, along with Kurdish-Turkish and Sunni-Shia conflicts in the region. Elsewhere, anarchy in Libya poses international problems due to refugee flows, while the war in Afghanistan reflects in part and certainly engages the volatile and dangerous conflict between Pakistan and India. The program of some Islamic fundamentalists involved in these conflicts involve terrorist attacks outside the region, and there is no doubt that they would use weapons of mass destruction for terror if they could get them.

Unfortunately, the international community’s PKO-plus treatment regime has not and probably cannot be applied in this region. In the first place, UN PKOs require major-power agreement, but, for example, the Syrian war has engaged the Unit-

Table 1

Number of Civil Wars with and without PKOs, by Region, 1990 – 2014

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Regions	PKO	No PKO
MENA	1 (5%)	20 (95%)
Asia	2 (12%)	15 (88%)
Sub-Saharan Africa	16 (53%)	14 (47%)
Eastern Europe/Former USSR	6 (60%)	4 (40%)
Latin America/Caribbean	3 (60%)	2 (40%)

Note: Includes civil wars that ended or were ongoing after 1989. Source: Author’s coding, available at <http://fearonresearch.stanford.edu/>.

ed States and Russia on opposite sides, at least concerning Assad (to this point).¹⁷ And even if an operation might get support from the Security Council in principle, there is typically great reluctance to send missions in the absence of a formal peace agreement and invitation by warring parties: the model is “peacekeeping” much more than “peacemaking.” This has been a barrier for UN and other third-party missions in all regions, but it may be more so in the MENA region given the number of significant regional powers engaged in intense competition there.

More important, even when Security Council political agreement is feasible, the fact that any foreign peacekeeping troops will surely act as a recruiting card for jihadism poses a major obstacle. Their rallying cry is to expel foreign influence. And finding capable peacekeeping forces from the region itself is made highly problematic by the Saudi-Iranian struggle, which ramifies into a region-wide Sunni-Shia conflict.

For civil wars that either ended since 1990 or are still ongoing, Table 1 shows the proportion that got UN PKOs (at some point) for each region. The MENA region has the largest number of wars with no PKO and the smallest number with a PKO. The sole PKO

case is the abortive UN Supervision Mission in Syria that operated for just four months in 2012, an exception that proves the rule. Both before and since the rise of a violent, transnational Sunni jihadist movement that has greatly raised the costs for third-party peacekeeping, MENA has not been fertile ground for internationally sanctioned third-party support to end civil wars.¹⁸

Before 1945, state-building was frequently a slow and often highly violent process. One can argue that, by contrast, the post-1945 UN system has done remarkably well as an experiment in the wholesale proliferation of the modern state form. The period has seen unprecedented, global advances in life expectancy and living standards, as well as widespread diffusion of electoral democracy and probably a significant improvement in human rights, on average. Many countries, including many new states, have been little affected by large-scale violence.¹⁹

But we are now seeing major pressures and strains for which the PKO-plus regime appears to be inadequate. This is mainly due to the rise of civil war, state collapse, transnational jihadism, and major and regional power proxy conflicts in the MENA region.

The deeper roots stem from the failure of the Arab (and some other) republics to find, after independence, a formula for successful governance: that is, nonabusive, non-kleptocratic government that fosters and allows adequate economic growth. Transnational jihadi movements are a religious nationalist reaction seeking better governance and a sense of dignity. Unfortunately, they are also vicious and immoral in the extreme, and destined to fail as a governance model if they ever really get to try to implement their current vision.

The experience of the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan (and, for that matter, Vietnam) suggests that the problem of building a state that can finance and govern itself can only be solved by locals, in what may be a violent process. Third-party support for one faction or another, or for formal power-sharing between former enemies, may put on hold or even undermine effective state-building. While these pes-

simistic conclusions surely do not apply everywhere – see the general point about the successes of the UN system above – their relevance to a number of states in the MENA region is especially confounding for “the international community,” and most of all for the region’s people.

The international response should focus on delivering humanitarian relief where it is possible to deliver without making matters worse, and trying to help protect against spillover effects in contiguous states that are basically functional. Containing and degrading the Islamic State (and the like) is fine, but if the United States or other Western militaries do too much, this may effectively help sustain the movement as a terrorist threat by preventing it from failing or evolving on its own. It is hard to kill an ideology by bombing it. In the longer run, the problem is state-building, something that can only be durably accomplished by the residents.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ These and subsequent civil war statistics are based on an updated version of the civil war list used in James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review* 97 (1) (February 2003): 75–90. The core criterion for magnitude is that the conflict kills at least one thousand people with an average of at least one hundred deaths per year. For details on other criteria, such as for marking starts and ends of conflicts, see *ibid.*; and James D. Fearon, “Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?” *Journal of Peace Research* 41 (3) (2004): 275–301. Figure 1 omits anticolonial wars, which have little effect on the number of wars but do make wars as a share of independent states (if we assign anticolonial wars to the metropole) higher in the late 1940s and 1950s. Note that other civil war lists yield quite similar overall pictures; for example, Therése Petterson and Peter Wallensteen, “Armed Conflicts, 1946–2014,” *Journal of Peace Research* 52 (4) (2015): 536–550.
- ² I have included Pakistan and Afghanistan in the MENA region here. Sudan and South Sudan are grouped in sub-Saharan Africa.
- ³ Since the number of states has greatly increased since 1945, the rate of civil war outbreak *per state* has significantly trended down.
- ⁴ These estimates have to be rough because there are a good number of cases that are difficult to designate as clearly “ethnic” or not.
- ⁵ Chronic weakness of many developing-country militaries can have political origins: Insecure leaders fear that better-resourced, more-competent militaries would pose a greater risk of coups. In effect, they trade off coup risk for insurgency risk. See Philip Roessler, *Ethnic Politics and State Power in Africa: The Logic of the Coup-Civil War Trap* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); and William Reno, “Fictional States & Atomized Public Spheres: A Non-West-

ern Approach to Fragility,” *Daedalus* 146 (4) (2017). Fearon, “Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?” gives a more developed version of the argument about shocks and civil war onset. James D. Fearon

- ⁶ See Barbara F. Walter, “The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement,” *International Organization* 51 (3) (Summer 1997): 335–364; James D. Fearon, “Commitment Problems and the Spread of Ethnic Conflict,” in *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*, ed. David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 107–126; and Fearon, “Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?”
- ⁷ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Civil War Termination” (unpublished paper, 2007). Note that it is not unusual for a government that has essentially won militarily to grant minor or relatively cosmetic concessions in negotiations to formalize the end of conflict (for example, Guatemala in 1992). For an example of an autonomy war ended by decisive military victory, see Sumit Ganguly, “Ending the Sri Lankan Civil War,” *Daedalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).
- ⁸ Richard Gowan and Stephen John Stedman, “The International Regime for Treating Civil War, 1988–2017” *Daedalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018). See also James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States,” *International Security* 28 (4) (Spring 2004): 5–43; and Stephen D. Krasner, ed., *International Regimes* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983) on the concept of international regimes.
- ⁹ Virginia Page Fortna and Lise Morjé Howard, “Pitfalls and Prospects in the Peacekeeping Literature,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 283–301; and Bernd Beber, Michael J. Gilligan, Jenny Guardado, and Sabrina Karim, “Peacekeeping, Compliance with International Norms, and Transactional Sex in Monrovia, Liberia,” *International Organization* 71 (1) (January 2017): 1–30.
- ¹⁰ For examples, see Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006); Fortna and Howard, “Pitfalls and Prospects in the Peacekeeping Literature”; Virginia Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents’ Choices after Civil War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008); Michael Gilligan and Ernest Sergenti, “Do UN Interventions Cause Peace? Using Matching to Improve Causal Inference,” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 3 (2) (2008); Lisa Hultman, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon, “United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in Civil War,” *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (4) (2013): 875–891; and Andrea Ruggeri, Han Dorussen, and Theodora-Ismene Gizelis, “Winning the Peace Locally: UN Peacekeeping and Local Conflict,” *International Organization* 71 (1) (January 2017): 163–185. Missions often viewed as having been effective include UNTAG (Namibia, 1989–1990), UNTAC (Cambodia, 1992–1993), UNTAES (Eastern Slavonia, 1996–1998), UNPREDEP (Macedonia, 1995–1999), MINUGUA (Guatemala, 1997), UNAMSIL (Sierra Leone, 1999–2005), UNTAET/UNMISSET (East Timor, 1999–2005), and UNMIL (Liberia, 2003).
- ¹¹ Work developing this argument includes Joshua S. Goldstein, *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide* (New York: Penguin, 2011); and Human Security Report Project, *Human Security Report 2009/2010: The Causes of Peace and the Shrinking Costs of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- ¹² For evidence on the latter point, see Aila M. Matanock, *Electing Peace: From Civil Conflict to Political Participation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); and Aila M. Matanock, “Bullets for Ballots: Electoral Participation Provisions in Peace Agreements and Conflict Recurrence,” *International Security* 41 (4) (2017).
- ¹³ See, for example, Mujib Mashalau, “Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Denounces President Ghani as Unfit for Office,” *The New York Times*, August 11, 2016.
- ¹⁴ Rod Nordland and Jawad Sukhanyar, “U.S.-Backed Effort to Fight Afghan Corruption is a Near-Total Failure, Audit Finds,” *The New York Times*, September 27, 2016. Anthropologist Thomas Barfield has added that since the nineteenth century, “successful Afghan rulers [have] specialised in dealing with foreigners by getting them to fund their states and equip their militaries.” See “Dr. Thomas Barfield Recommends the Best Books on Afghanistan,” September 16, 2010, <http://fivebooks.com/interview/thomas-barfield-afghanistan/>.

- ¹⁵ To summarize the calculations, let a be total Official Development Assistance (ODA) aid; g government spending raised by country taxes and other nonaid sources; g_a government spending from aid in the form of direct budgetary support; and m military spending. From the World Bank's data series for total Development Assistance Committee (DAC) aid and government consumption in constant dollars (DT.ODA.ODAT.CD and NE.CON.GOV.T.CD), averaged for 2004–2014, I estimate that for the median low-income country, $a/(m + g + g_a) = 0.86$. So $g/a = 1/0.86 - m/a - g_a/a$. Thus, the ratio of nonmilitary government spending to aid from donors, g/a , is at best close to 1, since g_a/a is on average about 0.15. Further, in low-income countries, the military share of GDP is typically 0.01 to 0.02, while aid as a share of GDP is about 0.11 (median). Thus, $g/a = 1/0.86 - 0.15 - 0.015/0.11 = 0.88$, implying that the share of aid in total nonmilitary spending by government and aid sources would be approximately $a/(a + g) = 0.53$.
- ¹⁶ For analyses of the problems of “alien rule” and third-party state-building that draw similar conclusions, see Michael Hechter, *Alien Rule* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and David A. Lake, *The Statebuilder's Dilemma* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2016). On the centuries-long path of state-building in Britain, see also Francis Fukuyama, “The Last English Civil War,” *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).
- ¹⁷ Barry R. Posen, in “Civil Wars & the Structure of World Power,” *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017), argues that coordinated PKO interventions will become less common due to what he sees as increasing “multipolarity.”
- ¹⁸ Nor has Asia, which in our data appears to be partly accounted for by the much larger share of autonomy-seeking conflicts in this region (autonomy-seeking wars are in general less likely to get PKOs in our data). See also Michael Gilligan and Stephen John Stedman, “Where Do the Peacekeepers Go?” *International Studies Review* 5 (4) (2003) on the infrequency of PKOs in Asia.
- ¹⁹ Bruce D. Jones and Stephen John Stedman stress these points in “Civil Wars & the Post–Cold War International Order,” *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017).

Civil Wars & the Post–Cold War International Order

Bruce D. Jones & Stephen John Stedman

Abstract: By the standards of prosperity and peace, the post–Cold War international order has been an unparalleled success. Over the last thirty years, there has been more creation of wealth and a greater reduction of poverty, disease, and food insecurity than in all of previous history. During the same period, the numbers and lethality of wars have decreased. These facts have not deterred an alternative assessment that civil violence, terrorism, failed states, and numbers of refugees are at unprecedentedly high levels. But there is no global crisis of failed states and endemic civil war, no global crisis of refugees and migration, and no global crisis of disorder. Instead, what we have seen is a particular historical crisis unfold in the greater Middle East, which has collapsed order within that region and has fed the biggest threat to international order: populism in the United States and Europe.

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Civil wars and their relationship to international order differ dramatically by historical era. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the great powers treated national rebellions as threats to international order and sometimes cooperated in suppressing them. During the Cold War, the superpowers viewed civil wars as proxy competitions, and armed and financed client governments or rebels in order to prevent them from losing. The post–Cold War order, by contrast, devoted substantial effort to the treatment, mitigation, and resolution of civil wars, usually with the cooperation and consent of great powers. At the same time, those same great powers were often unable to reach agreement on when and how military force should be used for humanitarian purposes in civil wars.

The effects of civil wars on international orders also differ across historical eras. Civil wars may be fought over principles that undermine the norms and rules that undergird an international order. Civil wars may tempt intervention by great powers,

who must learn prudence lest their involvement lead to direct military confrontation. The spillover of civil wars can ripple across borders and undermine regional balances of power. When those regions are of great-power interest, the containment of civil wars becomes an imperative for international order.

Much has been asserted about the relationship between civil war and the post-Cold War international order. During the last twenty-five years, pundits have repeatedly argued that the mere occurrence of particular wars, such as Somalia and Bosnia in the 1990s or Libya and Syria more recently, prove that international order is weak and tenuous. Civil wars have played an outsized role in a popular narrative of international disorder. According to this narrative, civil violence, terrorism, failed states, and the number of refugees are at unprecedentedly high levels. The world is falling apart, most people are worse off than they were thirty years ago, and globalization is to blame.

By almost every measure, this narrative is empirically incorrect. Over the last thirty years, there has been more creation of wealth and a greater reduction of poverty, disease, and food insecurity than in all of previous history.¹ During the same period, the numbers and lethality of wars have decreased.² The success of the post-Cold War era in managing civil wars – bringing multiple wars to an end and ameliorating several others – has contributed to a more peaceful world. Great-power confrontations have been few and great-power war a distant memory. As measured by increased trade and reductions of arms expenditures as a percentage of GDP, international cooperation has risen to unprecedented levels.³ Indeed, international cooperation has been a fundamental characteristic of the international order since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Nonetheless, the post-Cold War international order is currently under substan-

tial pressure, and in some areas, progress has reversed. The Russian annexation of Crimea and invasion of Ukraine signals a return to a militaristic approach to its border with Eastern Europe, while China's aggressive policies in the South China Sea promise that its relations with its neighbors will be tense and dangerous. And after a fifteen-year historic reduction in the numbers of civil wars, there has been a recent, major spike, mostly centered in the Middle East. Russian intervention in Syria and Saudi Arabian intervention in Yemen, and their indiscriminate use of force, run counter to the way the United Nations and its member states have managed civil wars over the past twenty-five years. The paralysis of the UN Security Council in responding to the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria conjures up memories of the Cold War, when proxy competition was the predominant response to civil wars.

None of these threats by themselves is enough to unravel the current international order. But there is one existential threat to the post-Cold War international order: the rise of nationalist-populist politics in the United States and Europe and the crumbling of domestic support for the international economic and security cooperation that has undergirded the post-Cold War order. While that order still maintains important strengths, the election of Donald Trump, the rise of right-wing populist parties in Europe, and the British vote to leave the European Union have thrown the order into crisis.

A full analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the current international order is beyond the scope of this essay. Instead, in line with the thrust of this volume and the companion issue that follows, we seek to understand the role that civil wars play in the current international order. We argue that the breakdown in international support for globalization is largely a result of the impressive success of the cooperative

order. The economic consequences of free trade, the integration of Western economies into global supply chains, the growing integration of democracies into supranational governance in Europe, and the social consequences of migration have fed a powerful antiglobalization nationalist and populist backlash in Europe and the United States. While globalization created billions of winners, it concentrated the losers and relative losers in the working classes of Europe and the United States, and has been a powerful factor in the polarization of politics and demise of party systems in Western democracies.

It is against this backdrop that the contribution of civil wars to current international disorder must be weighed. We argue that there is no global crisis of failed states and civil wars, and no global crisis of refugees and migration. Instead, what we have seen is the unfolding of a historical crisis in the greater Middle East, which has collapsed order within that region and has had three repercussions for today's international order. The first involves those civilians who sought to escape the violence and the failure of international humanitarian cooperation to manage their plight, resulting in hundreds of thousands of refugees seeking asylum in Europe, where immigration politics had already fed the rise of rightist national parties and created a cleavage between them and center parties. The second involves ISIS and its success in conquering parts of Syria and Iraq, its ability to metastasize in cells in countries far away from the fighting, and its capacity to inspire terrorist attacks in Europe and the United States, all of which amplify the ongoing demonization of Muslims, migrants, and refugees. The third involves the failure of the great powers and international institutions to manage the conflicts, and the decline to barbarism as external actors intervene militarily and engage in indiscriminate wars of attrition.

The civil wars of the Middle East and the failure of the international order to manage them have contributed to a narrative of overall disorder and failing global cooperation. That narrative is not the cause of the domestic political backlash in the United States and Europe against the international cooperative order, but does help to fuel it.

The international system is anarchic and, because there is no global government, states must rely on self-help strategies to survive. Order is a central problem in a self-help system in which some states may be predatory and state death is possible. Order is also an explanatory variable in why, despite the lack of global government, some historical periods are more peaceful and prosperous than others.

International order, much like international community or security, is a term that defies precise meaning. Within the discourse of international relations theorists, international order can refer to the distribution of power or it can refer to norms and principles that are supposed to regulate state behavior and provide predictability to the daily relations among and between nations.⁴ Some scholars add institutions to the conversation and others substitute the metaphor of architecture, which implies order is a building project involving design and construction.⁵ For others, international order is a normative concept that may be in tension with social goods like justice.⁶ In common usage, international order seems little more than a marker for popular perceptions of whether the world is more secure and prosperous than in previous eras, and is thus ripe for rosy retrospection.

Such a cacophony makes for difficult conversations, both within scholarly circles and between foreign policy practitioners, politicians, and citizens. For example, imprecision can be found in one of the more straightforward connotations

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of order: how power is distributed in the world and how that structures international relations. The period from 1945 to about 1989 is referred to as the Cold War. It implies that the bipolar distribution of power between the United States and the Soviet Union structured relations and behavior among and between states during that period. And certainly the superpower competition did have real ramifications in terms of the creation of competitive alliances in Europe, the search for clients in the rest of the world, and the paralysis of collective security because of the veto in the UN Security Council. But this gloss ignores key parts of the story of international order during those forty-five years: the Sino-Soviet split and the rise of China as an independent power, the German policy of *détente*, and the slow but steady integration of Western Europe.

If order is solely the distribution of power, then by definition, international disorder is the product of uncertainty about the distribution of power, either because great powers may be declining and potential challengers rising or because power may be changing in ways that lead to uncertainties in how to measure its distribution. Uncertainty about the distribution of power can raise the insecurity of the great powers and provoke temptations for preventive war.

The creation of the European Union and the economic rise of the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) gave rise to speculation that we were transitioning from a unipolar to a multipolar world. For at least the last ten years, however, reports of the death of American dominance have been greatly exaggerated. Although U.S. power and influence diminished after the self-inflicted wound of Iraq, thirteen years later, the United States remains central to the provision of international security and international cooperation for global public goods.⁷ And during that time, the star power of the BRICs dulled dramatically. At least some

of the narrative power of world disorder comes from the sense that we are in a power transition with no clear end point. But the mere fact that we don't know what the structure of international power will look like in thirty years should not blind us to the fact that the United States still enjoys a preponderance of power and influence in the international system, and is thus the key player in maintaining order – or in choosing to disrupt it.

The distribution of power is said to determine the distribution of benefits within the international system. The great powers set the rules and create institutions to enhance their security and prosperity and guide the behavior of other states. When some scholars refer to international order they are not speaking about the distribution of power, but the rules and institutions of the great powers. Thus, the period of the Cold War is also referred to as a time of a liberal world order, or the American liberal world order. The United States was essential in creating international institutions to guide the behavior of states in war and peace, trade, and finance. One can see the immediate problem here: how could this be a world order when the world was divided into two blocs of competing alliances and trading partners?

The answer is that such orders are aspirational and partial.⁸ During the Cold War, each superpower created institutions that it hoped would structure cooperation among allies and increase its influence. The American liberal international order rested on openness of trade and markets, and the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy, albeit selectively. It pertained to key alliance partners in Europe and Asia, but less so for other parts of the world, where liberal norms often took second place to considerations of military and political stability.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the United States became the world's sole su-

perpower, dominant economically and militarily. The period that followed has been called a liberal international order, though this is an imprecise and confusing term. More accurately, the period has been a cooperative, trade-driven order. Cooperation on openness of trade, financial flows, and movements of people became a pillar of the post-Cold War international order and held out a bargain to states outside of American alliances. The implicit offer to China, Russia, and other countries was that if they met the conditions for joining the World Trade Organization and restructured their economics and rule of law for incorporation into the global economy, their reward would be economic growth and greater prosperity for their peoples, and therefore greater political legitimacy for their state. And although the United States became more pronounced in including human rights and democracy into its foreign policy, these ideals have been pursued selectively at best.

International cooperation also became more pronounced in security issues. During the Cold War, the United Nations was limited in its role in international security. Security Council vetoes, both threatened and exercised, circumscribed Council activism. Military interventions during the Cold War were more frequently unilateral than multilateral. When the superpowers talked of collective security, they referred to their alliances, not the United Nations. With important exceptions, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, or during crises between the superpowers that threatened to escalate, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, the superpowers avoided internationalization of security issues in the United Nations.

In the post-Cold War order, there has been extensive international cooperation on security, whether nonproliferation, counterterrorism, counterpiracy, or end-

ing civil wars. Nonetheless, there exists an important difference between the economic and security pillars of the current order. The economic pillar relies on institutions that are theoretically universal: that is, any country that qualified based on membership requirements can join. Moreover, there was an attempt to reform international financial and trade institutions to reflect changes in global power. In the security realm, there has been greater use and reliance on the United Nations, but key alliances from the Cold War continue to structure security and balance power. The European order that emerged in 1989 extended Cold War security arrangements from Western Europe to Eastern Europe but failed to include Russia, which remains a problem to this day. In Asia, China eagerly bought into the cooperative economic order, and has become an increasingly important contributor to cooperative security through the United Nations, but Asia's security order has yet to find an arrangement that includes a richer, more powerful China.

From a global security perspective, the Middle East has been the hardest test for the cooperative international order, and for at least twenty years, it has failed. The United States embraced the United Nations in its response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and the results seemed to vindicate a hope for collective security in the post-Cold War era. By the end of the 1990s, however, questions of how to enforce resolutions against Iraq and Saddam Hussein divided the Security Council. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 was the signal failure of international order in the last three decades, and its reverberations are still felt in the region. By collapsing the state during the invasion and immediate occupation, the United States created a power vacuum in Iraq, which has since experienced non-stop civil war.

With the Arab Spring, a second wave of political instability led to another round of

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failed international cooperation in the region. The UN Security Council agreed on invoking the responsibility to protect (R2P) to mandate humanitarian intervention in Libya, but failed to prevent civil war and state collapse after the overthrow of Gaddafi. In Syria, the Security Council eschewed humanitarian force, and instead authorized mediation and diplomacy to search for a political solution. Successive mediators felt hamstrung by the divergent interests and strategies of Russia and the United States, and proved ineffective in the face of escalating violence. Since Russia's decision to intervene militarily in support of the Assad regime in Syria, there has been the potential for escalatory conflict between Russia and the United States, which has small numbers of troops in Syria and Iraq to fight ISIS and train anti-Assad rebels. Outside actors, notably Iran, the key Gulf states, and Turkey, have also intervened through financing rebels or other groups, providing weapons, and, in the case of Iran and Turkey, putting "boots on the ground." In Yemen, a carefully mediated agreement to the political crisis disintegrated in the face of rebel violence and American-supported Saudi military intervention. In both Syria and Yemen, outside forces have used indiscriminate military force in wars of attrition. In Syria, Yemen, and Libya, the humanitarian management of the consequences of war broke down due to insufficient funding and attention, leading to a generalized refugee crisis in the region and across the seas in Europe. In the Middle East, we appear to be back in a regime of proxy warfare, very distinct from the cooperative regime that has governed the treatment of civil wars for much of the past quarter-century.

The numbers of civil wars and their lethality have declined remarkably over the last twenty-five years as the current order has brought more than a dozen civil

wars to a close and contained or limited the spread of others. For two decades, civil violence declined in every major area of the world, but in 2011, this trend reversed in one region, the Middle East.

The wars of Libya, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria have been humanitarian catastrophes. They have been part of an external and internal dismantling of regional order in the Middle East. They have spawned and fostered ISIS, a grotesque transnational terrorist group that glorifies violence and incites its followers to attack innocents around the world. These wars have also laid bare the weakest filament in the ability of the current international order to manage conflict: that when great powers disagree about the desired outcome of a civil war, the collective response stalls and the war escalates. Much depends on whether these wars and the international failure to manage them are an exception, or whether they are a harbinger of things to come.

Several arguments have been made about the relationship between the Middle Eastern wars – Syria above all – and international order.

Externalities: refugees, terrorism, and regional instability. One commonplace assertion about these wars is that their refugees have fundamentally threatened the security of Europe, overwhelmed Europe's social fabric, and therefore contributed to international disorder. We find these claims preposterous.

To start with, politicians, journalists, and humanitarian workers have all routinely exaggerated the scale of the flow of refugees. To take but one point: pundits commonly referred to the one million refugees that flooded into Europe in 2015 as the largest refugee crisis in history. This likely came as a shock to the 1.1 million refugees who flooded into then Zaire (population forty-three million) in 1994 or the one million Cambodian refugees who fled to Thailand in 1979 –

1980 to escape genocide or the more than three million Afghan refugees who escaped into Pakistan in the 1980s. None of this is to diminish the plight of the Syrians who escaped the horror of war, but it is to expose the paucity of the European claim that it faced an unprecedented disaster.

The million – by now, perhaps million-and-a-half – refugees who entered Europe traveled to a region of over five-hundred million people that was, at the time, the largest economic bloc in the world (with a total economy just over \$17 trillion). To assert that the economic, political, or social costs of absorbing one million refugees into that bloc was a central cause of disorder is absurd.

The wars of the Middle East have contributed to the rise of nationalism in Western Europe, but they are not the cause of that rise. The influx of refugees to Europe in 2015 exacerbated but did not create popular disaffection with immigration, and the poor performance of the European Union in addressing the crisis contributed to an already inchoate sense that cooperative European or international approaches were broken and that nations again had to seize control of their borders. And the wars of the Middle East did add a security element beyond the economic effects of globalization, as terrorist attacks in France, Belgium, and Germany provoked fear and anxiety beyond the common trope of immigrants stealing jobs and welfare. But the wars in Syria, Yemen, and Libya were not primary drivers of European popular disaffection with the contemporary international order. Differential economic growth and growing disaffection with immigration due to EU expansion, as well as economic hardship caused by the financial crisis of 2007–2009, produced a resurgent national populist backlash against globalization and international cooperation well before the civil wars of the Middle East broke out.

This relationship stands out in the Brexit vote, the first tectonic domestic challenge to the international order. Some of the biggest voting districts for Leave were areas in the United Kingdom that had major job losses because of trade with China.⁹ Immigration from within the European Union, not migration or refugees from the wars of the Middle East, was a significant concern of the Leavers.¹⁰ The United Kingdom admitted few refugees or asylum seekers from Syria or Libya compared with the rest of Europe. The wars in Syria, Libya, and elsewhere in the Middle East figured little in the rhetoric of the Leavers.

The refugee crisis did contribute to a weakening of international order because some EU countries violated international obligations to refugees, and the European Union as a whole actively ignored its obligations and entered into expedient agreements to export the problem elsewhere.¹¹ But this rightly puts the explanatory weight on the dismal response of the European Union, rather than on the wars of the Middle East.

The failure to uphold principles of order. Some analysts have argued that the wars in the Middle East involved key principles of the international order, and the failure of the great powers to uphold those principles contributed to larger international disorder. There are three variations on this theme. The first invokes the international failure to stop mass atrocities in Syria and the lack of commitment to R2P. The second involves the international failure to confront and stop violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The third concerns the failure of the United States to enforce its own red lines in the war.

The argument that the failure to prevent atrocities in Syria represented a breakdown of international norms overstates the centrality of R2P or humanitarian intervention to the post-Cold War order. As Richard Gowan and Stephen Stedman

point out in their contribution to the next volume, militarized humanitarianism has been ascendant over the last twenty-five years.¹² During that time, there have been many more collective humanitarian interventions than in the previous half-century. And there has been frequent public pressure, mostly in the United States, to use military force for humanitarian purposes. Most humanitarian action and mandates have been ad hoc and nonstrategic, and thus unpredictable. And no stable international consensus has emerged over when and how humanitarian interventions should be deployed. Precisely because they are unpredictable, humanitarian interventions run counter to the establishment of shared expectations of behavior on which order is predicated.

In this vein, it is possible to interpret R2P as a way to make humanitarian action predictable, and therefore supportive of international order.¹³ However, governments, including in the West, were exceedingly partial in their interest in and commitment to R2P when it was adopted, and have been wholly inconsistent even in arguing for its application, let alone undertaking R2P interventions.

For example, in the aftermath of invoking R2P in Libya, the Security Council deadlocked on Syria. Yet the Council also drew on R2P to authorize a military intervention in Côte D'Ivoire. The intervention, carried out by UN peacekeepers backed up by French airpower, enforced compliance with outcomes of a democratic election, arrested the former head of state, and sent him to the International Criminal Tribunal. We cite this example to suggest that the failure to act upon R2P in Syria is not evidence of a complete abandonment of the principle, but rather proof that great-power support for the principle is conditional.

A more compelling case about Syria and the undermining of principles of international order involves the use of chemical

weapons by the Assad government. Central to any international order that relies on cooperative security is the question of enforcement. To the extent that the international order aspires to be grounded in international law, the authority for enforcing security treaties, weapons conventions, and Security Council mandates rests with the Security Council. If the Council cannot cohere behind enforcement due to great-power antagonism or a clash of interests, then violations of treaties, conventions, and mandates will go unanswered. This is a perennial challenge for any international order that relies on international law and collective security. In the post-Cold War order, the challenge has arisen regarding the compliance of Saddam Hussein with Council mandates after the First Gulf War, the compliance of Iran and North Korea with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations, and, most recently, with the Russian invasion and seizure of Crimea in Ukraine.

In the face of Council inaction, upholding order has fallen selectively on the great powers, and disproportionately on the hegemon and leading international power, the United States. Some have argued that the key principle for international order in the Syrian Civil War was a willingness of the hegemon to follow through on its threats. When a hegemon does not enforce its red lines (threats regarding particular actions), it signals a wider retreat from its willingness to enforce the rules of order anywhere.

This argument had its adherents in the Washington policy community after President Obama's retreat from declaring that the use of chemical weapons in Syria was a red line that would prompt a forceful American response. The argument gained wider adherence when Russia intervened militarily in defense of Assad, marking the first return of Russian hard power to the region since the Eisenhower presidency.

The problem with this interpretation is that it does not address the counterfactual

al. Had the United States acted militarily in Syria and become entrapped in a failed intervention, this would have prompted concerns about American recklessness, lack of strategy, and lack of predictability, the very traits that shook international relations after the American invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Nonetheless, the argument about American inaction in upholding its red line in Syria holds a kernel of truth. The inability or unwillingness to act in Syria in ways that could mitigate the consequences for Europe or prevent openings for Russia likely contributed to perceptions of a loss of American influence and leadership in the Middle East. In isolation, this might not have been particularly significant, but it came on the back of a series of decisions in Iraq that saw American forces withdraw in a manner that facilitated a return to violence and the (understandable) American withdrawal of support for long-time ally President Mubarak of Egypt. Taken together, these episodes called into question President Obama's commitment to the use of American hard power in defense of order. While it is not easy to parse exactly how much Syria contributed to this, our judgment is that it is an exaggeration to portray inaction or weak action in Syria as triggering wider disorder.

From a perspective of rules and expectations of the post-Cold War order, the most acute point concerning the great powers and the war in Syria is not that they did not intervene militarily to stop it, but that they did not invest resources and make the tough choices that would have been required to forge a diplomatic solution to the war. In 2012, when the war was at its ripest for a negotiated settlement, the United States did not want to engage Iran, one of Assad's patrons, in Syria talks to avoid complicating its nuclear negotiations with Iran. At the same time, American demands that Assad had to step down as part of any settlement made a negotiated settlement unlikely. Indeed, some Washington watchers be-

lieved that American diplomatic diffidence stemmed from overconfidence that the continuing war would drain Assad, Hezbollah, and Iran, and there was thus no urgency to compromise as part of any settlement.

Proxy war and potential for escalation. A third argument posits that Syria contributed to international disorder because it marked a significant retreat away from great-power cooperation to solve civil wars toward great-power proxy conflict within civil wars. Unlike the majority of civil wars of the post-Cold War period, in which outside support to combatants was limited to regional backers (usually with modest diplomatic and military capacity themselves), Syria has seen the military intervention of the United States (covertly, and admittedly somewhat ineptly) and Russia (overtly, and with more decisive results), as well as Turkey, the Gulf Arab states, and Hezbollah.

As Gowan and Stedman make clear, the post-Cold War order has been highly interventionist in civil wars.¹⁴ With the exception of Kosovo in 1999, the major powers have avoided direct military confrontation. In that case, NATO and Russian forces briefly risked skirmishing as they both attempted to occupy Pristina airport following Serbia's withdrawal of its forces. This brief crisis was quickly resolved as Russia and NATO agreed to parallel patrols in different parts of Kosovo, under an overall UN Security Council agreement.

Syria marks the first major episode since 1990 of sustained competing great-power intervention in a civil war. As of now, it remains an outlier, though a significant one. During the same period of Russian intervention in Syria, the Russians consented in the Security Council to a joint French-led EU-UN military intervention in Mali. And although Russia has not supported American action against ISIS in Iraq, it has neither blocked it nor interfered with it.

Russia and the United States have not worked out arrangements to avoid a direct

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military confrontation in Syria. During the Cold War, despite the almost constant superpower patronage to contending warring parties, Russia and the United States constructed rules of prudence to avoid direct hostilities.¹⁵ Because the superpower competition played out over decades in multiple civil wars, there was ample opportunity for Russia and the United States to learn how not to escalate in peripheral conflicts. Given their recent lack of experience with proxy conflict amidst growing rivalry and mistrust, the potential grows for direct violence between Russia and the United States in Syria. Despite several incidents of near misses by both sides, the two powers have not agreed upon a process for avoiding direct conflict or de-escalating their involvement in the war.

The quality of different international orders is best judged by the peace and prosperity they bring. By this standard, the contemporary international order has been an unparalleled success. International cooperation in economics and security have brought unprecedented economic growth, and with it a dramatic reduction in poverty. Cooperation in science and health have raised living standards around the world and, with them, increased life expectancy and reduced infant, child, and maternal mortality rates. Cooperation in security has greatly reduced the numbers of civil wars and, with the ending of those wars, more people live in peace than at any time in recent history.

Despite its successes, indeed perhaps because of its successes, the post-Cold War international order faces an existential crisis created by a dramatic rise in national populism within the United States and Europe that has led to policy pronouncements and choices hostile to international cooperation on trade, finance, migration, and security essential for today's order. This rise in populism has been aided

and abetted by Russia, a disgruntled, revisionist power in decline that has developed a sophisticated strategy of disinformation aimed at undermining trust in government, democratic institutions, civil society, and the media in democratic countries with the goal of destroying the domestic foundations for international cooperation in liberal democracies.

Civil wars have been a sideshow in this story. Arguments that their violence and spillovers have been principal causes of the decline in order fail to hold up under scrutiny. But, as the saying goes, past results are no guarantee of future success. As of now, the war in Syria is still an outlier, but an extremely dangerous one. In the absence of prudence and rules of proxy support, Syria remains ripe for escalation to violence between the great powers. Were that to happen, it would bring to an end the post-Cold War era. The great powers would have failed a basic challenge that civil wars pose to all international orders: the need to avoid great-power war in conflicts in which the stakes are marginal to their interests.

Domestic politics in the United States, Great Britain, and Europe will determine whether Western governments will continue to invest and protect the institutions and alliances that have formed the cooperative backbone of recent international order. Should they abandon those institutions and alliances, the ramifications for civil wars will be felt immediately. The post-Cold War order and its management of civil wars delivered important results. The steady decline in the numbers and severity of civil war during the past quarter-century is a testimony to what can be accomplished through sustained international cooperation, itself only possible in the context of an order that sustains a broad peace between the top powers.

If the great powers walk away from the management of civil wars, it will not be the result of the changing distribution of pow-

er in the world.¹⁶ As we argued earlier, the world may be moving to a more multipolar international system, but by any measurement of hard power, the United States will be the dominant actor for years to come. Moreover, nothing per se in a multilateral system need militate against an international regime for managing civil wars. A multilateral system that values international cooperation is much different than a multilateral system that values national-

ism and self-help, with great implications for the treatment of civil wars. Given that the United States will continue to be the most powerful actor in a protomultilateral system, its policies will matter. If the United States turns its back on NATO and the EU and does not invest in the United Nations, then that weak unipolar or protomultilateral system will prove disastrous for civil war management.

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ENDNOTES

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- ¹³ Throughout the development of R2P, its founders never advocated for automaticity of application of the norm. Rather, part of the contribution of R2P was to give decision-makers, especially the UN Security Council, a set of questions that would guide and discipline the application of the norm, and hence make it more legitimate and less divisive and disruptive of order. See Gareth Evans, *The Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and For All* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 128 – 156.
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Civil Wars & Transnational Threats: Mapping the Terrain, Assessing the Links

Stewart Patrick

Abstract: Among the primary strategic rationales for U.S. policy engagement in war-torn states has been the assumption that internal violence generates cross-border spillovers with negative consequences for U.S. and global security, among these transnational terrorism, organized crime, and infectious disease. Closer examination suggests that the connection between internal disorder and transnational threats is situation-specific, contingent on an array of intervening factors and contextual conditions. Taken as a cohort, war-torn states are not the primary drivers of cross-border terrorism, crime, and epidemics, nor do they pose a first-tier, much less existential, threat to the United States. Of greater concern are relatively functional states that maintain certain trappings of sovereignty but are institutionally anemic, thanks to endemic corruption and winner-take-all politics. Ultimately, the most important U.S. stakes in war-torn countries are moral and humanitarian: namely, the imperative of reducing suffering among fellow members of our species.

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For all the differences between the foreign policies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama, one theme that united them was the conviction that global security was only as strong as its weakest link. One year after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Bush issued his first National Security Strategy, which famously declared that “America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.”¹ Fifteen years later, in his last State of the Union address, Obama echoed his predecessor, declaring that the United States was endangered “less by evil empires and more by failing states.”² This was nowhere more apparent than in the turbulent Middle East, which was likely to be mired in a painful, violent transition for a generation or more, providing safe haven to the Islamic State (IS) and other terrorist groups.

In the decade and a half after 9/11, this broadly shared thesis altered the U.S. national security state, shaping the doctrines, budgets, and activities of mul-

multiple agencies, including the Pentagon, State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and intelligence community. As Robert Gates, who served as secretary of defense under both Bush and Obama, explained in 2010: “Dealing with fractured or failing states is . . . the main security challenge of our time.”³

By the time Donald J. Trump was elected president in November 2016, this viewpoint had become firmly entrenched. One of Trump’s first actions in office was to ban immigration from seven Muslim-majority countries embroiled in violence, as well as to suspend refugee admissions, on the grounds that both posed grave threats to U.S. national security.⁴

At times, the U.S. government has described the dangers posed by fragile states in lurid prose, as in this statement from USAID:

When development and governance fail in a country, the consequences engulf entire regions and leap around the world. Terrorism, political violence, civil wars, organized crime, drug trafficking, infectious diseases, environmental crises, refugee flows, and mass migration cascade across the borders of weak states more destructively than ever before.⁵

Hindsight suggests that this diagnosis is too sweeping and, as such, is an uncertain guide to policy. One problem lies in the catch-all category of “weak and failing” (or “fragile”) states, which encompasses a spectrum of some fifty poorly performing countries, most in the developing world. Today, they range from corrupt but stable nations like Kenya to completely collapsed polities like Somalia, right next door. Moreover, many countries that could plausibly be called fragile – like Burundi – have little relevance to U.S. or broader global security, given their marginal connection to the most worrisome transnational threats.

But what of that subset of states mired in civil war, the subject of this volume?

Here, too, nuance is needed. Under certain circumstances, countries experiencing or recovering from violence can contribute to transnational threats of concern to the United States, including terrorism, illegal trafficking, and infectious disease. More generally, civil wars can produce other negative “spillovers.” One is regional instability. This is particularly likely to arise when internal conflicts draw in regional and even great powers.⁶ This is what occurred after Syria began to implode in 2011, helping to destabilize its immediate neighborhood.

Another common spillover is the uncontrolled flow of refugees. In 2015, great numbers of asylum seekers and migrants from Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan, and other conflict zones risked the treacherous journey across the Mediterranean, often by dinghy, testing the unity of the European Union. Closer to Syria, the same exodus placed extraordinary social, economic, and political strains on Lebanon and Jordan, where, by early 2017, Syrian refugees accounted for approximately 25 percent and 10 percent of the total national population in those countries, respectively.⁷ One lesson is that humanitarian crises can have profound political consequences, not only for the nation at war, but also for the countries that end up hosting them.⁸

At the same time, the spillover risks that contemporary civil wars pose – particularly to the United States – should be kept in perspective. For one thing, the connection between internal disorder and transnational threats is situation-specific and contingent on an array of intervening factors and contextual conditions.⁹ For another, none of the transnational dangers that arise from civil wars pose an existential threat to the United States. They are thus hardly comparable to the risks of a potential military clash with a nuclear-armed adversary like Russia or China. Indeed, only rarely do such spillovers rise to the top tier of U.S. national security priorities.

The human suffering created by internal violent conflict is real, horrific, and unjust. But it is borne overwhelmingly by the unfortunate citizens of war-torn states and their immediate neighbors. A case in point is the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Between 1996 and 2008, its civil war may have taken more than five million lives and destabilized central Africa, but it had little material impact on the United States.¹⁰

It is true that the world has become interconnected in unprecedented ways. Still, many war-torn states have much in common with Vegas: what happens there often stays there.¹¹ The challenge for U.S. policy-makers is to think more clearly about the potential linkages between upheaval abroad and insecurity at home, and to consider more honestly the rationales for becoming involved in others' civil wars. The most powerful argument for intervening in internal conflicts is often moral and humanitarian, rather than interest-based and strategic.

Of the many potential spillovers from war-torn states, the one that has seized the imagination of U.S. policy-makers and independent analysts alike is the threat of transnational terrorism. The object lesson remains the searing experience of 9/11, when the Al Qaeda network, based in Afghanistan, a desperately poor country then already at war for more than two decades, orchestrated the most devastating foreign attack on U.S. territory in American history. Osama Bin Laden's ability, from his remote mountain redoubt, to grievously injure the world's most powerful nation spurred the Bush administration to reassess the main perils to U.S. national security. The result was the U.S. declaration of a "global war on terrorism"; among its core strategic goals was to deny terrorists safe havens and other benefits they obtained in the undergoverned, conflict-prone regions of the developing world.¹²

The Obama administration, despite its many ideological and substantive differenc-

es, shared its predecessor's certitude that failed, collapsed, and war-torn states played an integral, even indispensable, role for terrorist networks. This was particularly true when it came to the global *salafi* jihad, an extremist, transnational movement comprising a small minority of Sunni Muslims dedicated to (re)creating an Islamic caliphate, and of which Al Qaeda and the Islamic State are the most prominent exemplars. In 2011, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who had previously warned of "the chaos that flows from failed states," advocated NATO intervention into Libya's civil war to prevent that country from becoming another Somalia, spawning mayhem that crested its borders.¹³

This view was reinforced by the spread of new Al Qaeda and Islamic State "franchises" in insecure, turbulent, or war-torn countries like Libya, Mali, Nigeria, and Yemen, and, of course, by the emergence of the Islamic "State" in war-torn Syria and Iraq. With bipartisan support in Congress, the Obama administration elevated the elimination of terrorist safe havens to a centerpiece of U.S. counterterrorism efforts.¹⁴ This full-spectrum approach included building the capacity of vulnerable partners (like Mali) to undertake counterterrorism operations; expanding drone strikes to assassinate suspected terrorists in "ungoverned areas" (like Pakistan's tribal belt); providing logistical support for intervention by allies (like Saudi Arabia) in civil wars in other countries (like Yemen); deploying U.S. special forces to advise friendly governments battling insurgents (as in Iraq, Libya, and the Philippines); offering intelligence to beleaguered partners facing armed extremists (like Nigeria); supporting counterterrorism efforts by regional bodies (like the African Union in Somalia); and countering extremism in violence-prone states (including through multilateral efforts like the Global Counterterrorism Forum).

As an empirical matter, countries experiencing civil war are indeed at greater risk of experiencing terrorism.¹⁵ In principle, such war-torn states might also provide terrorists with useful assets to pursue a transnational agenda. These potential benefits could include safe havens for leadership cadres, conflict experience, pools of radicalized and/or desperate recruits, illicit revenue streams, and camps from which to plan, train for, and stage operations in other countries.¹⁶

A close look at the evidence, however, suggests that the link between war-torn states and transnational terrorism is more complicated and conditional than commonly imagined. To begin with, the vast majority of terrorist acts in such countries are perpetrated by local groups motivated by local grievances. To be sure, homegrown extremists operating in civil conflicts sometimes pledge fealty to a broader umbrella group with global aspirations. One example is the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, which in 2007 changed its name to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Another is Nigeria's Boko Haram, which offered its allegiance to the Islamic State. But such opportunistic "branding" efforts appear to have little impact on such groups' national or regional focus.

Second, many war-torn states are not hospitable settings for transnational terrorists.¹⁷ Indeed, the notion of a "safe haven" in a violent, collapsed polity "is a bit of an oxymoron."¹⁸ Recent research "suggests that conditions in failed states present major operational challenges for foreign terrorists."¹⁹ Al Qaeda's experiences in Somalia during the early 1990s are telling. According to intercepted messages, Al Qaeda's operatives repeatedly complained about how hard it was to live, plan, raise funds, and conduct operations in a Hobbesian environment with only limited operational security, sources of finance, communications capabilities, transporta-

tion infrastructure, and local support.²⁰ The collapse of state sovereignty in Somalia also left Al Qaeda more vulnerable to attacks by the United States.²¹ Rather than work in such chaotic conditions, transnational terrorist groups may find it more congenial to set up shop in weak states that fall closer to the middle of the fragility spectrum: that is, in nations where governance may be corrupt, dysfunctional, and uneven, but which have not yet failed and collapsed into violence.²²

Third, political and cultural variables are critical. Whether or not transnational terrorists find unstable or war-torn countries hospitable to their operations depends heavily on the political context, including the state's capacity to administer its territory and, importantly, its attitude toward would-be jihadists. Where the government is supportive (as the Taliban was in the case of Al Qaeda) or turns a blind eye (as elements of the Pakistan government have toward several extremist factions) such groups are more likely to flourish. Likewise, the global *salafi* jihad has a better chance to secure a haven in countries – or "alternatively governed" regions of countries²³ – where its brand of Sunni extremism resonates with local tribes.

Fourth, we should acknowledge that the manner in which U.S. analysts define and classify violent attacks can skew our view of the relationship between terrorism and war-torn states. When officials at the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center and other entities collect data, for instance, they typically code as "terrorist attacks" those violent tactics adopted by insurgents (such as the Taliban) in internationalized civil wars, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. The results can be ironic. By this reckoning, some 80 percent of the Americans killed by "terrorists" between 9/11 and 2015 were killed during combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, two countries where sustained U.S. military involvement

was justified precisely to eliminate or prevent terrorist safe havens.²⁴ Or, as Bridget L. Coggins has written, “Much of the [perceived] relationship between state failure and terrorism can plausibly be explained by ‘terrorism as war fighting.’”²⁵ No doubt, the line between insurgents and terrorists can blur (as can the line between terrorists’ local versus global aspirations). But treating terrorists and insurgents as identical risks inflating what is at stake for the United States in others’ civil wars, particularly in the Islamic world.

Fifth, the increasingly decentralized nature of transnational terrorist networks suggests that war-torn states may be less essential to their operations than often imagined. To be sure, the creation of an IS “caliphate” in Syria and Iraq, with its capital Raqqa, provided the organization with a useful territorial base – and an awesome propaganda coup. “These fighters can exploit their safe haven to plan, coordinate, and carry out attacks against the U.S. and Europe,” Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel explained in 2015.²⁶ And yet many attacks against American and European targets have been perpetrated by radicalized citizens living within marginalized immigrant populations in the West, rather than being directed and launched by terrorists from a remote IS enclave.²⁷ Consider the November 2015 mass murder at the Bataclan concert venue in Paris, perpetrated by a cell of European Union citizens and permanent residents, or the June 2016 slaughter at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, committed by a U.S. citizen born to Afghan immigrants. Lone wolf actors, often cultivated by Internet extremists, have become a major worry for law enforcement.

By contrast, “there is no evidence to suggest that terrorists who cross borders to carry out attacks in other countries predominantly originate from failed states.”²⁸ If anything, the flow has been in the opposite direction, with foreign terrorist fight-

ers traveling from the West and middle-income Arab countries to civil war zones. This pattern, of course, is not set in stone. The same fighters could later return to their home countries, even more committed to the jihadist cause and determined to use new combat skills to perpetrate violence there – just as Muslim volunteers who flocked from Gulf countries to resist the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan subsequently returned as battle-hardened mujahideen.

Fortunately for us all, the connection between war-torn states and transnational terror seems particularly tenuous when it comes to WMD (weapons of mass destruction) terrorism. Since 9/11, U.S. officials and experts have been understandably worried about the convergence among failed states, terrorists, and technologies of mass destruction. “Let’s be honest with ourselves,” Secretary of Defense Gates suggested in a 2008 speech, “the most likely catastrophic threats to the U.S. homeland – for example, that of a U.S. city being poisoned or reduced to rubble by a terrorist attack – are more likely to emanate from failing states than from aggressor states.” Fortunately, this scenario seems remote, especially for nuclear weapons.²⁹ It is not easy for terrorists to get their hands on a functioning nuclear device, or even to construct one themselves, given limited access to fissile material. And of the countries that currently possess nuclear weapons, only two – Pakistan and North Korea – regularly appear on lists of weak or failing states, and neither are war-torn. This is not a counsel of complacency. Either nation could collapse into violence, potentially losing control of its arsenal, or decide to sell or transfer its nukes to nonstate actors or another nation. But national security officials would be better served by paying more attention to the trajectory of the specific regimes in Islamabad and Pyongyang, as opposed to the generic category of “failed” or “war-torn” states.

The most important benefits that war-torn states provide to transnational terrorist groups are symbolic. Civil war in the Arab and broader Muslim world provides radical jihadists with evidence that the old political order – dominated by corrupt, apostate regimes and their Western enablers – is crumbling, allowing a caliphate to emerge that will unite and restore dignity to the *ummah*, the community of believers. For extremists wallowing in a narrative of decline and humiliation, a war for Islam against infidel imperialists makes a powerful recruiting tool. If that is so, it lends credence to the arguments of scholars like political scientist Robert Pape who warn that military interventions – whether direct (Afghanistan, Iraq) or by proxy (Syria, Somalia, Yemen) – only enlarge the tumor of Islamic radicalism that Western governments are trying to excise.³⁰

At first glance, the link between war-torn states and transnational crime seems strong – at least for some illegal activities. Afghanistan produces some 70 percent of the world’s opium and Colombia produces a plurality of its coca.³¹ In Africa, Somalia, the quintessential collapsed state, and Nigeria, which has lawless coastal regions, have been epicenters for maritime piracy.³² Meanwhile, Guinea-Bissau – not war-torn but politically unstable – became for several years a subsidiary of Latin American drug cartels, who used the tiny country as a transshipment point for South American cocaine destined for European markets.³³ Or consider the chaos and power vacuum following the NATO intervention in Libya in 2011, which allowed enterprising criminals to seize weapons from Muammar Gaddafi’s arsenal and traffic them across the Sahara. The resulting flood of weapons helped a rebel coalition topple the democratically elected government in Mali in May 2012, and armed a jihadist alliance that gained temporary control over the country’s northeast.³⁴

Certainly, too, distinctions between insurgents and criminals often blur in war-torn states. Rebels and extremist movements like the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Taliban, or the Islamic State have often resorted to criminal activities (such as kidnapping, extortion, or drug trafficking) to finance their activities, just as criminal groups have appropriated the methodologies of terrorists and insurgents to combat law enforcement and intimidate publics.³⁵ And particularly when linked to insurgency movements, illicit networks can nurture an alternative form of governance that Vanda Felbab-Brown labels “protostates,” in which criminals can win the allegiance of the population by delivering some measure of basic services, as well as human security.³⁶

Here again, though, nuance is warranted. Much of the organized crime in war-torn states is localized, and the connections between state failure and transnational crime vary depending on the type of criminal activity.³⁷ Most countries experiencing civil war, for instance, are not heavily implicated in illegal cross-border ventures like human trafficking, money laundering, drug trafficking, or environmental crime (to say nothing of intellectual property theft, cybercrime, and manufacturing of counterfeit merchandise). As with terrorism, it is not state failure that criminals find advantageous, but a more modest level of state weakness: collapsed and war-torn states are generally less attractive than superficially functional states that maintain a baseline level of political order and easy access to the infrastructure of global commerce, but also where corruption is rife, the rule of law absent or imperfectly applied, and gaps in public services and shortages in licit economic opportunities provide openings for illicit actors.

To sell illegal commodities and launder the proceeds, criminals need secure access to financial services and modern telecom-

munications, banking, and transportation. Such requirements are often (though not always) lacking in war-torn states. In their thirst for profits, criminals may be drawn to a convenient geographical base and proximity to the global marketplace, even if it presents other risks. Such factors help explain why Mexico and South Africa – neither of which is a war-torn or even fragile state – have emerged as hotbeds of criminal activity and violence.³⁸

Generally speaking, criminal organizations are inherently attracted to states (or portions of states, such as Transnistria in Moldova) where institutions are weak and corrupt. But beyond that observation, the relationship between transnational criminals and the broad spectrum of fragile states is highly variable, depending on the precise governance gaps that are most useful to specific crimes, and to relevant stages (production, transit, and destination) in an often complex illicit supply chain. The connection also depends on whether criminals are able to ignore, sidestep, penetrate, or even capture the state apparatus.

Some states – like tiny Guinea-Bissau – are so weak institutionally that their territories are easily exploited by transnational criminals. A middle tier of countries are “Swiss cheese” states: they may “work” at a superficial level, but criminals deploy corruption to hollow out and capture certain state functions (like the judiciary and law enforcement) or to gain effective control over portions of the nation’s territory. The Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, which have not experienced war recently but do suffer from high levels of violence, fall into this category. Large swathes of each country are in effect no-go areas for authorities, providing avenues for drug transshipment.³⁹

A third category comprises those states that are so penetrated by corruption that they have become fully functioning crim-

inal enterprises, justifying the term “Mafia state,” popularized by columnist Moisés Naím. A relevant case is Liberia, which under former strongman President Charles Taylor auctioned off elements and symbols of sovereignty – including diamond mine concessions, ship registries, and passports – to the highest bidder. But state capture is not confined to war-torn states. Several high-ranking Venezuelan officials have been officially labeled “drug kingpins” by the U.S. government. Today, the quintessential “Soprano state” may be North Korea, whose authoritarian regime keeps itself afloat by trafficking in illicit commodities from methamphetamines to weapons.⁴⁰

Finally, any claims about the connections between civil wars and transnational crime must include a disclaimer about the paucity of hard data.⁴¹ Unlike Fortune 500 corporations, criminal networks do not publish quarterly reports or boast (at least publicly) of their surging market share. Accordingly, estimates of the dimensions of illicit activities cannot be taken at face value. Many commonly cited figures, including databases maintained by reputable sources like the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, rely on self-reporting from governments, which may be tempted to lowball (or, alternatively, exaggerate) the scale of their problems. In other cases, oft-quoted numbers come from third parties, which may have an axe to grind. The world is a long way from having robust data on what Celina Realuyo of the National Defense University calls the four “Ms” of the global illicit supply chain: namely, material (what is moving and how much); manpower (who is moving it); money (how it is being financed); and mechanism (the trafficking routes and modes of transport).⁴²

Pandemic disease is an oft-cited third horseman in the war-torn state apocalypse. In this view, the weakest links in global pub-

lic health are those countries where violence has damaged or destroyed health infrastructure, leaving governments without the means to detect, respond to, and contain outbreaks of deadly diseases. At first glance, this seems a reasonable fear. To begin with, the world's most fragile states certainly shoulder a disproportionate share of the global disease burden. Moreover, noncombat mortality and morbidity consistently deteriorate both during and after war. Nor is it a coincidence that polio – to pick just one infectious disease – has resurfaced in recent years both in Syria's collapsed state and in Pakistan's volatile tribal regions.

Again, though, a bit of perspective is in order. Most war-torn states remain a sideshow when it comes to the most worrisome, indeed catastrophic, threats to global public health. Since the end of the Cold War, the infectious diseases that have hit the world's failed and conflict-prone states the hardest have tended to be either endemic (such as malaria, cholera, or measles) or the long-wave pandemic of HIV/AIDS, which is now (after several brutal decades) finally in abeyance. By contrast, there is little correlation between patterns of state fragility and the outbreak and transmission of those infectious diseases with the greatest pandemic potential: namely, short-wave, rapid-onset respiratory infections along the lines of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and, especially, influenza.

Let us first consider the question of risk. A nation's vulnerability to infectious disease is a function not only of the state of public health infrastructure, but also of ecological, geographic, cultural, technological, and demographic variables.⁴³ Today, as Paul Wise and Michele Barry note, the main global "hotspots" for emerging infectious diseases are "areas where new or intense human activity coincides with high wildlife and microbial diversity."⁴⁴ In principle, a civil war in any of these regions would reduce state

capacities for prevention, detection, and response. But a country's performance in managing disease outbreaks is also shaped by the quality of the nation's governance, regardless of whether it is experiencing violent conflict. In the first decade of the millennium, China, Indonesia, and South Africa all failed in their responses to particular epidemics (respectively, SARS, avian influenza, and HIV/AIDS) in part because of their regimes' lack of candor and resistance to external assistance. Finally, the global salience of local infectious disease outbreaks is likely to be greater the more tightly integrated the site of the outbreak is to modern transportation and trading networks – a fact that could help contain epidemics in many, though certainly not all, war-torn states.⁴⁵

A partial and worrisome exception to this generalization is the 2014 Ebola outbreak in the West African nations of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, all desperately poor countries that had emerged from civil wars but were still recovering from those conflicts. Previous incidences of Ebola had arisen in isolated locations and rapidly burned themselves out. This time, the situation quickly escalated into a public health emergency of international concern. Although the epidemic was largely confined to these three countries, where it took an estimated 11,301 lives (and only fifteen elsewhere), it might well have spread further.⁴⁶ Institutional weaknesses in all three nations gave momentum to the epidemic, which overwhelmed rudimentary national capacities for delivering primary care and monitoring and responding to infectious disease. Before the outbreak, for instance, Liberia had only one doctor and thirty nurses per one hundred thousand inhabitants.⁴⁷ In addition, populations were wary of cooperating with government officials throughout the crisis, reflecting a low level of confidence in public institutions that is a common feature of postconflict societies.

The Ebola experience suggests that institutional weaknesses in war-torn states can under certain circumstances enable the spread of deadly epidemics, particularly when the multilateral system (including the World Health Organization, which performed poorly in this case) fails to lead a robust early response.⁴⁸ It also raises the question of what the international community should – or could – do were such a potential pandemic to arise in a country that was in the throes of a full-blown civil war. Such a situation would likely confront the United States and other major powers with a difficult choice: either to quarantine the affected state, at potentially terrible human cost to the nation’s inhabitants, or to lead an international military (and public health) intervention, with uncertain costs to the United States itself.

The three transnational threats discussed above differ in fundamental respects, of course. Jihadist terrorism is a political activity undertaken by religiously motivated, nonstate groups that are convinced that attacks on government and civilian targets – and, in the case of IS, incitement of civil war – will hasten the arrival of a new order in the form of a caliphate consistent with their uncompromising ideology. Transnational crime is, on the other hand, an economic activity, whose profit-motivated practitioners respond to demand and supply signals in the global marketplace for illicit commodities. Pandemic disease, finally, is a “threat without a threatener,” which arises when new or reemerging pathogens exploit gaps in national and global systems for prevention, detection, and response.

As the world becomes more interdependent – politically, economically, and epidemiologically – we should expect transnational terrorism, crime, and epidemics to exploit new networks and vectors. But whether or not civil war will be a major catalyst in their spread remains unclear. The

analysis above suggests that violent conflict can often be as much of a hindrance as an enabling factor in the spread of transnational terrorism, cross-border crime, and infectious disease. Too much insecurity and violence can eliminate terrorist safe havens and complicate illicit trafficking. Civil war can also isolate countries and regions from transportation linkages that might otherwise facilitate the rapid spread of disease outbreaks.

Of greater global concern than war-torn states may be relatively functional states that maintain certain trappings of sovereignty but are institutionally anemic, thanks to endemic corruption and winner-take-all politics. (Indeed, securing and privatizing national revenue streams is too often the primary goal of ruling regimes.)⁴⁹ Such countries have not collapsed into war but often struggle to deliver the goods associated with modern statehood, notably maintaining a stable economy, delivering basic social welfare, providing accountable governance, and securing their territory and frontiers. Overall, civil wars may pose fewer dangers to global security than “areas of limited statehood,” to use Thomas Risse and Eric Stollenwerk’s phrase.⁵⁰

Whether a war-torn state generates negative cross-border spillovers is contingent on intervening variables. A nonexhaustive list might include the nature and capabilities of the governing regime, the presence of “alternatively governed” spaces, the causes of the underlying conflict and its duration and intensity, the existence of illicit commodities in high international demand, the country’s geographic location and integration into the world economy, and the influence of powerful external state actors.

The most important factor is the capacity and commitment of the government itself to address the relevant threat. For instance, in cases where the ruling regime is sympathetic toward jihadist terrorism, implicated in illicit trafficking, or unrespon-

sive during infectious disease outbreaks – or, alternatively, where it is well-intentioned but has no capability to act on its will – the relevant threats will be more difficult to contain. Where major territories are outside of the government’s control, terrorists and criminals may find shelter within alternative governance structures provided by local tribes or insurgents, though this is by no means guaranteed.

More generally, opportunities for transnational spillovers will inevitably be shaped by the nature of the specific civil war, including its root causes, territorial range, duration, and ferocity. A sectarian conflict that resonates with religious communities in other nations, for example, is more likely to become linked with transnational terrorism than a more straightforward struggle for power between ethnic groups within a particular nation. Similarly, while many civil wars are motivated and/or sustained by the presence of natural resources and the struggle to control these, cross-border spillovers will be more likely when the relevant commodities are illicit and in high global demand, such as narcotics, the production and trafficking of which benefits from local insecurity. Similarly, all things being equal, the linkage between internal strife and transnational threats is likelier to be tightest when the war-torn state is in close proximity to or has ready access to the transportation infrastructure, communications networks, financial systems, and other sinews of globalization.

Finally, the involvement of outside powers – either neighboring states or great powers – can determine whether violent conflict stays contained within or spills over the borders of war-torn states. External involvement can also influence whether cross-border networks of illicit actors emerge and flourish, or instead find themselves targeted and even eliminated. With this in mind, it is worthwhile to consider whether the contemporary world is enter-

ing a new phase, more reminiscent of the Cold War than the first two decades that followed it. During the long bipolar confrontation, many civil wars were internationalized, not least in the developing world. As global power continues to diffuse and geopolitical competition reemerges, we may well enter a new era of internationalized civil wars. If so, we should expect, as Barry Posen does, that local conflicts will increasingly become settings for proxy battles between powerful external actors pursuing their own agendas.⁵¹ Were this trend to gain momentum, the result could be an increase in the number, duration, and severity of civil wars, with a concomitant erosion in world order, particularly when it comes to cooperative efforts to manage violent conflict.

Acknowledging the importance of such intervening variables and contextual factors is critical for policy-makers, as it can help the United States avoid a “whack-a-mole” strategy, according to which all war-torn or failed states are threats to U.S. national security. An obvious place to begin would be for the executive branch to direct the U.S. intelligence community to develop a “consequences matrix” that assesses potential transnational spillovers from an updated list of war-torn and post-conflict states. Ideally, it would rank these cross-border consequences according to both likelihood and importance, as well as analyze the most relevant causal linkages. Attention to intervening variables should also widen the range of policy options for U.S. officials, potentially allowing them to tailor responses and target interventions that can cut any identified links between a particular civil war and a specific transnational threat (such as drug production or trafficking). Such a selective, nuanced approach is also more likely to resonate with the American public, whose exhaustion with nation-building abroad was one factor that propelled Donald J. Trump to the presidency.

A more realistic assessment of the dangers that civil wars pose to the United States can also reorient our attention from strategic to moral considerations. It is the suffering of strangers, more than any other spill-over, that should motivate U.S. and global concern with war-torn states. Since the end of the Cold War, and especially since 9/11, U.S. political leaders and national security officials have repeatedly warned of the “coming anarchy” that flows from failed states.⁵² But the greatest “threat” posed by internal violence is to our common humanity. Failed and war-torn states are the world’s greatest generators of human misery. They are the overwhelming source of the world’s refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the settings for some of the world’s worst human rights abuses, including mass atrocities like genocide, ethnic cleansing, and systematic rape. They are also, often, the countries furthest from international development objectives, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is humanitarian concerns, above all, that justify U.S. involvement in most contemporary war-torn states. In 2016, the global number of displaced persons reached a record 65.6 million (including 40.3 million IDPs, 22.5 million refugees, and 2.8 million asylum seekers with cases pending). More than half of all refugees came from just three war-torn countries: Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan.⁵³ The other seven nations rounding out the top ten were also experiencing (or recovering from) high levels of violence: Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Myanmar, Eritrea, and Burundi. In addition to those who crossed borders, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that, in 2016, 6.9 million people were newly displaced within their own countries by conflict or persecution.⁵⁴ Beyond disrupting the lives of tens of millions, the contemporary crisis of dis-

placement places heavy demands on host countries, which must cope not only with unanticipated costs, but also, as Sarah Kenyon Lischer notes, with the prospect that new arrivals “may exacerbate existing political, ethnic, or religious tensions.”⁵⁵

As one would expect, mass atrocity crimes also occur primarily during wartime, particularly in communal conflicts pitting rival ethnic and/or religious communities against each other. While assessments vary, over the past decade, mass atrocities have arguably been committed in at least ten countries, among them Burundi, the Central African Republic, Eritrea, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan, Sri Lanka, and, of course, Syria, all of which have experienced significant internal upheaval and violence.⁵⁶

Finally, as economist Paul Collier has written, civil war is “development in reverse.”⁵⁷ The inhabitants of countries experiencing (or recently emerged from) civil war are more likely than their counterparts in other countries to be poor and malnourished, endure gender discrimination, lack access to education and basic health care, and die young or suffer from chronic illness. Over the past quarter-century, the world has made tremendous advances in development. The number of people living in extreme poverty has been halved, as has the number of low-income countries (having a gross national income per capita of \$1,045 or less). Of the thirty-one low-income countries – all but five of which (Afghanistan, Cambodia, Haiti, Nepal, and North Korea) are in sub-Saharan Africa – approximately half are experiencing or recovering from internal conflict.⁵⁸

Analysts and policy-makers alike should bear these data points in mind when they assess and communicate to the public what is at stake for the United States in other peoples’ civil wars. It is the chance to alleviate the suffering of strangers, more than any narrow national benefit.

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Transnational Jihadism & Civil Wars

Martha Crenshaw

Abstract: When rebels also employ terrorism, civil wars can become more intractable. Since the 1980s, jihadism, a form of violent transnational activism, has mobilized civil war rebels, outside entrepreneurs, foreign fighters, and organizers of transnational as well as domestic terrorism. These activities are integral to the jihadist trend, representing overlapping and conjoined strands of the same ideological current, which in turn reflects internal division and dissatisfaction within the Arab world and within Islam. Jihadism, however, is neither unitary nor monolithic. It contains competing power centers and divergent ideological orthodoxies. Different jihadist actors emphasize different priorities and strategies. They disagree, for example, on whether the “near” or the “far” enemy should take precedence. The relationship between jihadist terrorism and civil war is far from uniform or constant. This essay traces the trajectory of this evolution, beginning in the 1980s in the context of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

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Transnational violence in the name of jihadist ideology is intermingled with civil conflict in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Jihadists are civil war actors as well as transnational terrorists.¹ According to James Fearon, in 1990, only 5 percent of civil conflicts featured jihadist rebels; by 2014, the proportion had increased to 40 percent.² Since the 1980s, jihadism has incorporated a medley of civil war rebels, outside entrepreneurs, trainers, funders, recruiters of foreign fighters, and organizers of transnational as well as domestic terrorism. Transnational coalitions link distant local conflicts. These activities are integral to the jihadist trend that developed within Islam in the 1980s, representing overlapping and conjoined strands derived from the same general ideological current, which in turn reflects dissatisfaction within the Arab world and within Islam. Jihadists primarily seek power in Muslim-majority countries or areas, and terrorism against the West and neighboring states represents the spillover of that conflict.³

Jihadism is a strain of violent, radical, and exclusivist Sunni Islamism. The central tenet of the ideology

and the narrative that supports it is the urgent need to defend the worldwide Muslim community, the *umma*, from both foreign occupiers and domestic infidels and non-believers. As political scientist Thomas Hegghammer has argued, jihadism is as much about national identity and imagined community as about religion and faith.⁴ It is a form of violent transnational activism that aims to mobilize Muslims worldwide to restore a strict conception of political and religious order stemming from the early days of Islam. Many adherents fall into the category of what Tanisha Fazal calls “religionist rebels.”⁵

This is not to say that jihadism is a unitary or monolithic movement. It encompasses competing power centers and divergent ideological orthodoxies, as exemplified in the split between the Islamic State (ISIS) and its former patron, Al Qaeda. Moreover, different jihadist actors emphasize different priorities and strategies. They disagree, for example, on whether the “near” or the “far” enemy should take precedence and whether or not spectacular terrorist attacks against civilians in the West are worthwhile or justified. The majority of the victims of Islamist terrorism are Muslim, and different factions argue over whether Islam allows or prohibits killing fellow Muslims. The Islamic State and Al Qaeda think differently about cooperating with local rebels and trying to attract popular support in civil conflicts. They diverge on the issue of establishing a caliphate in Syria and Iraq. Islamic State doctrine is much more prone to sectarianism and attacks on Shia civilians, as well as publicized atrocities.

Finding distinct one-way causal mechanisms in this complex tangle is difficult if not impossible. Civil conflict may facilitate the export of terrorism by providing safe havens for those organizing attacks, but sanctuary in failed states or ungoverned spaces is only part of the story. Civil conflicts are attractions for foreign fighters from the re-

gion or from distant countries. Rebellions can also inspire “homegrown” terrorists or “lone wolves.” Jihadist affiliates who are local civil war rebels use terrorism to strike at hostile neighboring states. At the same time, jihadist terrorism, inside and outside of conflict zones, and influxes of foreign fighters can alter the course of civil wars. Both terrorism and the involvement of foreign fighters can contribute to the escalation and intensification of violence and make conflicts harder to resolve.⁶ Transnational terrorism provokes American drone strikes against jihadist leaders and, in general, terrorism may increase the likelihood of foreign military intervention in civil wars. Foreign intervention, in turn, sparks terrorism against occupying forces, their local allies, and their home countries. Foreign fighters may return home to join the ranks of rebels in ongoing conflicts or to orchestrate acts of terrorism in otherwise peaceful and stable environments. The ease of communication and travel in a globalized world facilitates all of these interconnections. The ubiquity of social media and Internet communications promotes individual-level “homegrown” mobilization across national borders. The fact that acts of terrorism against undefended civilian targets, such as public transportation or crowded markets, are relatively easy and cheap to carry out further compounds the problem.⁷

Despite the importance of these path intersections and interdependencies, it is still rare to find systematic academic studies of the linkages between civil war, jihadism, domestic terrorism, transnational terrorism, and foreign fighter recruitment. Most typically, each subject is studied in isolation from the others. Hegghammer has examined jihadist foreign fighter recruitment, and some recent analyses have explored the relationship between civil war and domestic terrorism. Political scientist Page Fortna, for example, found that rebels who used terrorism at home were less

likely to win.⁸ These studies typically conclude by calling for an end to the neglect of the subject.⁹ How transnational terrorism and civil war are linked and how these linkages change over time are questions that remain largely uncharted territory. How terrorism relates to foreign military intervention in civil wars is also an open question.

This essay proceeds to trace the trajectory of this evolution, beginning in the 1980s in the context of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. After this launch period, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the victory of the mujahideen in Afghanistan, the Balkan Wars of the 1990s, and violent discontent in Egypt contributed to the expansion of Al Qaeda's version of jihadism. The shock of the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon marked the start of a new era dominated by the global war on terrorism and American and Western military involvement in civil conflicts, beginning with Afghanistan. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 led to another shift in trajectory as jihadists became key actors in the conflict between Sunni insurgents, coalition forces, and the new Shia-dominated regime. From that point on, jihadists became active participants in an expanding number of civil wars, either through the insertion of operatives from global organizations (for example, Al Qaeda in Yemen and later the Islamic State in Libya) or when local rebels signed onto the global movement's agenda (for example, there are jihadist affiliates and clients in Algeria, Mali, Somalia, and Nigeria).¹⁰ The uprising against the Assad regime in Syria and the ensuing civil war provided another opening, which led to a decisive split within jihadism as the organization that was Al Qaeda in Iraq transformed itself into the independent Islamic State and declared a caliphate under its governance in Iraq and Syria in 2014. Its seizure of substantial areas of both countries changed the stakes for both jihadists and their adversaries and al-

tered the course of the civil war in Syria. The Islamic State became the focus of American military intervention, while Iran supported Assad, who was later assisted by Russian intervention. France became involved militarily and, by 2016, Turkey was also drawn in. All of these external parties have been the targets of transnational jihadist terrorism. But there is a distinction between assisting local parties and intervening directly, and between air power and soldiers on the ground. By 2017, the Islamic State's caliphate was on the verge of collapse, but the end of the caliphate will not mean the end of jihadism. In fact, in the long run, the primary benefactor of the civil war in Syria and jihadist involvement may be Al Qaeda.

In the 1980s, civil war served as inspiration and validation for the burgeoning jihadist project. Political scientist Gilles Kepel has traced radical Islamism to the 1970s, with its rise cemented by the victory of Khomeini in 1979.¹¹ Violence by small Islamist conspiracies, marked by the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979 and the assassination of Egypt's Anwar Sadat in 1981, was an early signal of confrontation between Sunni Arab regimes and jihadists with revolutionary aspirations. But the crucible for the birth of jihadism as both ideology and practice that linked civil war and transnational terrorism was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and resistance by the mujahideen. The framing of the war as a struggle pitting Islam against the foreign invader was key to Abdullah Azzam's appeal, announced in 1984 with a fatwa titled *Defence of Muslim Lands*. It called for defensive jihad – to fight on behalf of the Afghans – as the individual as well as collective responsibility of all Muslims.¹² However, Azzam's ambition went beyond liberating Afghanistan from Soviet occupation; in 1985, he announced that his own homeland of Palestine would be next on the path of great battles for Islam, followed by Arab regimes that re-

fused to assist in jihad. Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad organization who joined Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan in 1985 after his release from an Egyptian prison, also emphasized the overthrow of apostate Arab regimes. Afghanistan was to be a springboard to revolution in the Muslim world.

Having failed to defeat the American-assisted insurgency, the Soviet Union withdrew in 1989. Thus, in the 1990s, with success in hand, the foreign fighters dispersed, and Bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia. The organization of Arab volunteers established for Afghanistan, the "Afghan Arabs," became the core of Al Qaeda under Bin Laden's leadership. Egyptians played key roles in the military command. The perceived victory of the mujahideen in Afghanistan, embellished by a mythology that exaggerated the contribution of what was actually a relatively small number of Arab foreign fighters, endowed jihadism with even more prestige. The collapse of the Soviet Union further enhanced the significance of the triumph in jihadist eyes, and it also left in its wake new Muslim-majority countries and powerful separatist movements, for example, in Chechnya.

The question now was the next step. As political scientist Kim Cragin has observed, Bin Laden did not immediately turn to terrorist attacks against the United States.¹³ Instead, he expressed interest in joining the ongoing conflicts in Kashmir and Yemen. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 led the Saudi regime to invite the United States to station troops on its soil, a move that Bin Laden vehemently rejected. Still, in the early 1990s, Al Qaeda focused on assisting local Muslim militants, including rebels in Egypt, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and then Somalia, Bosnia, Tajikistan, Chechnya, and the Philippines. Assistance included military training as well as religious indoctrination and funding. In 1991, Bin Laden relocated from Saudi Ara-

bia to Sudan, where the National Islamic Front had assumed power in 1989.

Al Qaeda's leaders may have seen the American intervention in Somalia as a new opportunity to strike a blow against foreign occupiers of Muslim lands. But when the United States withdrew in 1994, Al Qaeda turned its attention again to overthrowing Arab regimes.¹⁴ The Arabian Peninsula remained central to the leadership's thinking. The Saudi crackdown on dissent was further incentive for challenging the monarchy.

By the mid-1990s, Al Qaeda was active in both Sudan and Afghanistan, which had drifted into civil war. Training camps there sheltered recruits from Egypt, Chechnya, Uzbekistan, and Palestine. Egyptian Islamic Jihad militants, driven out of Egypt following an assassination attempt against the prime minister, moved to Sudan. After the 1995 Dayton Accords, Bosnian fighters also returned. Al Qaeda was now thoroughly transnational in terms of organization, location, membership, and ambitions for jihad. It was also part of a broader transformation of nationalist conflicts into Islamist struggles, as in the case of Chechnya. Political scientist Kristin Bakke has attributed this shift to the influence of transnational insurgents, or foreign fighters, especially the Arab contingent, which brought recruits, weapons, experience, and access to funding. She also noted that the Islamist framing of the war coincided with the adoption of the new tactics of suicide attacks and cross-border terrorism.¹⁵

In 1996, Bin Laden moved back to Afghanistan, on the eve of the Taliban's seizure of power. It was at this point that Al Qaeda declared war against the United States and its "Judeo-Christian alliance," which announced the beginning of the decades-long campaign of terrorism against jihadism's Western enemies and their allies. Al Qaeda thus benefitted from sanctuary, not in ungoverned spaces, lawless zones, or

territories unsettled by civil wars, but where sympathetic regimes held power.

The idea of attacking the United States at home was not new, as reflected in the first bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993. The perpetrators included Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's nephew Ramzi Yousef, who claimed to be acting to punish the United States for its support of Israel. Yousef was also instrumental in the 1995 Bojinka plot, which was intended to blow up multiple airliners flying from Asia to the United States. When the plot was discovered in the Philippines, Yousef was apprehended in Pakistan and tried, convicted, and sentenced to life in prison by American courts for his roles in both the 1993 bombing and the failed 1995 plot. Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, a prominent Islamist cleric from Egypt, was also indicted for his involvement in the World Trade Center bombing. He received a life sentence for a linked plot to bomb a series of New York landmarks and died in prison in 2017.

Al Qaeda opened its campaign of terrorism against the United States with the bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and the United States retaliated with cruise missile strikes in Sudan and Afghanistan. In the build-up to the 9/11 attacks, the embassy bombings were followed by the bombing of the *USS Cole* in Yemen as well as a series of potentially deadly but intercepted plots, including an attempt to bomb Los Angeles International Airport. The operative in question in the LAX plot was an Algerian trained in Afghanistan who entered the United States from Canada.

This connection highlights another point of overlap between jihadism, civil war, and transnational terrorism in the 1990s: Algeria. Here, violent confrontation grew from a failed effort by Islamist political parties to take power through the democratic process. In December 1991, the Algerian military stepped in to cancel parliamentary

elections that the Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win. The Front was banned, and its members were arrested by the thousands. Several armed groups formed, some linked to the Front, others independent and more extreme, and bloody fighting continued through the decade.

Civil conflict spilled over in two ways: One was terrorism in France. The Armed Islamic Group, known by its French acronym GIA, had attacked widely and indiscriminately within Algeria, targeting not just the government but also the Algerian political and cultural elite, unveiled women, journalists, insufficiently Islamist schools, and foreigners, among other civilians. In December 1994, the GIA famously hijacked a plane from Algiers to France, a crisis that ended with a French commando rescue. In 1995, there were bombings and bombing plots in Paris and Lyon, often against the metro and the regional train network. The strategic logic of these attacks may have been coercive, to compel the French to halt their support of the Algerian government, but competition on the rebel side and the prospect of ascendancy over the rival Islamic Front might have also been a motive.

The second spillover was a regional transfer of jihadist militancy outside Algeria's borders into the Sahel region, in part caused by high levels of domestic terrorism. In 1997 and 1998, Algeria suffered a series of terrible civilian massacres when entire villages were brutally and indiscriminately attacked. Responsibility is still disputed, but the GIA was widely blamed. As a result, the Islamic Front's armed units announced a cease-fire, and the GIA began to splinter. One faction broke away to become the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, which soon expanded its reach across Algeria's borders into Mali, Niger, and Chad. This expansion was probably a displacement of activity due to the Algerian government's success in ending the civil war, which included

a controversial amnesty program for former combatants that eventually weakened the militant groups. In the end, the excesses of the most violent militants discredited Islamism, and this distrust combined with fear of instability also discouraged popular uprisings during the Arab Spring. By 2007, the Salafist Group was formally allied with Al Qaeda and became Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). AQIM brought wealth and local contacts to the alliance, while Al Qaeda central brought the prestige of a global brand and access to communications networks. AQIM's allegiance was announced by an attack on the United Nations headquarters in Algiers.

The stunning shock of the 2001 attacks launched a new era dominated by the global war on terror and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. In the case of Afghanistan, transnational terrorism provoked military intervention that led to a return to civil war. After 2001, Al Qaeda was constrained by American military pressure, the defeat of the host Taliban, and the necessity of shifting its center of gravity from Afghanistan to Pakistan, but the invasion of Iraq provided a critical new opportunity for jihadists who were waiting in the wings – the origin story of the Islamic State. In retrospect, jihadists could probably not have hoped for a more propitious development. The United States now occupied a country at the heart of the Arab Middle East, and its Sunni population was in open rebellion. Ironically, the United States had removed an apostate Arab ruler generally hated by jihadists, but the replacement was an even more despised Shia government.

Jihadists now sought an active role as rebels in Iraq, but transnational terrorism continued as well. Why both? Different jihadist actors were the agents, and perhaps it also seemed reasonable to act as a combined terrorist and insurgent force in Iraq while keeping up the pressure with transnation-

al attacks to punish the United States and its allies and mobilize worldwide support, including by attracting foreign fighters. Al Qaeda was hardly passive between the fall of 2001 and the invasion of Iraq in spring 2003. It is likely that many attacks were already in the planning and implementation stages as follow-ons to 9/11.¹⁶ In late 2001, the famous “shoe bomber” tried to bring down an American Airlines flight over the Atlantic. In 2002, Al Qaeda operatives exploded a truck carrying natural gas at a historic synagogue on the Tunisian island of Djerba, killing mostly German tourists. Al Qaeda's Indonesian affiliate Jemaah Islamiya organized the bombings of tourist sites in Bali, killing over two hundred people, with Australia apparently the main target. Israeli tourists were similarly targeted in Kenya.

The jihadist leader poised to seize the opportunity on the ground in Iraq was Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.¹⁷ Zarqawi was a Jordanian who had fought in Afghanistan independently of Bin Laden's organization. He returned to Jordan in 1993 to challenge the monarchy and was promptly caught and sentenced to prison, where he gained a loyal following. In 1999, he was released in the general amnesty that accompanied King Abdullah's accession to the throne. Before returning to Afghanistan, he may have played a role in the “millennium plots” that targeted Jordanian hotels and alarmed the United States. In Afghanistan, he met Bin Laden, who apparently funded his training camp in western Afghanistan. In late 2001, Zarqawi left for Iran, basing himself there and in Iraqi Kurdistan. In 2002, he directed the assassination of an American diplomat in Jordan. By August 2003, he had moved into Iraq, where he organized the bombings of the Jordanian embassy and the UN headquarters. The bombing of a Shia shrine in Najaf introduced his strategy of provoking a sectarian civil war, which intensified after the bombing of the Golden Mosque in

Samarra in 2006. Videotaped beheadings of hostages began in 2004, with the first victim an American. Zarqawi also continued his campaign against Jordan with an attempt on military intelligence headquarters in Amman.

In fall 2004, Zarqawi pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda, and his group became Al Qaeda in Iraq, or AQI. It was a tactical alliance based on expediency, and disagreements broke out almost immediately over Zarqawi's brutality and sectarian violence against Shia, including attacks on religious institutions such as mosques, pilgrimages, and funeral processions. Suicide bombings of hotels in Amman that killed large numbers of Muslims did not improve relations. Yet paradoxically, at the same time, Al Qaeda and its other affiliates were organizing bombings in Riyadh, Casablanca, Jakarta, Istanbul, and again Bali, as well as bombings against public transportation targets that caused mass casualties in Western capitals, first in Madrid in 2004 and then in London in 2005. There were more attempts to bring down airliners.

In 2006, an American bomb killed Zarqawi. His successor, an Egyptian, renamed AQI the "Islamic State of Iraq," or ISI, possibly in an effort to legitimize an organization that was suspected locally of being too foreign, or perhaps simply out of ambition and zeal. He also named an Iraqi as nominal head of the "new" organization. In 2007, the United States increased troop levels in Iraq, and Sunni tribal leaders united to reject ISI and, in many cases, to ally with coalition forces. In 2010, the two ISI leaders were killed by American bombs; the replacement was Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. When he assumed power, the future of the organization looked bleak.

However, Al Qaeda had affiliates beyond Iraq. The organization had not abandoned its goal of overthrowing the Saudi regime, but terrorism provoked severe repression. In 2009, the remaining Saudi branch

merged with Al Qaeda in Yemen, thus forming Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP. One of its first moves was a thwarted attempt to assassinate Saudi Prince Mohammed Bin Nayef. The group moved swiftly outside the region to attempt to destroy a Northwest Airlines flight from Amsterdam to Detroit, in the famous 2009 "underwear bomber" case involving a Nigerian recruit trained in Yemen. In 2010, bombs were placed on cargo planes flying from Yemen to the United States, although the plot was foiled. But an added concern was AQAP's proficiency in online propaganda, especially in the English language, as exemplified by its *Inspire* magazine and the call for supporters in the West to act independently at home. For example, the 2009 shooting at the Little Rock military recruiting office by Carlos Bledsoe, an American convert to Islam, was linked to AQAP. American-born leader Anwar al-Awlaki was an influential ideologue as well as operational planner. He inspired Major Nidal Hassan, the 2009 Fort Hood shooter, for example. But in an era of drone warfare, terrorist leaders are hard-pressed to find safe havens, and an American drone strike killed Awlaki in 2011.

The death of Osama Bin Laden in an American raid in Pakistan in 2011 was a blow to worldwide jihadism but did not slow the movement's momentum. The year 2011 also marked two major but unexpected changes in the context for jihadist violence. The first event was the withdrawal of American and coalition forces from Iraq at the end of the year. The second was the Arab Spring.

When the United States left Iraq, the Islamic State of Iraq was in decline. It could still organize domestic terrorist attacks against undefended civilian targets, but its potential as an insurgent force that could threaten internal stability had waned. Its fortunes improved when the Iraqi government failed either to provide security or to incorporate Sunnis into political and secu-

rity institutions. The combination of Sunni dissatisfaction and general insecurity was conducive to a revival of ISI, which began to reassert itself through domestic terrorism against Shia civilians and against the Baghdad government. ISI also attracted support from nonjihadist Sunni opposition groups, some with useful military expertise.

Simultaneously, in Syria, opportunities opened. In early 2011, protests broke out against the authoritarian regime of Bashar al-Assad. When the state responded with unexpected repressiveness, violence escalated. Factions from all sides, including democrats, jihadists, nonjihadist Islamists, Kurds, and others joined the rebellion, which was generally favored in the West.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the regime, supported by Iran and its client Hezbollah, exhibited surprising staying power. Estimates vary, but by April 2016, the United Nations Special Envoy concluded that the civil war had cost 470,000 lives. Around five million Syrians had fled the country, contributing to a refugee crisis in Europe, and over six million were internally displaced. The civil war also led to direct military intervention by outside actors, including the United States, France, Russia, Iran, Jordan, and Turkey (which deployed ground troops in 2016), and indirect involvement from the Gulf monarchies.

The formation of the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham, thus ISIS, or of Iraq and the Levant, thus ISIL, began when both Al Qaeda central and the Islamic State of Iraq were drawn to fighting in Syria. Combat against a secular Arab dictator was a perfect occasion for jihadists, especially since, from their perspective, Assad was doubly apostate, being both secular and Shia. The fact that Assad was not an ally of the United States and indeed that the United States strongly opposed him was inconsequential. Syria was a rallying cry for jihadists around the world, and as the civil war spread, it became a magnet for foreign

fighters. By the end of 2015, estimates were that between 27,000 and 31,000 foreign fighters from eighty-six different countries had gone to Syria and Iraq, most of them from Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and Russia.¹⁹ Out of the five thousand total from Europe, large numbers came from France, Belgium, and Germany. Foreigners included supporters as well as opponents of Assad; for example, Iraq's Shia militias were drawn into the conflict, as was Hezbollah.

The formal break between Al Qaeda and ISI came in 2013 as a result of a dispute over who would represent Al Qaeda in Syria. The outcome was that the Al Nusra Front, which was established as a Syrian outpost in 2011, became Al Qaeda's main branch, and the Islamic State struck out on its own. Having picked up momentum in Syria, ISIS swept back into Iraq and, in 2014, seized Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, and declared a caliphate with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the caliph. As it consolidated its control, the caliphate was now a state within a state in significant areas of both Syria and Iraq. Its reign was harshly intolerant, punishing the slightest deviation from strict Islamic law and brutal to the point of genocide against religious minorities. The reliance on violence that is extreme even by terrorist standards distinguished it from other rebel groups, even other jihadists. Taken by surprise, the United States began air strikes against the caliphate soon after and was increasingly drawn into the conflict as the war unfolded in both Syria and Iraq.

Political scientist Daniel Byman argues that terrorism is an integral part of the Islamic State's civil war strategy.²⁰ Terrorism can disconcert and distract enemies, even deter them, create security vacuums by intimidating local security forces, and attract recruits who are anti-Western or sectarian. It is a powerful propaganda tool. Terrorism also permitted ISIS to strike distant West-

ern targets that would be completely beyond the reach of its local military fighting capabilities, not that this strategy was new to ISIS. It is worth noting that cross-border terrorism did not begin until the fall of 2015. Beginning in 2014, however, ISIS publicized horrible executions of foreigners captured in Iraq, including a Jordanian pilot. Perhaps the moves outside ISIS territories in the fall of 2015 were a reaction to pressure on the ground as forces mobilized against the caliphate, but it is hard to know. The deadly December 2015 attacks in Paris, for example, were in the planning stages before ISIS began to suffer defeats on the ground. There was also a downside for ISIS, since terrorist strikes against Western targets provoke retaliation, and the military power of the Islamic State's enemies far exceeds that of the caliphate. Turkey, for example, responded to the Islamic State's terrorist attacks in Turkey by intervening in Syria despite its greater antipathy toward the Kurdish enemies of ISIS. Yet the states targeted by ISIS are vulnerable to the threat of returned foreign fighters, as seen in the coordinated terrorist attacks in France and Belgium in 2015 and 2016.

Byman concludes that the Islamic State's resources were always concentrated on the "near enemy," whereas Al Qaeda targeted the "far enemy."²¹ This essay has argued that, from the outset, Al Qaeda, too, had a mixed strategy that included overthrowing local, especially Arab, regimes, although it did not favor establishing a territorial caliphate until conditions were ripe. Nevertheless, ISIS was able to constitute a powerful local fighting force that Al Qaeda was not able to muster. A critical question is whether the eventual collapse of the caliphate will weaken the Islamic State's ability to orchestrate transnational terrorist attacks. Numbers of foreign fighters as well as social media presence declined under military pressure, especially as American drone strikes specifically targeted ISIS leaders re-

sponsible for external operations and propaganda. The Islamic State's credibility and ideological appeal may decline.

Within and beyond the Iraq-Syria theater, the deepening global rivalry between the Islamic State and Al Qaeda increasingly dominated jihadist politics. Attacks against Western targets could reflect internecine struggles, indicating a form of outbidding in extremism. For example, the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris in January 2015, linked to AQAP, were perhaps intended as a challenge or reply to rival ISIS.

Spillover of civil conflict into transnational terrorism and external jihadist involvement in local conflicts increased as well. For example, AQAP came to play a more important role in the developing civil war in Yemen. In fall 2011, the regime in Yemen was collapsing, plagued by internal dissension as well as a rebellion by Shia Houthis in northern Yemen, which, in 2015, provoked intervention by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The civil war turned into a proxy war between Iran and the Sunni monarchies, with the United States, France, and Britain supporting the latter. In the turmoil, AQAP acquired a territorial base, and the Islamic State in turn established a province or *wilayat*. ISIS also established branches in the Sinai and in Libya after the fall of Gaddafi's regime in 2011. By 2017, ISIS had established a foothold in Afghanistan.

In Somalia, Al Shabaab (whose 2008 pledge of allegiance to Al Qaeda was only formally accepted in 2012) adopted a strategy of regional terrorism against civilians in Kenya and Uganda. Both countries were members of the African Union's peacekeeping mission supporting the Somali government against Al Shabaab, which got its start in 2007 by attacking Ethiopian peacekeeping troops. In 2010, two suicide bombings struck crowds in Kampala, Uganda. In 2013, Al Shabaab attacked the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya.

In 2014 and 2015, there were more attacks in Kenya, including an assault on a college in which non-Muslim students were singled out (147 victims were killed). Kenya's establishment of buffer zones was a response to such deadly cross-border terrorist attacks.²²

Similarly, in 2014, Boko Haram moved outside its home base in northeastern Nigeria to organize attacks in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, neighboring states that were authorized by the African Union to contain the spread of violence. Boko Haram began to rely increasingly on domestic terrorism, such as the mass kidnapping of school girls. In 2015, Boko Haram pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, and a few months later, suicide bombings hit Chad's capital, N'Djamena. Two suicide bombers also attacked a market in Cameroon in February 2016.

In addition, AQIM exploited unrest in North Africa to expand its influence first into Libya and then into Mali. It also connected with AQAP, Al Shabaab, and Boko Haram. In Mali, AQIM formed an alliance with local Tuareg tribal militants as well as indigenous jihadists to seize control of the northern part of the country. This intrusion provoked French military intervention to stabilize Mali's government, and that setback split AQIM and led to further violence, including a 2013 attack on the El Aminas gas facility in Algeria and suicide bombings in Niger. AQIM was apparently divided over whether to switch sides from Al Qaeda to the Islamic State, but in the end, it stayed in the Al Qaeda orbit. In 2015, AQIM publicly rebuked ISIS and also attacked UN peacekeepers in Mali.

Civil war, domestic and transnational terrorism, and the involvement of foreign fighters have been essential components of jihadist strategy since the 1980s. Much remains to be learned about these interconnections. What vectors might lead from civil war to terrorism? First, civil war can con-

tribute to terrorism by providing safe havens for those organizing attacks against "far enemies," but sanctuary may not be necessary and it is more easily found on the territory of stable sympathetic governments. Safe havens have also become vulnerable with the advent of drone warfare. Second, civil wars can mobilize outside support, including recruiting foreigners for local fighting and the activation of "homegrown" terrorists. Experienced foreign fighters sometimes return home to commit acts of terrorism or to start or join rebels in local conflicts. An outside presence can "Islamize" nationalist conflicts. Third, civil wars have spillover effects. Jihadist rebels can use terrorism defensively to punish or deter hostile neighboring states or distant foreign occupiers. Defeat at home can lead them to move their operations across borders. Striking enemy civilians at home can be initiated from the outside (the 9/11 attacks) or the inside (Orlando 2016).

At the same time, jihadist terrorism and the introduction of foreign fighters can alter the course of civil wars. Both might contribute to the escalation of violence and complicate conflict resolution, especially if jihadists are absolutist religionist rebels. Terrorism can be a useful propaganda tool for recruiting foreign fighters as well as mobilizing support. Civil wars in which Muslims appear to be opposing non-Muslims are exploited as propaganda tools. It is possible that jihadists are more prone to use terrorism in civil wars than are nonjihadists, implying that they are not likely to win. In addition, foreign fighters are not necessarily an asset. In his own contribution to *Dædalus*, Stathis Kalyvas compares jihadists to the Marxist rebels of the 1960s and 1970s and concludes that they are less of a threat, largely because they lack outside state support. However, as jihadists suffer military defeats in civil wars, they may revert increasingly to transnational terrorism.²³

Last, there are dangerous feedback loops. Terrorism against outside powers provokes military intervention, which not only intensifies civil war, but also sparks more terrorism against occupying forces, their local allies, and their home countries. An important question for the future is whether or not powerful states can resist terrorist provocation.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Jihadi Rebels in Civil War,” *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).
- ² James D. Fearon, “Civil War & the Current International System,” *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017).
- ³ See Anthony H. Cordesman, *Rethinking the Threat of Islamic Extremism: The Changes Needed in U.S. Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2016). Cordesman refers to a “clash within a civilization” as opposed to a “clash between civilizations.” See also Martha Crenshaw, “Why America? The Globalization of Civil War,” *Current History* 100 (650) (December 2001): 425–432.
- ⁴ Thomas Hegghammer, “The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad,” *International Security* 35 (3) (Winter 2010/2011): 53–94.
- ⁵ Tanisha Fazal, “Religionist Rebels & the Sovereignty of the Divine,” *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).
- ⁶ This is not to say that foreign fighters are necessarily an asset to civil war rebels. See Kristin M. Bakke, “Help Wanted? The Mixed Record of Foreign Fighters in Domestic Insurgencies,” *International Security* 38 (4) (Spring 2014): 150–187.
- ⁷ The Marxist rebels of the 1960s and 1970s did not typically resort to indiscriminate attacks against civilians.
- ⁸ Virginia Page Fortna, “Do Terrorists Win? Rebels’ Use of Terrorism and Civil War Outcomes,” *International Organization* 69 (3) (2015): 519–556.
- ⁹ See Hegghammer, “The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters”; Fortna, “Do Terrorists Win?”; Michael G. Findley and Joseph K. Young, “Terrorism and Civil War: A Spatial and Temporal Approach to a Conceptual Problem,” *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (2) (June 2012): 285–305; and Bridget L. Coggins, “Does State Failure Cause Terrorism? An Empirical Analysis (1999–2008),” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59 (3) (2015): 455–483.
- ¹⁰ See the “maps” of the global ISIS and global Al Qaeda networks on Martha Crenshaw’s website, “Mapping Militant Organizations,” mappingmilitants.stanford.edu. These organizational diagrams are linked to detailed profiles of the groups in question and trace their evolution over time.
- ¹¹ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002). Although a Shia revolution, its outcome demonstrated to Sunni extremists that an Islamist rebellion could succeed against an ally of the West.
- ¹² See R. Kim Cragin, “Early History of Al-Qa’ida,” *The Historical Journal* 51 (4) (2008): 1047–1067. This account, which covers the period 1984–1996, is based largely on primary documents.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 1056–1057.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1060–1062.
- ¹⁵ Bakke, “Help Wanted?” 166–170, 172.
- ¹⁶ Observers have a tendency to attribute causality in short time frames, seeing terrorist attacks as immediate reactions to government actions, when many complex attacks take some time to plan.

- ¹⁷ Mary Anne Weaver, “The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,” *The Atlantic*, July – August 2006, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/>. See also Joby Warrick, *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS* (New York: Doubleday, 2015).
- ¹⁸ See the maps of Syria and of Aleppo province and accompanying group profiles at Crenshaw, “Mapping Militant Organizations.”
- ¹⁹ The Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq* (New York: The Soufan Group, 2015), http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf.
- ²⁰ Daniel Byman, “Understanding the Islamic State – A Review Essay,” *International Security* 40 (4) (Spring 2016): 127 – 165, esp. 144 – 145.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 153 – 155.
- ²² Seyoum Mesfin and Abdeta Beyene, “The Practicalities of Living with Failed States,” *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).
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Civil War & the Global Threat of Pandemics

Paul H. Wise & Michele Barry

Abstract: This essay confronts the collision of two potential global threats: the outbreak of infectious pandemics and the outbreak and protraction of civil wars. Specifically, it addresses the potential that civil wars can elevate the risk that an infectious outbreak will emerge; the possibility that civil wars can reduce the capacity to identify and respond to outbreaks; and the risk that outbreaks in areas of civil conflict can generate political and security challenges that may threaten regional and international order. Both global health governance and international security structures seem inadequate to address the health and security challenges posed by infectious outbreaks in areas of civil conflict. New approaches that better integrate the technical and political challenges inherent in preventing pandemics in areas of civil war are urgently required.

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The West African Ebola outbreak is thought to have begun with little Emile Ouamouno, a one-year-old who died in December 2013 in the village of Meliandou, Guinea. By the time the outbreak was declared over in January 2016, an official tally of some 11,300 people had died and more than 28,000 had been infected in the three most heavily affected countries: Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. The economies and health care systems of these three countries had been devastated, which in turn resulted in more suffering and countless lost lives. The armed forces of the affected countries had been mobilized, as were units from the United Kingdom and the United States, including the famed 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). While the impact of this outbreak in death, human suffering, and fear was catastrophic, this essay raises the question of what might the impact of an Ebola outbreak have been if it had occurred not in 2013 but in 2000, when Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia were embroiled in brutal civil wars. This question seems particularly relevant given that the 2013 Ebola outbreak exposed current global health struc-

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doi:10.1162/DAED_a_00460

tures as largely incapable of operating effectively in countries with poor health systems and weak governance, characteristics likely to be particularly apparent in areas plagued by protracted civil unrest. In such settings, global health imperatives may collide with global security structures, a collision for which neither arena of global governance appears adequately prepared.

The interaction between epidemic disease and civil conflict has evolved dramatically over the centuries. The past several decades have witnessed the predominance of protracted civil conflicts that do not readily conform to traditional boundaries between war and peace. Rather, prolonged, churning instability has become common with periods of relative calm interrupted by eruptions of violent, often vicious conflict. While the diseases associated with these new forms of war have also evolved, what has altered the threat of war-generated epidemics forever is the unprecedented potential for rapid dissemination throughout the world.

This discussion is premised on the dual recognition that global infectious pandemics have the potential to threaten the international order and that civil wars may enhance the risk that such a pandemic will emerge and have a global impact. Three related mechanisms are of central concern: 1) the possibility that civil wars can elevate the risk that an infectious outbreak with pandemic potential will emerge; 2) the possibility that civil wars can reduce outbreak surveillance and control capacities, resulting in silent global dissemination; and 3) the potential that infectious outbreaks emerging in areas plagued by civil conflict can generate complex political and security challenges that can threaten traditional notions of national sovereignty and enhance incentives for international intervention.

Interestingly, the very definition of a pandemic foretells the intricate dance between

epidemiology and politics that always accompanies a global infectious outbreak. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines a pandemic as “an epidemic that has spread over several countries or continents, usually affecting a large number of people.”¹ It involves epidemiology since it has at its core the dynamics of disease progression and infectious transmission from individual to individual. However, the definition also recognizes that pandemics must cross national borders, an inherent acknowledgement that pandemics relate to notions of state sovereignty and governance.

The majority of the approximately four hundred emerging infectious diseases that have been identified since 1940 have been zoonoses: infections that have been transmitted from animals to humans. Commonly, the infectious agent lives in the animal host, often without causing any discernable disease. The animals thereby serve as a “reservoir” for the infectious agent. The jump, or “spillover,” from the animal host to human populations can be due to an unusually close contact, such as slaughtering an infected animal, and may be associated with a mutation in the infectious microbe making it more likely to infect a human host. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is the iconic disease that emerged from a spillover from a simian host. Emergent infectious diseases can also require arthropod blood-seeking insects for transmission such as mosquitoes or ticks. Mosquitos serve as “vectors” in such diseases as malaria, yellow fever, and zika, and involve cycles of mosquito transmission from reservoir animals with spillover to humans. The emergence of a zoonosis with the potential for pandemic spread generally occurs when there is a change in the long-standing ecology of human-animal-infectious agent interaction. The importance of this ecological relationship has been recognized by the One Health Initiative, which links hu-

man and veterinarian medicine within a new ecological framework.² For the most part, human factors, such as the expansion of human populations into previously forested areas, domesticated animal production practices, food shortages, and alterations in water usage and flows, have been the primary drivers of altered ecological relationships. There is also substantial evidence that climate change is reshaping ecological interactions and vector prevalence adjacent to human populations.³ Enhanced trade and air transportation have increased the risk that an outbreak will spread widely. While infectious outbreaks can be due to all forms of infectious agents, including bacteria, parasites, and fungi, viruses are of the greatest pandemic concern.

New infectious agents can emerge anywhere humans inhabit the planet. However, the science of emerging infections suggests that the greatest danger of pandemic generation lies in tropical and subtropical regions where humans and animals, particularly wild animals, are most likely to interact. Recent analyses have suggested that the “hotspots” for emerging infectious diseases lie in Eastern China, Southeast Asia, Eastern Pakistan, Northeast India and Bangladesh, Central America, and the tropical belt running through Central Africa from Guinea, through Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Burundi, and into Ethiopia.⁴ These hotspots have been identified using sophisticated analytic models but generally approximate areas where new or intense human activity coincides with high wildlife and microbial diversity. This elevated risk includes both the initial spillover of infectious agents from animal to human populations as well as the potential for substantial human-to-human transmission due to local conditions, such as human population density and movement.⁵

Although serious pandemics have emerged from mid-income countries, such

as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Southern China and H1N1 influenza likely in Mexico, there is considerable overlap between the hotspots for emerging infections and hotspots of civil conflict. Of particular concern is the role of social disruption and forced migration in generating the conditions for pandemic emergence. Combat operations and the threat of violence invariably generate the migration of civilian populations into safer locations, often into forested or other remote areas where intense interaction with wildlife populations is more likely. In addition, the search for food among these refugee populations may require the hunting of nontraditional forms of wildlife, such as rodents, bats, or primates, which can greatly elevate the risk of zoonotic spillover. For example, the dangerous Ebola, Marburg, and Nipah viruses are carried by bats, and the virus that caused the 2002–2004 SARS outbreak was also likely transmitted by bats.

While the emergence of new human diseases is not confined to areas plagued by war, populations fleeing civil war may also intensify the early human-to-human transmission of emerging infections.⁶ Refugee camps are usually characterized by people living in extremely close proximity to one another, often crowded into makeshift shelters, elevating the risk of transmission. In addition, malnutrition and poor hygiene and sanitation can also elevate the risk of infection. However, while the impact of civil conflict on pandemics may elevate the risk that a new infectious disease will emerge, the greater concern is that civil conflict will undermine the local and global capacity to control it.

There exists a significant technical capacity to ensure that a local infectious outbreak is not transformed into a global pandemic. There also exists a global health governance system charged with employing this technical capacity whenever and wherever such an

outbreak emerges. The control of infectious outbreaks requires some level of organized collective action; in essence, effective governance. Together, the technical and governance requirements for controlling the risk of pandemics can be grouped into three general categories: prevention, detection, and response.

Prevention requires the provision of immunization, when effective vaccines exist. Immunization programs for polio, cholera, yellow fever, measles, and a variety of other infectious illnesses are effective and relatively inexpensive. Immunization to prevent influenza is a special case: while generally effective, it must be given annually since the immunization is directed at only one strain of virus, which varies from year to year. Prevention also includes efforts to alter behaviors that elevate the risk that an infectious agent will jump from animals to humans. For example, a behavioral modification campaign was implemented in Sierra Leone to confine an outbreak of Lassa fever, relying primarily on disseminating information on how to avoid exposures to rodents, the primary carrier of the Lassa virus.⁷ Educational efforts have sought to reduce the risk of the animal-to-human spillover associated with the hunting of non-domesticated tropical animals, generally referred to as “bushmeat,” which in many areas includes monkeys and bats. These educational efforts have been targeted at reducing hunter exposure to the blood and other bodily fluids of bushmeat prey, as some communities may depend upon the hunting of bushmeat for nutrition or livelihood.

The early detection of an infectious outbreak with pandemic potential is a fundamental component of any pandemic control capacity. However, the requirements for an effective detection capability are both technically and organizationally complex. The early detection of worrisome infectious agents in animal or human populations re-

quires a strong and methodical surveillance infrastructure.⁸ The routine collection and testing of samples drawn from domesticated poultry and pig production chains can provide early warning of a potential for spillover into human populations. Similarly, the sampling of wildlife, including potential vectors, such as mosquito or rodent populations, is also a standard mechanism for identifying the presence of worrisome infectious agents. The detection of actual animal and human illnesses requires a clinical capacity that can both identify worrisome cases and report this concern to the appropriate pandemic alert systems. Clinically distinguishing illnesses that may be of pandemic potential is not easy, since many such illnesses can present with relatively ordinary symptoms, such as fever and malaise. Indeed, potentially pandemic influenza generally presents as “the flu.”

The development and maintenance of animal surveillance systems in areas characterized by civil conflict and poor security can be extremely challenging. Routine animal surveillance demands substantial logistical chains and careful organizational controls. The sampling protocols cannot be based on isolated events or convenience samples but must be representative of the actual environment to be of any practical utility. In addition, animal surveillance systems require adequate laboratory capacity to identify the viruses or other infectious agents of concern. Because most laboratories capable of performing the requisite tests are located in capital cities or regional centers, this generally means that samples must be routinely collected and transported from relatively remote sites and travel substantial distances. In many low-resource areas, even relatively sophisticated laboratories may not have the requisite biosafety capabilities to test for highly infectious agents. While possible, overcoming these logistical challenges in insecure areas can be exceedingly difficult.

Detection may also require the ability to quickly discern patterns of atypical case presentation. Epidemiological investigations in which contact tracing can be conducted and suspicious clusters of cases can be distinguished from the background noise of common illnesses may not be feasible in conflict areas. It is also important to remember that the practical utility of early detection will be heavily dependent on the speed with which systems of surveillance can operate. Accordingly, strong, responsive communication networks are essential for early outbreak detection, both for coordinating the requisite investigations as well as for integrating data derived from various sources. Civil wars commonly disrupt traditional means of communication. New strategies that utilize satellite or other technologies to link remote or insecure areas to surveillance are needed.

The Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa exposed glaring weaknesses in the global strategy to control pandemic outbreaks in areas with minimal public health capacity. The local failures were myriad and have been documented by a variety of post-outbreak assessments.⁹ The detection and reporting of the outbreak was delayed for months because of inadequate health services and poor communication among clinicians and public health authorities. Health facilities were quickly overwhelmed by the rising number of patients with Ebola and large numbers of health workers became ill and died. Many facilities were shuttered or restricted their services to patients with suspected Ebola infection. Consequently, it is likely that, during the outbreak, many more deaths resulted from inadequate care for patients with illnesses other than Ebola. The health care provided to patients with Ebola was substandard early on, which not only led to unnecessary deaths, but also enhanced transmission.

Virtually all the post-Ebola appraisals were quick to emphasize that weak nation-

al health systems were a key contributor to the deeply flawed response to the outbreak. While these reports called for enhanced financial support for strengthening national health systems, current global health security structures continue to place the responsibility for improving these systems on the national governments themselves. Clearly, this approach is problematic for countries plagued by civil war. It is useful, therefore, to examine these global health security systems and why they rely so heavily on the commitment and capacities of the affected countries and why this is not likely to change anytime soon.

The only comprehensive global framework for pandemic detection and control is the legally binding international treaty, the International Health Regulations (IHR).¹⁰ Currently covering 196 nations, the IHR have their historical roots in the early nineteenth-century sanitary codes, developed after a series of cross-border epidemics in Europe underscored the need for international public health standards and cooperation. The United Nations created the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948, which had built into its constitution the authority to craft regulations directed at “sanitary and quarantine requirements and other procedures designed to prevent the international spread of disease.” In 1951, the WHO consolidated a number of earlier health agreements and renamed them the International Sanitary Regulations (ISR). A revision of the ISR was adopted in 1969 and renamed the International Health Regulations. Significantly, the IHR were, as were their predecessor agreements, directed at the dual goals of reducing the international spread of infectious diseases and the avoidance of unnecessary burdens on the flow of international trade and transportation. However, the inadequacies of the IHR during several outbreaks in the early 1990s prompted the WHO to initiate a re-

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vision process in 1995. However, the revisions only moved to the front burner after the 2002 outbreak of SARS, which began in the Guangdong Province of China but quickly spread to some two dozen countries in North America, South America, Europe, and Asia and had an estimated short-term, economic cost of about \$50 billion.¹¹ China's failure to report the outbreak in a timely manner and prolonged resistance to international cooperation in mounting a global response only underscored the urgent need to revise the IHR.

The revision was ultimately adopted in 2005 and addressed several significant deficiencies, including the glaring problem that the IHR only attended to outbreaks from three diseases: cholera, yellow fever, and plague. Interestingly, these were the same three diseases that were addressed by the original European sanitary regulations adopted in the 1800s. The 2005 revision expanded the purview of the IHR to include all outbreaks that posed a "public health risk" or a "public health emergency of international concern." In addition, the 2005 revision allowed the WHO to obtain and use data from nongovernmental sources. This provision recognized that information from member states might not be accurate, either because of inadequate data collection capabilities or in response to the political and economic repercussions states might encounter by reporting an outbreak. The 2005 revision also attempted to address the fact that many national public health systems do not possess even the most rudimentary capabilities to detect, respond to, and report an infectious outbreak. However, the burden was placed on the states themselves to improve their systems and report progress on a regular basis to the WHO. Additionally, the 2005 revision inserted concerns for human rights into the regulations and created a mechanism by which the WHO could authorize the declaration of a Public Health Emergency of International

Concern (PHEIC), which is a formal call to adopt WHO recommendations and to coordinate the responses of member states, but, significantly, it imposes no binding obligations on state action.¹²

The IHR (2005) required that states report the status of their health capacities and imposed a deadline of 2012 for all states to have in place the necessary capacities to detect, report, and respond to local infectious outbreaks. However, only a small percentage of state parties reported meeting these requirements and almost one-third did not even provide the requisite capacity information when surveyed by the WHO. Prior to the outbreak, Sierra Leone reported inadequate progress in meeting IHR capacity goals; Liberia and Guinea were among the countries that failed to report their status.¹³ Post-Ebola recommendations have stressed the need for greater external assessment and the linkage of international funding for health system strengthening to more rigorous evaluation and reporting.¹⁴ However, even with enhanced funding and accountability provisions, the low probability that weak states, and particularly those plagued by civil conflict and protracted violence, will make the requisite improvements in their own health systems represents a dramatic vulnerability in the global health security system.

Despite calls to strengthen general health system capacities, a major component of foreign assistance initiatives concerned with pandemic control are focused specifically on enhancing just those capabilities needed for pandemic surveillance, detection, and response. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the CDC have been working to improve local pandemic detection and response capacities by directing resources and training to twenty countries thought to be at high risk for pandemic emergence, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo.¹⁵

The Emerging Pandemic Threats Program (EPT-2) has supported a variety of projects designed to develop data and build capacity in surveillance and response. A broader global effort, the Global Health Security Agenda, has been endorsed by the G7 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) as means for bringing together a variety of health and veterinary agencies within a One Health framework and improving accountability for the status of national pandemic control systems.¹⁶

The underlying premise of these focused initiatives in places like the DRC is that what is needed for effective pandemic control is not good governance per se but “good enough governance” or “strategic governance” in which the minimal governance and security conditions required by the technical elements of pandemic control are met.¹⁷ Strategic governance for health service provision contends that each technical intervention places distinct burdens on governance and system capacity. For example, an immunization program may require different things from local governance capacities than a maternal mortality reduction initiative. This may clarify why, in unstable regions, specific domains of health outcomes can improve while others plateau or worsen. For example, Liberia experienced dramatic declines in young-child mortality over the past decade. However, its response to Ebola was catastrophically ineffective. Other examples include the success of large-scale antiretroviral medication programs in the central plateau of Haiti, immunization programs in Somalia, and dramatic reductions in maternal-to-child transmission of HIV infection in Zimbabwe.

Support for the potential utility of a strategic approach has also come from the successful containment of Ebola in Nigeria, a country deeply troubled by corruption, political and ethnic tensions, and, in cer-

tain areas, a running insurgency.¹⁸ In July 2014, a Liberian-American diplomatic traveler, who had been infected with Ebola virus in Liberia, traveled to Lagos, a megacity of almost eighteen million people. The virus was subsequently transmitted to others in Lagos and in Port Harcourt, the home of Nigeria’s international oil refining and export industry. However, just two months after the first case was identified, no new cases were reported in Nigeria. This experience would suggest that, indeed, pandemic control can be successfully implemented in countries with weak health systems and low government effectiveness. However, on deeper examination, there were special conditions in Nigeria that may not be representative of conditions in other areas of weak governance or chronic conflict. Because Nigeria was one of the few remaining countries in the world still experiencing cases of polio, a significant investment had been made beginning in 2012, particularly by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to develop an extensive system of polio surveillance and response.¹⁹ With the detection of the first case of Ebola, this system of highly trained supervisory staff, hundreds of field operatives, communication networks, and specialized equipment were immediately shifted to support the outbreak control apparatus in the affected Nigerian cities. The presence of this polio eradication infrastructure was likely crucial to the relatively swift and successful response to Ebola in Nigeria. This would suggest that a strategic investment in specific health and governance capacities can prove effective in certain settings. Similar polio eradication initiatives have been developed in Pakistan, another country plagued by civil conflict. Nevertheless, it is useful to note that the polio eradication infrastructure required considerable time to develop and substantial external investments. Therefore, the Nigerian experience with Ebola may not reflect the likely capacities of other political-

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ly complex, low-income countries attempting to control a serious infectious outbreak.

The vulnerability generated by weak national health capacities is not confined to issues of health. Rather, if there is a perception that a country is either unwilling or unable to deal with a potential pandemic outbreak, a series of serious security concerns can quickly emerge. The IHR do not require that any state implement WHO recommendations, permit entry to WHO technical teams, or accept international assistance. “Soft” compliance mechanisms have been adopted that attempt to enhance the incentives for state compliance, but cannot compel fulfillment of WHO guidance. For example, the WHO can publicize the failure of states to abide by WHO recommendations and openly articulate the presumed consequences of resisting international assistance. The IHR also permit the WHO to seek data on outbreaks from non-governmental sources for the first time.²⁰ This provision was adopted, after considerable negotiation with concerned state parties, in the hope of encouraging host states to provide more timely and accurate data on the status of outbreaks. There have also been recent efforts to enhance state reporting of health system capacities through supplementary independent voluntary assessments of countries working through the Global Health Security Agenda consortium.

The bottom line, however, is that despite the profound global threat of pandemics, there remains no global health mechanism to force state parties to act in accordance with global health interests. Moreover, there also persist inherent disincentives for countries to report an infectious outbreak early in its course. The economic impact of such a report can be profound, particularly for countries heavily dependent upon tourism or international trade. China hesitated to report the SARS outbreak in 2002. Tragic delays in raising the alarm

about the Ebola outbreak in West Africa were laid at the doorstep of the affected national authorities and the regional WHO committees, which were highly concerned about the economic and social implications of reporting an outbreak.²¹

Countries experiencing civil wars may not be particularly worried about disruptions to tourism or international trade. However, the deference to sovereignty claims in the IHR has also had a significant impact on the detection and response to infectious outbreaks in these areas. Syria had not reported a case of polio since 1999. In 2013, health workers began to see young children presenting with the kind of paralysis that is generally associated with a polio outbreak, which is highly contagious and is considered a public health emergency. However, the government and the regional WHO office have been intensely criticized for their slow and uneven responses.²² It was noted early in the outbreak that the cases were concentrated in areas controlled by groups opposed to the Assad regime. This was not particularly surprising given that these areas had experienced a deterioration in general living conditions as well as the government’s abandonment, if not active destruction, of sanitation and water supplies, two primary means of polio virus dissemination. In addition, government-sponsored immunization services for children had also eroded badly in these areas. The Assad regime has been accused of hesitating to confirm early reports of polio in the opposition areas and impeding the delivery of vaccines and health workers to those locations. The WHO was also criticized for its lack of quick response, although its hands were somewhat tied by the mandate that it act only after receiving the assent of the national government. Ultimately, with pressure from international health organizations and neighbors in the region (Jordan, the West Bank, and Israel detected the polio virus in sewage presumably coming from

Syria), a major polio vaccination campaign was implemented involving the government health infrastructure in the south of the country and a consortium of both international and local nongovernmental organizations in the north. This strategy apparently terminated the outbreak and remains the only way to provide immunizations in both governmental-held and rebel-controlled areas of Syria.²³

The Syrian polio outbreak is an important reminder that health interventions, though technical in nature, can be transformed into political currency when certain conditions are met. At the most basic level, the destruction or withholding of essential health capabilities can be used to coerce adversaries into political compliance, if not complete submission. The purposeful Syrian and Russian bombing of hospitals and other health facilities in the besieged city of Aleppo is a representative, if especially brutal, expression of this explicit strategy. The intention was clearly to inflict profound suffering and amplify casualties: one dead doctor can result in many more dead among the unattended injured.

There are also important, though more subtle mechanisms by which the provision of health services can take on an intensely political character. In particular, three general conditions can define how health interventions ultimately relate to perceptions of political legitimacy: First, the population must perceive that an infectious outbreak represents a major threat. Second, the population must see health services as technically capable of successfully combatting the perceived threat. Third, the state must be viewed as being responsible for the provision of this technical capacity. When these conditions are met, the political legitimacy of the state will almost always be in play; political legitimacy can be undermined by nonprovision. Alternatively, when the state or its proxy, such as a UN agency or nongovernmental organization, is successful

in providing the health service in question, the state's political legitimacy may be enhanced. In this manner, the role of health services in creating state legitimacy can be intensely dynamic, particularly in violently contested political environments.

Regardless of how extensive the capacities of a health system appear on paper, the actual effectiveness of the system will almost always rest on whether the citizenry perceives the system as legitimate.²⁴ The lack of political legitimacy can undermine a health system's response in several critical ways: First, diminished political legitimacy can threaten informational authority. As was seen early in the Ebola outbreak, the official attempts to disseminate information on the nature and prevention of Ebola transmission were profoundly weakened by a general distrust of the state as a source of reliable information. While concerns regarding inappropriate cultural, linguistic, and literacy levels of the information likely also contributed to the lack of effect, the core problem was less the content than the source of the information. The authority of the state to provide critical, life-or-death information had to confront the fact that many at greatest risk of being infected by the Ebola virus did not believe the state prioritized their interests. Second, under certain conditions, local communities may attempt to insulate themselves from state authority. Particularly, where states have been perceived as predatory, the "art of not being governed" can produce protective practices and local political impulses that can expressly, or at least effectively, shield populations from state control, a situation that can undermine even the best-intentioned public health initiatives.²⁵ Third, and perhaps most important, weak political legitimacy can make state-propagated health activities increasingly reliant on coercion. Public health responses to an infectious outbreak will almost always depend upon public compliance with behav-

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ioral recommendations, such as quarantine. In settings of high political legitimacy, such compliance will reflect normative respect for state authority on such matters as public health. However, when legitimacy is low, normative respect can be replaced by skeptical noncompliance. In a setting of potential pandemic dissemination, skeptical noncompliance may not be tolerated by the state or threatened regional or international entities, and coercive tactics may seem the only recourse. In such situations, responsibility for the management of the outbreak may shift from the ministry of health to the army.²⁶ This shift in strategic authority was made clear to a global audience when Liberian security forces were utilized to impose what ultimately became a failed attempt to quarantine the crowded, impoverished West Point neighborhood of Monrovia, Liberia, at the height of the Ebola outbreak.²⁷

The political currency of health services, particularly in areas of civil conflict, can also be wielded as a weapon of political advantage. This is most apparent when a service of clear political value is provided or withheld based on the behaviors of local populations. Standard counterinsurgency doctrine has made the provision of public goods, such as valued health services, a means of generating strategic support for a combatant force, the state, or its proxies.²⁸ When the conditions of perceived infectious threat, effective technical capacity, and state responsibility for access to this capacity are met, the direct provision of this service will tend to enhance the political legitimacy of the state. However, when the state fails to provide the service, its political legitimacy can be diminished. It should not be surprising, therefore, that health services may become vulnerable to assault by forces that oppose the state. Conversely, attacks on services of high value to local communities could undermine the legitimacy of the forces opposed to the state. There are

numerous examples of this dynamic. Most Jihadist forces in Iraq and Syria have supported immunization campaigns. Most Taliban fighters in Afghanistan have generally not attacked local health clinics, even those constructed by U.S. forces or supported by external nongovernmental organizations. However, there are also many counterexamples in which the struggle for legitimacy has put health workers at risk of politically motivated violence, as is evident by the continued targeting of Pakistan's polio immunization programs.²⁹ The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's use of a Pakistani physician masquerading as an immunization worker to ascertain the whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden only enhanced the political utility of these attacks on state-sponsored vaccination teams. In Syria, the Assad regime and allied Russian forces have targeted health facilities and personnel in order to deprive civilian populations of adequate health care and thereby amplify the suffering and death associated with continued resistance.

Global pandemic control systems respect national sovereignty; infectious outbreaks do not. This mismatch of policy and biology is an inherent vulnerability of the current international health governance infrastructure, which can create a level of profound unpredictability in how states respond to pandemic threats. While these questions relate generally to the control of pandemics, they have special meaning in the context of civil conflict and violent political instability. Sovereignty is best considered as a composite of several component political standards.³⁰ Domestic sovereignty refers to the state's performance in regulating violence and exercising authority within its borders. Westphalian sovereignty refers to the autonomy of the state and its ability to exercise power without interference from external forces. International legal sovereignty involves the formal recognition of the state within the administration of in-

ternational organizations and law. Interdependence sovereignty relates to the ability of states to control threats emanating from regional or global processes that transcend national borders, such as climate change, air pollution, or the globalization of food production. By some measures, the vulnerabilities and contradictions within the global health security regimes reflect tensions between these different forms of sovereignty.

A series of calls for reforming global health governance have emphasized the inherent interdependence of states in addressing a variety of public health challenges.³¹ Particularly, in the wake of the Ebola outbreak in 2013–2014, the risk of rapid cross-border dissemination of infectious diseases has questioned the IHR's basis in legal and Westphalian sovereignty claims, claims that may represent an outmoded map for navigating effective global pandemic control. The argument suggests that the epidemiologic challenge to interdependence sovereignty is so significant that some arenas of power traditionally rooted in legal or Westphalian sovereignty should give way to shared, global governance processes.³²

The case for enhancing the power of global health agreements seems most compelling for risks emanating from areas of violent conflict. Here, minimal health system capacity, poor security, and suspect political legitimacy represent a heavily compromised domestic sovereignty. The maintenance of traditional Westphalian sovereignty claims in the face of a weak domestic sovereignty reality may prove particularly counterproductive, at least in meeting the requirements for pandemic control.³³

This misalignment not only may make the global response to pandemic risk less effective, it may also create a potential gap between actions sanctioned by current global health governance agreements and the homeland security interests of regional and global powers. This tension has been

described as the conflict between two logics: the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequences.³⁴ The logic of appropriateness emphasizes legal sovereignty and compliance with rules, roles, and behaviors prescribed in international agreements. The IHR reflect this approach, relying on the approval of all 196 member states. The logic of consequences recognizes the pragmatic behavior of political actors to maximize their own interests. While the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequences are not incompatible, they can often diverge, particularly when domestic political concerns begin to dominate international behavior.

The fear of pandemic infectious disease can be a powerful driver of domestic politics. In response to the fears generated by the Ebola outbreak in 2014, a number of countries imposed harsh travel restrictions even though they violated protocols delineated in the IHR. In the United States, public fear and the resultant political environment set the stage for several state governors to disregard technical recommendations from the CDC and implement their own severe quarantine procedures. In such an atmosphere, domestic political pressures in accordance with the logic of consequences may result in meaningful departures from global health agreements developed in accordance with the logic of appropriateness.

It is also important to keep in mind the speed with which pandemics and, significantly, the fear of pandemics can spread. As these fears take hold, neighboring countries as well as states with a global military reach may experience growing domestic pressure to intervene. These pressures could force international actors to depart quickly from extant global health protocols and resort to direct intervention. Even if these interventions are directed at technical and health personnel, in areas of conflict, this assistance will likely require sufficient military capability to ensure the security of the

requisite health personnel and activities. As was noted in Haiti and Liberia, this security role can extend beyond the usual logistical responsibilities the military may have in settings of complex humanitarian emergencies. Moreover, because most civil wars reflect the proxy involvement of regional or global powers, the ad hoc nature of such health-instigated interventions could play into complex geopolitical agendas and potentially trigger unpredictable and destabilizing military confrontations.

The fundamental concern is that the global health security regimes may not attend to the requirements of homeland se-

curity and, ultimately, the demands of international order. The unpredictability of a serious infectious outbreak, the speed with which it can disseminate, and the fears of domestic political audiences can together create a powerful destabilizing force. Current discussions regarding global health governance reform have largely been preoccupied by the performance and intricate bureaucratic interaction of global health agencies. However, what may prove far more critical may be the ability of global health governance structures to recognize and engage the complex, political realities on the ground in areas plagued by civil war.

ENDNOTES

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The Global Refugee Crisis: Regional Destabilization & Humanitarian Protection

Sarah Kenyon Lischer

Abstract: In addition to being a tragic output of civil war, large-scale displacement crises often become enmeshed in the politics, security, and economics of the conflict. Refugee and internally displaced populations thus exacerbate concerns about regional destabilization. The Syrian refugee crisis, for example, is deeply entwined with civil and international conflict. Neighboring host states of Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon bear the brunt of the crisis, while European states seek to prevent further encroachment by Middle Eastern asylum seekers. Policy-makers often mistakenly view host state security and refugee security as unrelated – or even opposing – factors. In reality, refugee protection and state stability are linked together; undermining one factor weakens the other. Policies to protect refugees, both physically and legally, reduce potential threats from the crisis and bolster state security. In general, risks of conflict are higher when refugees live in oppressive settings, lack legal income-generation options, and are denied education for their youth. The dangers related to the global refugee crisis interact with many other threats that emanate from civil wars and weak states, such as fragile governments, rebel and terrorist group activity, and religious or ethnic fragmentation.

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Millions of people around the world today have fled their homes to escape civil war and other violence. Recent United Nations figures report 22.5 million refugees and 38 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Statistics from 1996 to 2016 show that refugee numbers are at a twenty-year high. Internal displacement, in which people are forced from their homes but cannot cross the border, is also at a twenty-year high. Remarkably, 55 percent of the world's refugees come from three states experiencing protracted civil wars: Syria (5.5 million), Somalia (1.4 million), and Afghanistan (2.5 million).¹ Contrary to their expectations of sanctuary, many of these people continue to experience security threats in their new locations. Manipulation of refugee groups for political and stra-

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doi:10.1162/DAED_a_00461

tegitic purposes generally reduces their safety and downplays the human suffering associated with the crisis. In addition to being a tragic output of civil war, massive and intractable refugee crises often become deeply enmeshed in the politics, security, and economics of the conflict.

Early responses to refugee flows usually address functional and practical issues, actions such as meeting basic needs and working out the logistics of displacement, but these rarely require direct attention from national political leaders. As the crisis grows geographically and numerically, national leaders are confronted by the broader implications of refugee populations, though government discourse focuses more on the humanitarian disaster, rather than the conflict itself, increasing the likelihood of scapegoating and manipulation. Temporary situations begin to seem more permanent, increasing displacement-related tensions within and between affected states. A major concern of international negotiation then revolves around dealing with the “excess” people produced by the conflict, sometimes even eclipsing the focus on conflict resolution.

Many host states express concern about the destabilizing effects of sizeable refugee populations. Large-scale forced displacement places an immense strain on the resources of the host states, the refugees, and international donors. Some governing parties fear a loss of power due to popular anger over economic hardship and social pressures sparked by large refugee populations. Refugee crises may exacerbate existing political, ethnic, or religious tensions within the host state or between the host and sending states. Refugee demographics can create an unstable ethnic balance that encourages a previously oppressed minority to confront the government. Host states struggling to meet the needs of both displaced people and their own citizens resent the lack of assistance from wealthier, more dis-

tant states. In the worst-case scenario, destabilization of the host state and threats to refugee protection can exacerbate civil and international conflict.

In Lebanon, a country already coping with political and economic difficulties, Syrian refugees now account for more than 20 percent of the population. Local Lebanese citizens blame the influx of refugees for increasing food and housing prices and for undermining wages.² The mostly Sunni Arab newcomers affect the delicate sectarian balance, which also includes Christians and Shia Muslims. The antigovernment Shia group, Hezbollah, actually offers significant military assistance to the Assad government in Syria. The International Crisis Group explained that “the specter of renewed conflict has led the Lebanese authorities to adopt a heavy-handed security approach toward the refugees” that has included raids on refugee encampments and arrests of refugee men.³ Governments such as Lebanon’s that bear the brunt of regional crises therefore express resentment when the United States and other wealthy countries refuse to accept even a miniscule proportion of the displaced people. Regional governments have increasingly used refugees as leverage in negotiations with Western states desperate to prevent the mass arrival of asylum seekers. Humanitarian organizations, refugees, and sympathetic governments condemn the manipulation of displaced populations for political reasons. Advocates are particularly critical of measures, such as forced return to conflict zones, that contravene the international legal principles of refugee protection. In some situations, overwhelmed or hostile host states reduce legal protection and humanitarian aid, which can lead to violence and renewed displacement. Destabilization and human rights abuses in the first country of asylum can spur secondary displacement, as we have seen in the mass movement of refugees from the Middle East to Europe.

The most extreme outcome is the spread of violence across borders, which occurs if the original conflict spreads from the refugee-sending state via cross-border attacks, rebel activity, or invasion. Militants may mix among the refugees, as occurred when the militarized Rwandan Hutu state-in-exile fled to Zaire among millions of refugees following the 1994 genocide. Refugee-related violence remains rare, however, and observers caution against treating all refugees “as potential threats to be controlled, rather than as displaced victims of conflict in need of asylum.”⁴ Indeed, drawing on Stephen Stedman and Bruce Jones’s argument, which downplays the current rhetoric about global chaos, one could argue that attention to the global refugee crisis has more to do with its influence on Europe and the Middle East than a qualitative change in the nature of displacement. Stedman and Jones have labeled as “preposterous” the idea that refugees from the Middle East fundamentally threaten European security.⁵

In addition to displacement across international borders, most conflicts include large numbers of IDPs. In conflicts such as Syria, Iraq, and Colombia, there are more people displaced within the borders than outside them. As of 2015, 6.7 million Colombians were displaced within the country due to the decades-long conflict there, whereas 360,000 Colombians were registered as refugees in neighboring countries.⁶ Both refugees and IDPs suffer from similar humanitarian needs, and both generally lack security. In terms of international law and security, the situation differs for these populations since IDPs are supposed to be protected by their own government. Concerns with sovereignty complicate efforts to protect and assist the internally displaced, particularly when the government is a main driver of displacement. A major concern in conflict resolution is that returning refugees end up internally displaced, creating an im-

pediment to peace-building and stability. Unlike refugee populations, IDPs present less risk to regional stability or the international spread of civil war.

The violence directed at refugees and IDPs generally far outweighs criminal or militant activity emanating from the population. For example, Palestinian refugees within Syria have faced mounting difficulties now that they are also internally displaced. The Brookings Institution reported that, in 2011, the Yarmouk camp near Damascus held 150,000 to 200,000 Palestinians, as well as 650,000 Syrians. Later, in 2012, “intense fighting broke out in the camp between pro-regime and opposition forces, with the Free Syrian Army and the Al Nusra Front taking control of the camp by the end of the year.”⁷ Most of the Syrians left the camp. The Syrian government imposed a siege on the camp in mid-2013. After the siege was “relaxed” in early 2014, it then suffered attack by ISIS in April 2015. As of fall 2015, five to eight thousand people remained in Yarmouk.⁸ The Palestinian refugees in Syria thus suffered the effects of multiple types of displacement.

Large-scale forced migration initially affects the specific hosting states and refugee groups, however, those trends can also have a much broader reach. Considering the potential for exacerbating conflict or undermining peace efforts, this essay explores the following questions: Under what circumstances does a refugee crisis contribute to destabilization in the host state? What conditions are most likely to promote violations of humanitarian and legal protection for the displaced? In what ways do host-state destabilization and refugee insecurity interact with the wider dynamics of a civil war? Answering these questions requires an examination of the historical context in the host state, the regional security environment, the response by Western states, and the human geography of the crisis.

Host state responses differ because each state views refugee crises in the context of past experiences with displacement and civil conflict, which leads to variations in security and economic concerns. Historical context helps explain why some states view refugee populations with alarm and hostility even in the absence of provocation. In many Middle Eastern countries, past experience with Palestinian refugees has shaped the response to Iraqi and Syrian refugees.

In general, states with existing refugee populations from earlier conflicts tend to extrapolate from that experience, especially in determining initial responses toward new populations. In trying to predict conflict, one can ask whether and how past refugee crises have been resolved in the host state, and which issues proved most difficult to resolve.

Host states that have experienced civil war, especially a conflict based on communal differences reflected in the refugee population, are more likely to fear destabilization and curtail refugee protection measures. Refugees may share ethnic or religious characteristics with local populations that are in conflict, creating the perception of a demographic threat. For example, when hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanians fled to Macedonia in the late 1990s, the government was concerned that the influx would unsettle the fragile ethnic balance in the state. In such circumstances, refugees will face hostility based merely on their demographic attributes.

Historical context has also affected responses to the displacement of millions of Syrians, the most high-profile refugee crisis at present. Not unreasonably, the regional hosting states of Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey fear destabilization and the spread of violence. Reports of militarization include recruiters for the Free Syrian Army operating in the Zaatari camp in Jordan.⁹ Turkish policy has shown sympathy for Syrian rebels and Sunni jihadist groups fighting the

Assad regime. Political scientists Özden Zeynep Oktav and Ayca Çelikaksoy cite a 2012 BBC Turkey report that describes a separate refugee camp in Hatay “that housed defectors from the Syrian security forces and wounded members of the Free Syrian Army.”¹⁰ Attempts to control the crisis by violating refugees’ rights have caused a secondary migration as the desperate refugees seek asylum in Western Europe, leading to Western actions that may create further insecurity.

The response of Jordan to Syrian refugees harkens back to the Palestinian displacement of 1948. That era “not only shaped Palestinian identity, but it has dominated Arab-Israeli relations for sixty-plus years and has influenced the region’s response to later waves of displacement.”¹¹ The refugee crisis began with an estimated 600,000 to 840,000 refugees from the 1948 war with Israel. The Palestinian refugees went primarily to the West Bank (controlled by Jordan), the Gaza Strip, and neighboring states. Political parties later emerged among the refugee population, including the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which formed in 1964.

By September 1970, the PLO had over five thousand full-time and twenty to twenty-five thousand part-time fighters, mostly based in Jordan. Despite Jordan’s generous treatment of the refugees, including granting citizenship, the Palestinian militants sparked a civil war and nearly toppled the government of King Hussein. Thousands of Palestinian civilians and militants died during Hussein’s harsh crackdown on Palestinian activity. The PLO was forced to move its forces to Lebanon. Jordan learned from that Black September that refugees can become militarized and hostile. And that they can overstay their welcome.

More recently, Jordan experienced a massive migration of Iraqis in 2006. Considering its past, Jordan, with a population of only 5.7 million (more than half of whom

are Palestinians) understandably viewed the Iraqi refugee crisis as a serious security threat.¹² In March 2008, the International Organization for Migration estimated that 2.4 million Iraqis had crossed international borders, including around five hundred thousand into Jordan and 1.2 to 1.4 million into Syria.¹³ Other refugee-receiving states included Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, and Turkey.

In Jordan, alarm over the influx led to restrictions that violated international refugee protection guidelines, but because Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention, it is not obliged to follow the convention's mandates. Since the government considered the Iraqis illegal aliens rather than refugees, they continually faced the threat of deportation. In February 2008, Jordan introduced visa restrictions that required Iraqis to apply for a visa in Iraq, rather than at the Jordanian border crossing. In addition, border officials refused entry to men between eighteen and thirty-five years old and reportedly turned back many Shia would-be refugees; most of the Iraqis returned to Iraq, although they remained displaced within its borders.¹⁴ Jordanian officials likely reacted, in part, based on their experience with the Palestinians.

Important lessons can also be drawn from the decades-long presence of over 330,000 registered Somali refugees in Kenya.¹⁵ Although the Somali refugee crisis receives less international attention and assistance than Syria, there are useful comparisons that apply. Kenya's 2011 invasion of Somalia was partially motivated by the political and security dynamics of the massive long-term displacement of Somalis. The Kenyan government has also successfully manipulated the refugee crisis to gain Western support for its military policies. In addition, refugees in Kenya have been targeted by Al Shabaab operatives in the camps. In both the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, the fear of terrorist groups has provid-

ed a rationale for eroding refugees' legal and physical protection. Addressing the refugee crises is an essential aspect of conflict resolution in both situations.

Domestic demographic considerations influence how Kenya responds to the Somali refugees within its borders. Somalis have lived in Kenya for decades; many arrived as early as 1991, fleeing civil war. The ethnicity of the refugees affects Kenya's domestic policy and the harsh crackdowns on the displaced. The Kenyan government often scapegoats the Somali ethnic minority and conflates it with the refugee population. Despite that long-term population, Kenya refuses to offer permanent residence to Somali refugees and drastically curtails their freedom of movement. Journalist Ben Rawlence has observed that the "Dadaab [camp] has survived as an isolated slum precisely because Kenya does not want to swell the Somali vote by up to one million refugees, or 2 percent of Kenya's population."¹⁶

In general, destabilization and violence are more likely when the host state has been involved in refugee-related violence in the past or when refugees alter demographic balances related to host-state internal conflict. Analyzing each new refugee crisis in its historical context allows policy-makers to predict potential destabilization and target resources accordingly. If security resources are scarce, for example, it makes more sense to focus them on refugee crises that occur in a possible tinderbox, rather than situations in which refugees and their hosts share ethnic ties and cultural sympathy.

Unsurprisingly, refugee crises tend to occur in unstable and high-conflict regions, which begets further violence and displacement. Trying to resolve a crisis in isolation of the regional security environment generally leads to frustration and a waste of resources. For example, the return of hun-

dreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees who had been in Syria does not indicate improvement in the Iraq conflict; it merely demonstrates the decreasing options available to the Iraqis who, for the most part, remain displaced within Iraq. Rather than solving a problem, refugee return merely relocated it.

Political scientist Myron Weiner's classic article on refugees and conflict, "Bad Neighbors, Bad Neighborhoods," explains how regional conflict contributes to the likelihood of refugee-related violence.¹⁷ Certainly, both the Horn of Africa and the Middle East qualify as "bad neighborhoods" in which conflicts tend to cluster. In assessing the likelihood of further conflict, one can ask how many neighboring states experience violent conflict and whether there is cross-border violence or rebel group activity. Those questions highlight the role of weak or fractured governments, particularly those that lack control of their periphery, in exacerbating potential destabilization. The relationship between the host and the sending state will also determine the level of tension and risk of violence based on the refugee crisis.

The dangerous security environment has clearly affected the Turkish government's response to Syrian refugees and has created a precarious situation for them on the border. Turkey does not grant Syrians refugee status or allow them to register with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); rather they are granted "temporary protection." In 2013, Turkey adopted the Law on Foreigners and International Protection to establish an immigration process for Syrians. The law recognizes Syrians as "guests" rather than as refugees and uses the term "guest camps" rather than refugee camps.¹⁸

The mixed Turkish government response to Syrians stems, in part, from conflicts and tensions with its own Kurdish population. As President Erdoğan stated, "What happens in Syria [is] an internal affair of Turkey

and not a foreign policy issue."¹⁹ A Kurdish homeland is anathema to Turkey, yet the displacement patterns of Kurds are increasing the geographical clustering among Kurds in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Foreign policy scholars Elizabeth Ferris and Kemal Kirişçi have explained that "the Turkish government considers the prospect of an uninterrupted Kurdish-controlled zone along its border a threat to national security." They continue, "this complicates Turkey's relationship with the United States, which maintains very close cooperation with the [Syrian Kurdish rebel group] PYD in the fight against ISIS."²⁰ In addition, Syria's Kurds have been effective in countering ISIS; thus, military action to weaken them creates tension between Turkey and the United States. The main losers in the high politics and negotiations have been the refugees, who see a continual decline in their humanitarian and legal protection.

Regional violence also surrounds the issue of displacement in Kenya, a host state in a supremely bad neighborhood. The surrounding states include Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Uganda – countries that have variously suffered civil war, international war, famine, terrorist attacks, and crushing poverty. Cross-border refugee flows and rebel attacks coexist in this unstable region.

The Kenyan government views its Somali refugee population as intertwined with the larger security issue of cross-border attacks by Al Shabaab. Kenya cited the need to relocate refugees to support its 2011 invasion of Somalia and the establishment of a buffer zone on the Somali side of the border. Abdeta Beyene and Seyoum Mesfin highlight the regional security strategy of buffer zones, "which can be established in a shared territory or created unilaterally through force and monitored exclusively by one state or through proxies in a nonshared area in (a) relatively weaker state(s), or on the other side of the enemy's

territory that harbors a threat to the stronger state.”²¹ The Kenyan government continues to battle Al Shabaab and intermittently revives the threat to close the refugee camps.

Regional security issues remain important during conflict resolution and peace-building, as well. The way in which displaced populations are integrated into a peace plan, and whether they are offered a durable solution to their situation, can influence postconflict stability. Refugees from the most protracted conflicts, such as in Afghanistan, include people who were born into refugee status and have never seen their “homeland.” The concept of voluntary return often does not appeal to the generations who grew up in Pakistan and live in established communities there. This creates tensions between the host state, which urges the refugees to return, and the refugees who resist repatriation. Reporting from Pakistan, Human Rights Watch claimed that “in the second half of 2016, a toxic combination of deportation threats and police abuses pushed out nearly 365,000 of the country’s 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees, as well as just over 200,000 of the country’s estimated 1 million undocumented Afghans.”²² The government of Afghanistan, which cannot meet the needs of its existing inhabitants, finds itself overwhelmed by returning refugees. A November 2016 report describes instances of “returning refugees clashing with locals over resources and land,” and explains that “the displaced are often rejected, or pushed into squalid camps. They also face the threat of forced eviction and rarely have access to clean water or food.”²³ The internal displacement crisis in Afghanistan demonstrates the need to develop a feasible survival plan for the returnees. Otherwise, conflict can erupt and displacement will continue to grow.

The negative effect of bad neighborhoods indicates that peacemakers must take a coordinated regional approach to conflict res-

olution. In conflict clusters, such as Central Africa, the attempt to resolve one crisis usually results in the relocation of violence rather than resolution. As Congolese rebels (and refugees) were pushed from Uganda, for example, they merely resurfaced in other weak, conflict-ridden states in the region. The destabilizing effect of refugee repatriation in Afghanistan offers another example of traditional peace-building measures that can actually worsen a situation. In the short term, policy-makers may find it easier to focus on piecemeal solutions to displacement crises, but such measures can actually undermine long-term peace efforts.

Unlike neighboring states such as Jordan and Kenya, Western states usually enjoy the privilege of distance from the conflict zone, which decreases pressure for an immediate reaction. The initial Western approach to refugee crises commonly divorces the humanitarian emergency from the causes of the displacement, addressing them through entirely separate channels. In response, humanitarian organizations reiterate that the provision of aid as a life-saving measure cannot resolve the crisis, particularly when political efforts undermine humanitarian goals. A disjointed response to the crisis reduces the likelihood of a durable resolution of both the refugee crisis and the conflict.

A Western state with security interests in the regional conflict is more likely to view the refugee population in strategic, rather than humanitarian, terms. The crisis may fit into a broader political relationship with the refugee-sending and -hosting states. Conversely, Western states may ignore a crisis that occurs in a region with little strategic value. In that case, the only engagement will be through humanitarian assistance, and usually at insufficient levels to meet refugees’ needs. That may leave refugees unprotected from militarization and desperate for any means to improve

their situation. Such a combination can quickly lead to violence.

Many Western governments are complicit in schemes that essentially use refugee populations as bargaining chips in international politics. In some cases, host governments use refugees as leverage in negotiations with Western states desperate to prevent the mass arrival of asylum seekers. Donor states have also encouraged manipulation and commodification of refugees by offering money to states that promise to prevent refugee flows.

The 2016 agreement between the European Union and Turkey formalized the treatment of refugees as political bargaining chips, and is likely to spur other receiving states to follow Turkey's strategy. By agreeing to accept Europe's unwanted asylum seekers, Turkey gained long-sought advances toward integration with Europe, as well as an additional three billion Euros for refugee assistance.²⁴ Human rights advocates express concern that the agreement violates international law and infringes on migrants' rights. The agreement forcibly returns asylum seekers without giving them a hearing. It also provides no guarantee that Turkey won't forcibly return people to dangerous situations. Rawlence explains the larger impact of sacrificing the legal rights of refugees in pursuit of political gain: "Against the backdrop of the Turkey deal, refugees are a good currency to hold: a hedge against foreign criticism, a liability for which to blame domestic problems, and a bargaining chip for special favors from abroad. In its vulgar attempt to buy itself out of its international obligations, the European Union has started a bidding war."²⁵

The Syrian civil war and refugee crisis is deeply intertwined with Turkey's regional and international ambitions. Oktav and Çelikaksoy have explained that the refugee crisis has led the Turkish government to both blame and embrace the West: "This bifurcated attitude toward the West has

typified the Turkish dilemma of trying to both gain membership in the EU and at the same time establish normative influence regionally."²⁶ Turkey berates Western donors for their stinginess, yet rejects international involvement in refugee-hosting areas. As the crisis unfolded in 2011, "the Turkish government saw international nongovernmental organizations and UN agencies as invasive and therefore acted to keep them at bay."²⁷

The Turkey-EU deal formalized an arrangement that occurs less formally in other crises. For example, Kenya has an unsettling habit of threatening to close refugee camps as an attention-getting ploy. Rawlence has argued that Kenya's announced plan to dismantle the Dadaab refugee camp, which houses nearly half a million people, is actually "a demand for ransom" from Western nations that follows from Turkey's lucrative deal with the European Union.²⁸ In the past, Kenyan threats to close Dadaab netted a U.S. promise of a \$45 million aid bonus.

Kenya has also been able to leverage American antiterror concerns to build support for military action against Al Shabaab in Somalia. Kenya's 2011 invasion of Somalia was both antiterrorist and antirefugee since the government hoped to establish a border zone in Somalia and expel refugees from Kenya. After Al Shabaab gunmen attacked Garissa University College in Kenya, killing 147 people, the government scapegoated refugees. This rationalized security crackdowns and aid reductions at the Dadaab camp.

Overall, destabilization and violence are more likely when host states use refugees as political pawns in negotiations with third parties. The willingness of Western states to resettle refugees also influences the refugees' levels of desperation and discontent in the country of first asylum. The chance of conflict also increases when host states do not have the means (or desire) to

meet the refugees' basic needs. Since most host states cannot afford to provide sufficient assistance, this requires massive donations by wealthier countries.

The human geography of a crisis, including the organization and administration of a refugee camp, can affect security and protection. Host states usually site camps in peripheral and inhospitable regions of the country, sometimes with the explicit intention of discouraging long-term settlement. Some governments even forbid refugees and aid agencies from using durable building materials to emphasize the impermanence of the settlements. Measures intended to reduce host-state destabilization, such as enclosed camps and denial of legal employment, infringe on refugee protection and rights. Over time, the policies meant to increase state security backfire by isolating and impoverishing the refugees and creating resentment. Far-flung camps also offer increased opportunities for criminal and political violence to flourish.

Considering the norm of massive, underfunded camps such as Dadaab in Kenya (321,000 residents) and Zaatari in Jordan (90,000 residents), it makes sense to pay attention to how camps function. Host states promote the perception of camps as temporary humanitarian way stations as a way to avoid dealing with the reality of camps as sprawling, insecure, and impoverished slums. Yet, as noted by political scientist Lionel Beehner, "there has been little attention to date on how the construction, organization, and administration of refugee camps can contribute to security threats or vice versa."²⁹

In their organization and governance, refugee and IDP camps can function as areas of limited statehood where nonstate actors perform government functions. As Thomas Risse and Eric Stollenwerk explain, "Limited statehood concerns those areas of a country in which central author-

ities (governments) lack the ability to implement and enforce rules and decisions and/or in which the legitimate monopoly over the means of violence is lacking."³⁰ Although international law mandates that the government is responsible for meeting the needs of displaced populations, the host government often does not provide public goods or even security in refugee camps. UN agencies, NGOs, and donor states provide food, medical care, shelter, and sanitation for displaced people. When the host state lacks the willingness or ability to provide security, camp organizers must make ad hoc arrangements, such as hiring private contractors or local police to patrol camps. Many observers, including the beleaguered providers of services and security to the displaced, express a wish for states to establish effective sovereignty in the camps. Risse and Stollenwerk, however, challenge the commonly held concern that areas of limited statehood pose inherent risks of violence.³¹ Instead, such areas can remain stable and peaceful, especially if a stronger state would result in increased threats toward the inhabitants of refugee and IDP camps. Somaliland, a breakaway and autonomous region of Somalia, hosts tens of thousands of recent Yemeni refugees. The region declared independence from Somalia, although it remains unrecognized internationally, and offers a more peaceful haven than either Yemen or Somalia.³²

The organization of refugee settlements, as well as their conditions, can influence the likelihood of violence and destabilization. When host states and aid organizations build settlements, they may unwittingly undo existing patterns of integration by clustering refugees according to ethnic or religious affiliation. This can potentially create more identity-based communities. In some cases, however, such as when they are a persecuted minority, refugees are sequestered for their own protection. As a general rule, settlements func-

tion more smoothly when the inhabitants are consulted about their organization.

The conditions of exile also influence the potential for conflict. The main points of contention for refugees are freedom of movement, the right to work, and education for their children. While locals may resist allowing refugees those freedoms, in the long run, more self-sufficiency reduces tensions and can even have a positive economic impact. Regardless of legal restrictions, markets will abound among the displaced. The question is really whether jobs will occur legally or as part of a distorted informal economy (including criminal networking).

Based on field research in the Zaatari camp, Beehner argues that top-down social engineering policies that treat refugee camps as “incubators of social unrest, terrorism, and illicit markets” are “counterproductive to enhancing security in refugee camps, both for the refugees themselves and for the host state.”³³ As of 2016, the Zaatari camp in Jordan held about ninety thousand Syrian refugees.³⁴ Every type of business flourishes despite attempts to restrict refugees and regulate their living conditions; services such as pizza delivery and wedding dress rentals are available from refugee-run businesses. Beehner strongly advocates for less regimented camps that allow refugees greater cultural and economic flexibility, arguing that “camps, left unregulated, have the same dynamic capacity to become engines of economic growth as they do to become incubators of violence.”³⁵

Beehner’s recommendations on camp structure would fall on deaf ears in Kenya, where the residents of Dadaab find themselves continually restricted. The camps are so-called “closed camps,” in which refugees must obtain official permission to leave. The government refuses to allow any construction using permanent building materials, consigning refugees, many

of whom have lived their entire lives in Dadaab, to flimsy and dangerous structures. Income generation is also highly restricted and the government mandates that all of the best jobs, such as staff with international NGOs, go to Kenyan citizens. Of course, strict limits on employment and movement end up creating a distorted informal economy. Massive smuggling operations, which profit Kenyan civil servants and businessmen, use the refugee camps as hubs. The sugar trade in Kenya is a complex and corrupt web of profit between government officials and Al Shabaab militants that relies on cheap refugee labor. The profiteers bring contraband sugar across the Somali border on trucks that also rent space to Somalis desperate to reach refugee camps in Kenya.³⁶ The Kenya example suggests that when corruption benefits government factions, they have a further incentive to reduce the legal options for the refugees.

Although Syrian refugees in Turkey are concentrated in border regions, where one might expect conditions to exacerbate tensions, observers have found little evidence to support worries of destabilization. Around 260,000 Syrians are housed in twenty-one government-run camps, with the vast majority living in urban areas.³⁷ Economic analysis by Yusuf Emre Akgündüz and colleagues finds that the presence of over five hundred thousand refugees has not distorted labor markets and has only minimally increased food and housing prices. Their finding suggests that economic conditions will dampen local resentment against the refugees. They also note, however, that Syrian refugees lack legal protection in Turkey since the government labels them “guests” rather than “refugees.”³⁸ The International Crisis Group suggests that “Ankara now needs to assume the permanence of the refugees in order to craft an integration strategy to mitigate the long-term risk for the nation’s stability.”³⁹ Opponents of the Turkish government complain that the

ruling Justice and Development Party is re-locating the Sunni refugees into opposition and minority areas as a way to “achieve absolute power.”⁴⁰ Physical and legal insecurity increases the potential for destabilization, which could be alleviated by granting the Syrians refugee status and the related legal protection that implies.

According to the UNHCR, Syrian refugees in Lebanon suffer in very poor conditions: “Around 70 percent live below the poverty line. There are no formal refugee camps and, as a result, more than a million registered Syrians are scattered throughout more than 2,100 urban and rural communities and locations, often sharing small basic lodgings with other refugee families in overcrowded conditions.”⁴¹ The government has responded to security risks with indiscriminate crackdowns on refugees, as well as Lebanese civilians.⁴² Lebanon is probably the host state most at risk for increasing political instability, given its existing problems. In general, risks of conflict rise when refugees live in oppressive and highly regimented settings. This is exacerbated when they have no legal income-generation options and when young people are denied an education.

Large-scale population displacement generates fear. Refugees flee due to fear of persecution and violence; those fears often do not dissipate in their new surroundings. Host countries fear the potential destabilizing effects of refugees in the economic, political, and security realms. Regional and international observers fear the spread of conflict across borders. Many of these concerns stem from past historical experiences and existing political tensions, leading to refugee policies that actually worsen the risks for destabilization. Confining the displaced to squalid, insecure, and underfunded camps can create a high level of desperation among inhabitants. Faced with an unlivable situation, refugees will risk their

lives on a treacherous journey to reach a perceived safe haven, such as Europe. A lack of security also creates the opportunity for militant activity, including forced or voluntary recruitment of people in search of basic safety. For example, forced recruitment by militant groups in Africa has occurred in unprotected camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Darfur, Chad, Somalia, and many other states.⁴³

Policy-makers often view host-state security and refugee security as unrelated – or even opposing – factors. In reality, refugee protection and state stability are strongly connected; undermining one factor weakens the other. Policies to protect refugees, both physically and legally, reduce potential threats from the crisis and bolster state security. Overwhelmed and often impoverished, host states cannot provide this protection without significant international assistance. Outside help is also required when the host state is hostile to the displaced population or seeks to manipulate their situation for unrelated gains.

The dangers related to the global refugee crisis interact with many other threats that emanate from civil wars and weak states. In many cases, refugee crises destabilize international security only in the company of other factors, such as weak governments, rebel and terrorist group activity, and religious or ethnic fragmentation. When states lose control over territory or engage in civil war, massive displacement is a likely result. Mitigating the risk factors for host state destabilization and refugee insecurity will reduce the likelihood that a refugee crisis will contribute to further conflict.

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Organized Crime, Illicit Economies, Civil Violence & International Order: More Complex Than You Think

Vanda Felbab-Brown

Abstract: This essay analyzes the multiple threats that organized crime and illicit economies pose to states and the international order, with a particular focus on the security dimensions of the crime-conflict nexus. In analyzing the range of responses by states and the international community to the nexus of criminal economies and civil wars, insurgencies, and terrorism, this essay also highlights how premature and ill-conceived government efforts to combat illicit economies have counterproductive effects, hampering efforts to suppress militancy and, in some cases, generating dangerous international spillovers of criminality. The second part of the essay examines various pathways out of the conflict-crime nexus, including defeating militants without suppressing illicit economies, suppressing crime and illicit economies without ending conflict, and state co-optation of illicit economies. The essay concludes with policy recommendations.

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Several years ago in the south of Afghanistan, the core of the Taliban's insurgency effort, the Taliban hammered up posters offering to protect villagers against government attempts to eradicate the illegal poppy fields and seize opium stocks. The Taliban insurgents left a cell phone number to call if a government eradication team sponsored by the United States showed up. In one village near Kandahar, the villagers caught on to a sting operation in which a counternarcotics agent posed as an opium trader.¹ After his visits to the village to buy opium were followed by raids on the villagers' opium crops, the villagers phoned the Taliban. The Taliban instructed them to invite the suspected informant back, capture him, and force him to call the police. When the police arrived in the village, the Taliban ambushed them, killing several policemen, including the police chief. The Taliban scored a success against the government and limited its presence in the area. Cru-

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doi:10.1162/DAED_a_00462

cially, this episode fortified the relationship between the local population and the Taliban, even though the village residents had previously shown no pro-Taliban feelings. The Taliban used its protection of the illegal poppy economy to greatly increase its legitimacy with the local population and reduce the legitimacy of the Afghan government, accusing it and its U.S. sponsor of killing people with hunger by destroying their poppy fields.

This story from Afghanistan illustrates the complex relationships between illegal economies and organized crime, on the one hand, and civil wars, military conflict, and international order, on the other. Many studies too simplistically posit a unidirectional relationship between state strength and criminality and the effects of illicit economies on international order. Their standard argument: Illicit economies weaken states, fuel internal conflict, and undermine international order. They also cause undesirable international spillovers: the trafficking of illicit commodities and, perhaps, fueling of conflict in other countries. Hence, the logic goes, if illicit economies are suppressed, the internal conflict recedes, the state is strengthened, and international order is reinforced. Yet these relationships are far more multidirectional and multifaceted, and many of the policy recommendations derived from their simplistic characterizations are not only ineffective but outright counterproductive, as the opening story reveals.

This essay problematizes and revises the asserted causal relationships and provides empirical evidence from Latin America, South and Southeast Asia, and Eastern Africa. It shows that what is internationally illegal may be seen as highly legitimate by local populations, and that the sponsors of the illegal can become potent power brokers and political actors. In analyzing the multiple threats that illegal economies and organized crime pose to the state and to in-

ternational order, this essay also highlights that negative externalities and undesirable spillover effects can also be caused by government policies, not just the illicit markets and civil wars. Paradoxically, internal stability and even international order are not necessarily weakened by a state hosting an illicit economy; sometimes stability and order can be strengthened by the illicit economy. This essay also analyzes the various pathways out of the crime-conflict international disorder nexus, given the highly complex dynamics, and offers policy implications.

Large-scale criminal economies generate multiple threats to states and domestic and international stability.² They can threaten the state politically by providing an avenue for criminal organizations and corrupt politicians to enter the political space, undermining the democratic process. Such penetration and eventual domination of the political space has been evident from Afghanistan to Guatemala and Honduras. Colombia's so-called parapolitics scandal in the mid-2000s exposed how criminal groups and paramilitaries came to control the local governments of many municipalities and sponsored at least one-third of the members of the Colombian National Congress.

These crime-connected actors frequently experience great success in the political process, wielding influence from official jobs or behind the scenes. Consequently, the legitimacy of the political process is subverted. The problem perpetuates itself as successful politicians bankrolled with illicit money make it more difficult for other actors to resist participating in the illicit economy, leading to endemic corruption at both the local and national levels.

Large illicit economies with powerful traffickers also have a pernicious effect on the judicial system of a country. As the illicit economy grows, the investigative capacity of law enforcement agencies diminishes. Impunity for criminal activity also

increases, undermining the credibility and deterrence capacities of the judicial system. For example, between 2007 and 2014, a staggering 164,000 people were murdered in Mexico, and perhaps some forty thousand since.³ Yet a decade after President Felipe Calderón declared a war on the Mexican cartels in 2006, only 2 percent of violent crimes have been effectively prosecuted. Powerful traffickers frequently turn to violent means to deter and avoid prosecution, killing off or bribing prosecutors, judges, and witnesses.

Illicit economies also have large and complex economic effects. Drug cultivation and processing generate employment for impoverished rural populations, numbering frequently in the hundreds of thousands. Moreover, in some circumstances, the drug economy not only allows the poor and marginalized to make ends meet, it can also facilitate some level of upward mobility, even if only from grinding poverty to lesser poverty. For example, in Afghanistan, the country with the world's largest cultivation of illicit drugs and the greatest economic dependence on a drug economy, profits from drugs constitute between one-third and one-half of the overall economy.⁴ In recent years, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has lowered that estimate, stating that the farm gate value of opium production in Afghanistan represents about 4 percent of the country's GDP.⁵ But this number is misleading. The farm gate value does not take into account the value added in Afghanistan or the economic spillover effects: for example, much of the consumption of durables and nondurables and much of Afghanistan's construction is underpinned by the opium poppy economy.

But there are also significant negative economic effects associated with illicit economies. Burgeoning economies, such as large-scale drug cultivation or smuggling, can contribute to inflation and appreciation of land and labor costs, which

harm legal, export-oriented, import-substituting industries that poor countries need for their economic development. The illegal drug trade encourages real estate speculation and a rapid rise in real estate prices, undermines currency stability, and often fuels drug addiction within the supplier states.

Certain illicit economies also generate environmental threats. Poaching and smuggling of wildlife throughout Africa as well as Southeast Asia, for example, depletes biodiversity and contributes to the demise of endangered species. Illegal logging in East and West Africa leads to further soil erosion and desertification, making land inhospitable for agriculture. Both illegal logging and wildlife trafficking have fueled civil wars, such as in Burma, Cambodia, and South Sudan. In the Congo and the Amazon, illegal logging and mining decimates some of the world's last rainforests, contributes to carbon release and global warming, and results in species loss. Illicit smuggling of toxic waste into Africa generates critical health problems and ecological catastrophes. States caught up in civil wars or intense insurgencies often have a far smaller capacity and fewer resources to devote to effectively suppressing these other negative effects and threats.

Crucially, because insurgent and terrorist groups obtain multiple benefits by sponsoring these illicit economies, the presence of a large-scale illicit economy in the context of violent political conflict greatly exacerbates security threats to the state.⁶ And in some circumstances, such as in Mexico since 2006, organized crime can become so violent and so overwhelm a state's weak law enforcement capacity that its actions can amount to a national security threat, not merely a public safety threat.

Armed groups, such as the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in Peru, and the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and paramilitaries in Colombia, often obtain

tens of millions and sometimes hundreds of millions of dollars per year by sponsoring and taxing illicit economies like the drug trade. With these vast profits, they can hire more combatants, pay better salaries, and purchase superior weapons and other equipment.

Better procurement and logistics also enhance what I call “the freedom of action” of belligerents: that is, a greater scope of tactical options available to belligerents and the ability to optimize both tactics and their grand strategy. Prior to penetrating illicit economies, belligerents frequently have to spend much time and energy on activities that do little to advance their cause, such as robbing banks and armories to obtain money and weapons or extorting the local population for food supplies. Once their participation in an illicit economy, such as the drug trade, solves their logistical and procurement needs, they are free to concentrate on high-impact targets.

Critically, as I detailed in my book *Shooting Up: Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs*, participation in illicit economies greatly increases the belligerents’ political capital: that is, the extent to which the population welcomes and tolerates the presence of the belligerents.⁷ Large-scale illicit economies frequently provide basic livelihoods for the population in a conflict zone, and by sponsoring the illicit economy, belligerents are able to distribute real-time economic benefits to that population. Moreover, beyond the basic provision of livelihoods, belligerents also provide protection and regulation services to the illicit economy and its producers against, for instance, brutal and unreliable traffickers. With large financial profits from the illicit economy, belligerents also often provide a variety of otherwise absent social services, such as clinics, roads, sewer services, and schools. They reduce the dependence on external sponsors for funding. The state’s willingness and capacity to provide basic social services is lack-

ing in large parts of the world; a Western-like social contract does not exist.⁸ Illicit economies are thus a crucial source of distribution of resources to the marginalized, and their sponsors can obtain large political support.

Ideology or religious motivations are not a determinative factor as to whether belligerent groups become involved in illicit economies.⁹ Most do and find ways to square their criminality with their religion or ideology. Although the FARC originally saw coca cultivation as the ultimate expression of decadent capitalism and the Taliban saw the production of opium as profoundly anti-Koran, both groups found their antidrug efforts too costly politically and economically. Thus, the FARC declared it acceptable to send drugs to the imperialist gringos and the Taliban allowed drugs to go to the infidels. But the Islamic State in Afghanistan, for example, has for three years attempted to suppress poppy cultivation, despite the significant legitimacy costs with the local population in the province of Nangarhar, its primary base. But contrary to conventional wisdom, participating in illegal economies does not necessarily mean that belligerent groups lose political objectives or even ideology. Neither the FARC nor the Taliban are merely cartels, as is sometimes alleged. They remain profoundly political actors.

Four factors have a decisive influence on the extent to which belligerent groups derive political capital from their sponsorship of illicit economies:

The state of the overall economy determines the extent to which the local population is dependent on the illicit economy for basic livelihoods and any chance of social advancement. The poorer the country and the fewer legal jobs, the greater the dependence of the population on the illicit economy, and the greater the political capital accrued by belligerents for sponsoring it.

In contrast, in a wealthy, developed country with a plenitude of legal economic opportunities, the local population may well object to the illicit economy and the belligerents can become discredited by participating in criminal economies. Hence, in Afghanistan, as the opening story shows, the Taliban derives crucial political support protecting the poppy fields. By contrast, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) in Northern Ireland discredited itself with its Catholic base when it became involved in local drug distribution. The resulting loss of legitimacy ultimately led the PIRA to abandon its participation in the drug trade, though not in extortion or gambling rackets.

The character of the illicit economy determines the extent to which the criminal economy provides employment for the population. Labor-intensive illicit economies, such as the cultivation of drug crops, easily employ hundreds of thousands to millions of people in a particular locale. The employment needs and opportunities, such as in the case of illegal logging or poppy cultivation (far more so than of coca), can also accommodate an extensive itinerant and migrant labor force, often mostly domestic, but sometimes cross-border. The smuggling of drugs or other contraband, by contrast, are labor-nonintensive illicit activities that frequently employ only hundreds of people. Belligerents' sponsorship of labor-intensive illicit economies thus brings them much greater and more widespread political capital than their sponsorship of labor-nonintensive ones.

The presence or absence of independent traffickers determines the extent to which belligerents can provide protection and regulation for the population against the traffickers. To the extent that independent traffickers are present and abuse the local population, the belligerents can insert themselves into the relationship and act as protection and regulation agents. If traf-

fickers are not present, perhaps because the belligerents eliminated them, belligerents cannot provide the same scope of protection and regulation services to the producers, and hence their political capital decreases. During the 1980s and early 1990s, for example, the FARC bargained on behalf of farmers for better prices from the traffickers, and limited the abuses by traffickers against the population. Its actions were met with widespread approval from the *cocaleros* (coca growers). During the late 1990s, however, the FARC displaced independent traffickers from the territories it controlled, demanded a monopoly on the sale of coca leaves, and set a ceiling on the price paid to the *cocaleros*. Consequently, the FARC's political capital plummeted, further contributing to the deterioration of its legitimacy, which was already in decline as a result of its own brutality and failure to protect the population from the paramilitaries' massacres.¹⁰

Finally, *the government's response to the illicit economy* critically influences the extent to which belligerents can derive political capital from sponsoring the illicit economy. The government's response can range from suppression – eradication and interdiction – to laissez-faire, to some form of official sanctioning of the illegal economy, including full-blown legalization. Although suppression policies often dominate government responses, increasingly less-punitive policies are being explored as well. Legalization or licensing has been adopted in the case of gems, such as with diamonds in Africa under the so-called Kimberly Process Certification Scheme. Similarly, although easily evaded and falsified, certification systems distinguish illegally sourced, processed, and transshipped timber from legally certified timber. In August 2013, Uruguay became the first country to fully legalize the cultivation and sale of marijuana, and several U.S. states too have legalized its recreational use.

The more the government attempts to suppress the illicit economy, the more it boosts demand for the belligerents' protection and regulation services, and the more dependent both the criminal business elites and the wider population are on the belligerents for the preservation of the illicit economy. Government suppression policies, such as the effort to eradicate illicit crops, thus frequently have the inadvertent and highly counterproductive effect of strengthening the belligerents politically. Policies to suppress illicit economies on which the local population depends for basic livelihoods thus encourage the local population to support the belligerents and discourage the population from providing intelligence on them. Accurate and actionable human intelligence is of course essential for successful counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations.

Moreover, although they alienate the population, government efforts to crack down on illicit economies rarely result in a substantial curtailing of the belligerents' financial income. For example, drug eradication policies so far have not bankrupted or seriously weakened any belligerent group. Eradication policies fail in their goal to stop the money flows to belligerents because belligerents, drug farmers, and smugglers have a variety of adaptive methods at their disposal: relocating production to new areas, altering production methods to avoid detection or survive suppression, or even switching to other illegal fundraising activities.

The various efforts in Afghanistan since 2001 to eradicate or ban the cultivation of opium repeatedly resulted in the strengthening of the Taliban and gravely undermined counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts.¹¹ First, they did not bankrupt the Taliban. In fact, the Taliban reconstituted itself in Pakistan between 2002 and 2004 without access to large profits from drugs, rebuilding its material base largely

with donations from Pakistan and the Middle East and with profits from another illicit economy: the illegal traffic of licit goods between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Second, eradication strengthened the Taliban physically by driving economic refugees into its hands. Third, eradication alienated the local population from the national government as well as from local tribal elites who agreed to eradication, thus creating a key opening for Taliban mobilization. Fourth, eradication critically undermined the motivation of the local population to provide intelligence on the Taliban to the counterinsurgents while it motivated the population to provide intelligence to the Taliban. Fifth, the local officials in charge of eradication were in the position to best profit from counternarcotics policies, being able to eliminate competition from both drug business and politicians alike. They could use eradication to increase their own share of the local drug economy.

Recognizing the counterproductive effects of eradication, the Obama administration broke with decades of U.S. counternarcotics policies and, in 2009, defunded the centrally led eradication effort in Afghanistan.

But even though stopping revenue flows to belligerents by suppressing illicit economies is elusive, there are pathways out of the crime-insurgency nexus. The time-tested one, though politically controversial, is to militarily defeat the belligerents while adopting a *laissez-faire* approach to the illicit drug economy. In many counterinsurgency efforts, this approach has succeeded. For example, until the 1950s, Mao Zedong not only tolerated the antinationalist and anti-Communist drug cultivation and trade, but allowed his units to participate actively in it. It was only in the 1950s and 1960s, after he had won the insurgency and established firm territorial control throughout China, that he embraced the

eradication of China's flourishing poppy fields.

The case of Peru is particularly revealing of the importance of government counter-narcotics policies for the overall effectiveness of counterinsurgency policy. When eradication was undertaken during the early 1980s and again in the mid-1980s, the military lost ground to the Shining Path (the Communist Party of Peru). The belligerents secured the villagers' allegiance and came to control large parts of the countryside. When eradication of drug crops was halted and the military did not allow the police to interfere with the villagers' coca livelihoods, the villagers, like the traffickers, were willing to provide vital intelligence to the military and the military scored key successes against the Shining Path. Ultimately, the military's *laissez-faire* approach to the drug economy was instrumental in its success at winning the countryside back.

In Colombia, the government, with U.S. sponsorship and encouragement, pursued drug eradication for almost thirty years, including the most intensive aerial spraying campaign in history, undertaken between 2000 and 2008. But the counter-narcotics policy has failed to accomplish either of its goals: Although the area under cultivation decreased temporarily in the latter part of the 2000s, it has rebounded since 2005 to pre-eradication levels. Nor did eradication bankrupt or severely weaken the FARC. As a result of direct U.S. military assistance to Colombia, the capacities of the Colombian military significantly increased and the Colombian state was able to substantially weaken the FARC's operational capacity and territorial control. The successes cannot be attributed to eradication, but rather to direct military action against the insurgents.

Indeed, everywhere in the world, the effective suppression of drugs in any particular locale has required the resolution of military conflict and robust state pres-

ence throughout the territory, regardless of whether the suppression has come from mailed-fist eradication or effective alternative livelihoods efforts.

On the other hand, under some circumstances, though not easily in the case of large-scale drug cultivation, it is also possible to suppress illicit economies without ending conflict. For example, international antipiracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden and off Somalia, which cost the global economy an estimated \$18 billion at their peak between 2011 and 2013, suppressed dangerous and costly piracy there without ever addressing Somalia's violent conflict or the poverty that stimulated the piracy.¹² The expansion of international naval patrols in the piracy-affected areas, such as NATO's Operation Ocean Shield, the European Union's Operation Atalanta, and naval deployments by Russia, China, India, and other countries, increased both situational awareness and radically shortened the response time of antipirate naval forces. The use of best management practices and layers of defenses on ships that could be targeted by pirates, such as citadels and barriers against pirates boarding ships, made the success of attacks considerably more difficult. The highly controversial presence of armed guards on ships has further increased the capacity of ships to resist attacks and increased the deterrent effects of these various measures. In particular, European and U.S. naval deployments became more effective at collecting legal evidence on captured pirates, facilitating their effective prosecution in special courts established in the region, and also enhancing deterrence. For a variety of reasons, actions by land forces against pirates, such as by the Puntland Maritime Force, or Kenyan law enforcement units against pirates in hiding or enjoying recreation in Kenya, had mostly limited effects: many safe havens remained. Arresting and prosecuting pirate financiers and

enablers, such as in Kenya or in the United Arab Emirates and among the Somali diaspora in Europe, also remained an elusive and largely unfulfilled promise.

Nonetheless, the naval interdiction and the strengthening of ship's defenses instilled fear in pirates that their attacks would be unsuccessful and that they may face punitive actions. Many pirates thus switched to working as protection guards for (illegal) fishing and other vessels off Somalia, which earlier would have been their prime targets.

A third pathway out of the crime-insurgency nexus, even more controversial than a *laissez-faire* attitude toward the illicit economy by the state, is the state's outright co-optation of the illicit economy. The case of Burma since the 1990s is a prime example of how the state's co-optation of organized crime and the state's *laissez-faire* policies toward illicit economies were central to the government's ability to suppress military conflict. However, the Burmese case provides a new twist on *laissez-faire*: *laissez-faire* was not used by the government to win the hearts and minds of the population, but rather to buy off and co-opt the belligerents and the traffickers themselves.

After decades of civil war and eradication-based poppy suppression policies, the military junta in Burma in the early 1990s managed to strike cease-fires with some of the country's insurgencies. A key incentive for the groups to accept the cease-fire deals was to give them *de facto* licenses to trade the resources in the areas they controlled, including drugs. Despite U.S. opposition to these policies and resulting U.S. economic sanctions, the junta also suspended eradication of opium poppy. In the Kachin state, the various rebel groups – the Kachin Defense Army, New Democratic Army-Kachin, and Kachin Independence Organization – were allowed to harvest timber and opium pop-

py and mine gems and gold. In the Karen state, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army also taxed opium poppy cultivation and trafficked in opium and timber. In the Shan state, the United Wa State Army, Shan State National Army, Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, and Mong Tai Army were given similar freedoms in the drug trade. Moreover, in the cease-fire areas, the junta legalized cross-border trade with China, Thailand, and India on the condition that government checkpoints were established and taxes collected on trade.

Several years into the cease-fires in the 1990s, the central junta and some of the ethnic rebel leaders restarted poppy eradication and dramatically suppressed poppy cultivation. Although this severely diminished the political capital of the authorities, the population had no recourse and suffered great hardships, impoverishment, and immense food insecurity. The drug eradication campaigns in Burma contributed to a boom in opiate production in Afghanistan, but ultimately, without alternative livelihoods for the desperate farmers, the campaigns were not sustainable. In the 2000s, Burmese poppy cultivation significantly rebounded.

The Burmese state is hardly alone in co-opting illicit economies and using criminal groups for its purposes. Many states have adopted similar practices, and such states are hardly solely weak or violently contested. Governments embrace criminal groups in order to suppress internal opposition groups, such as in Mexico in the 1970s and 1980s. States delegate authority to criminal groups over areas on which the government and elites do not want to expend resources or in which they do not have the capacity to govern, such as the slums in Brazil, Jamaica, and Bangladesh. Far beyond Burma, states, political elites, and power brokers co-opt illicit economies and organized crime to generate resources, such as financial contributions, electoral

votes, patronage support, and hard currency. Examples include not only pariah states like North Korea, but also states like India and Nepal.

And states use organized crime to augment their military and external power – whether for aggression or for desirable international public goods. Russia has used de facto militias hired from among organized criminal groups to conduct its aggression in Crimea and support insurgents in Eastern Ukraine. For example, the leather-clad biker gang Night Wolves helped Russian special operations forces annex Crimea in 2014 and other criminal gang “volunteers” directed by Russian intelligence agents played a crucial role in Eastern Ukraine.

The use of organized criminal actors by states for prosecuting conflict or for political control is, of course, nothing new. The U.S. forces invading Sicily relied on the Sicilian mafia for intelligence provision as well as postinvasion stability operations. Chiang-Kai Shek depended on Du Yue-sheng’s criminal group, the Green Gang, to fight the Japanese during War World II and even made Du, the world’s most accomplished drug trafficker, his minister of counternarcotics.

All of these various pathways out of the crime–civil war nexus demonstrate that both states and the international community often do have the capacity to limit and isolate potentially dangerous international spillovers.¹³ Civil wars and internal instability are thus often seen simplistically and narrowly as inevitable sources of dangerous international flows, such as arms, drugs, other contraband, militants, and illegal migrants. Libya is the most frequently highlighted recent case of such dangerous outflows originating in internal instability and wreaking havoc regionally and on the international order.

However, preexisting characteristics of states, such as law enforcement capacity

and the style and purpose of governance, strongly influence a state’s susceptibility and vulnerability to negative externalities of illicit economies, organized crime, and civil conflict. The dangerous flows of weapons, smugglers, and militants from Libya found fertile ground in Mali, Nigeria, and elsewhere in West Africa. So did the drug trade that arrived in West Africa a decade ago when Europe suddenly acquired a taste for cocaine supplied from Latin America, with West Africa as a key transshipment center. It is not simply that these dangerous flows were suddenly entering West Africa, but rather the preexisting weakness and corruption of law enforcement forces and government elites, weak rule of law, and indeed the very concept of the state as a mafia bazaar, with extensive intermeshing of state and crime, determined the local vulnerability to drug trafficking and other dangerous flows of weapons, contraband, and militancy.

Indeed, politics in West Africa has for decades been about taking over the state in order to control the main sources of revenue, licit or illicit. In essence, the government has been seen as a means to personal wealth, not as a service to the people. The state would then define (or redefine) what constitutes illegal economic behavior and selectively issue exemptions from law enforcement and prosecution to families, friends, and the regime’s network of clients. Such political arrangements have been so pervasive in West Africa that some scholars have described the environment there as a “mafia-like bazaar, where anyone with an official designation can pillage at will.”¹⁴ Moreover, fearing internal coups and yet facing little external aggression even in the context of very porous borders, many ruling elites in West Africa postindependence systematically allowed their militaries and law enforcement institutions to deteriorate. These deinstitutionalization political imperatives left West African po-

litical systems and “rule-of-law” arrangements highly susceptible to penetration by the drug trade and other dangerous criminal flows from unstable areas.¹⁵

In contrast, the extraordinarily high amount of violence by organized crime in Mexico has not spilled into the United States even though many of the same Mexican criminal groups dominate U.S. drug distribution. Nor is organized crime, including drug trafficking groups, in East Asia anywhere near as violent as in Latin America. In the United States, Western Europe, and East Asia, law enforcement retains a far greater deterrence capacity toward criminal groups, unlike in Latin America, where it has been gutted.

Moreover, such deleterious spillovers do not result merely from the breakdown of state capacity or outbreaks of civil war; many times they are the result of state actions. All too often, suppressing illicit economies or the crime-conflict nexus in one area merely pushes it into another, destabilizing wider regions in the process. Counternarcotics policies are notorious for generating such spillover effects, referred to in the drug field as “balloon effects.” In the absence of global demand reduction, drug suppression in Peru merely pushes cultivation and trafficking into Colombia, drug suppression in Burma pushes it into Afghanistan, and criminal violence in Mexico and state efforts against Mexican drug trafficking groups intensify and make it more dangerous to traffic drugs in Central America. Similarly, U.S. deportation of youth gang members to Central America significantly contributed to the rise of the *pandillas* and *maras* (street gangs) there.

The state’s relationship with criminal groups and illegality is not merely one of weak states unwillingly receiving bad international flows and being compelled to allow illicit markets. States often have nu-

merous ways of co-opting and controlling the illicit economy and organized-crime actors, sometimes bringing stability to turbulent societies and order to international affairs. While it is true that illicit economies can weaken states and fuel civil wars, state efforts to suppress illicit economies, particularly labor-intensive ones in areas of extensive poverty and marginalization, often undermine efforts to end conflict. And government policies to suppress illegal economies can also generate dangerous international spillovers.

More effective policies toward suppressing the deleterious crime-conflict dynamics and the threats that illicit economies pose to states and society include:

Correctly sequencing anticrime and conflict mitigation efforts. Premature suppression efforts against illicit economies that provide livelihoods to large segments of local populations without legal economic alternatives will hamper conflict mitigation. Governments can end civil wars and win insurgencies without destroying the illegal economy to suppress financial flows to insurgents. To mitigate conflict, efforts to suppress labor-intensive illicit economies, such as drug cultivation, should be postponed.

Moreover, in the absence of security and a strong on-the-ground presence, the effectiveness of any illicit-economy suppression efforts will be highly limited, in addition to being counterproductive. No matter what anticrime/counternarcotics efforts are ultimately undertaken – whether iron-fist suppression of the illicit economy or a prior fostering of legal alternative livelihoods – they will not be effective in reducing the illicit economy unless firm security throughout the entire territory has been established first.

Indeed, the most successful example of counterinsurgency, and ultimately counternarcotics efforts, adopted such sequencing: in the case of Thailand, through well-designed postinsurgency alternative liveli-

hoods, and in the case of China and Myanmar, through iron-fisted postinsurgency eradication. In Peru, the right sequencing of suspending eradication during insurgency allowed the Peruvian government to defeat the Shining Path and, ultimately, somewhat reduce coca cultivation.

Such proper sequencing, however, requires a whole-of-government effort so that bureaucratic proclivities of particular agencies, such as eradicating drug crops, do not undermine the counterinsurgency effort. Aligning and sequencing the efforts of various line ministries and bureaucracies is necessary to end conflict, stabilize the country, and build effective and legitimate governance. Once again, Thailand is the most successful example of such a united effort. In contrast, despite the counterinsurgency military progress during the 2000s and the ultimately unsuccessful 2016 FARC peace deal, Colombia has struggled with the whole-of-government state-building effort. If the international community decides to promote “good governance” in settings of civil war/insurgency and large-scale illegal economies to suppress existing criminal enterprises and illicit economies and to prevent the emergence of new ones, it needs to plan for and take on this effort early on. The immediate and early postintervention, post-military operations period is the critical and optimal time to shape the political and criminal environment in the country. That, however, requires a coherent vision of a strategy, with explicitly stated sequencing and with alignment of military, law enforcement, development, and governance efforts.

Recognizing the political dimensions of crime and illicit economies. The state as well as outside interveners need to operate on the premise that the more the legal economy is destroyed, the more robust and deeply ensconced the illicit economy will be. Prominent domestic military and political actors – possibly allies and partners of

outside interveners or major international powers – will also very likely be deeply involved in the illicit economy. Their power will often be inextricably linked to their ability to use the illicit economy to provide for the population’s elemental needs. Conversely, the engagement of the international community, such as external interveners, will have profound effects on the shape of the crime-politics nexus and on power distribution within the illicit economy, and thus within the country itself. Through their actions and engagement with local power brokers, international military forces will thus codify or alter the balance of power in the criminal market as well as in the political landscape.

In fact, outside intervention forces often have not only a poor capacity to understand local illicit economies and patronage networks of crime and politics, but also lack the capacity to respond to crime. The absence of such capacities applies to both organized and street crime. The rise in street crime is often the first and most direct way that local populations experience postintervention insecurity. Such an increase in street crime can alienate the population from the state and the intervention forces, stimulate a hankering for the *ancien régime*, empower extralegal power brokers, and even bring on a full-blown criminal order. Yet both the outside intervention forces and their military police components are often ill-prepared to respond to street or organized crime, nor can they effectively train local police forces. Neither military policing nor “counterinsurgency-light” approaches are adequate substitutes for traditional community-oriented policing skills. Thus, making a determined and systematic effort to develop police forces capable of tackling street crime, and having a police-training program geared toward street-crime suppression, would greatly enhance the effectiveness of international interventions.

Anticrime training needs to become an urgent focus and element of external assistance to train local police forces. Often, the local police are trained as either paramilitary counterinsurgency forces or as military police. Neither task is sufficient to assure postintervention stability or to reshape undesirable local orders. Being able to train local police forces for doing anticrime work may necessitate expanding U.S. or international expeditionary police units.

The crucial focus of anticrime efforts to induce a better local order and anchor desirable and legitimate stability must obviously include an effort to reduce criminal and predatory behavior perpetrated by existing police themselves. Since the baseline is often very low, achieving some improvement may not be hard, but making truly meaningful progress in reducing police participation in criminality and improving their anticrime capacity will be much harder. No doubt, police development is arguably the most difficult form of institution building and reform a country can undertake, and the record around the world – both for internal domestic efforts and externally assisted ones – is poor.

Reducing corruption and improving governance. The United States and the international community should define good governance in ways that are consistent with the views of local populations as well as key international principles: good governance is not just the delivery of services, but also, critically, physical security, food security, the provision of justice, and a reduction in impunity for egregious corruption and extensive crime. A good measure of the quality of governance is one derived from a comprehensive concept of human security: that is, security from physical abuse, whether from insurgents, criminals, warlords, local militias, or the local government, and security from great economic want, as well as access to justice and accountability mechanisms.

Promoting good governance thus does not imply promoting particular political or institutional visions and arrangements. But the international community's long-term goals in any place where it seeks to establish a sustainable local order should include strengthening checks and balances within the political system, reducing patronage, clientelism, and corruption, and enhancing government service delivery. Such equitable and inclusive political systems have a much better chance of being sustainable than do rapacious and exclusionary ones.

Anticipating second- and third-order effects. Finally, in determining whether and how to counter the most pernicious illicit economies and militant and criminal actors, the United States and the international community need to consider how they will adapt to U.S. and international actions. They need to ask themselves some hard questions and consider second- and third-order effects of their policies. Is it better to have illegal poppy cultivation in Pakistan rather than in Afghanistan, and what antipoppy policies in Afghanistan, then, should be emphasized? Will antipiracy efforts off Somalia push piracy from the Gulf of Aden into the wider Indian Ocean, and is that a better outcome? If the international community imposes sanctions on a particular country, will that give rise to new highly profitable smuggling enterprises, and by whom will their profits be captured?

Such questions do not have easy answers and governments are loath to contemplate any solutions. But without anticipating the likely adaptations of militants, organized-crime actors, and illicit economies, and without careful cost-benefit analyses of the various policy options, governments may only make the violent conflict of the twenty-first century more threatening to a desirable international order.

Illicit economies and criminal political arrangements are very likely to grow over

the next several decades as formal governance systems struggle to deliver effective solutions to the problems of significant segments of populations. This growth will not only be one of scope, but also of type, with water smuggling, for example, as one of the illicit economies of the future.¹⁶ Inevitably, belligerent groups will interact with the illicit economies, but so will states, often embracing them. Indeed, how illicit econ-

omies are handled even outside of conflict settings will critically shape the viability of some states and the systems of rule. Thus, a failure to incorporate a sophisticated political analysis of illicit economies into decision-making will undermine the effectiveness of counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and state-building efforts, and even international relations.¹⁷

ENDNOTES

- ¹ I am grateful to Sarah Chayes, an aid worker in Kandahar at that time, for the information on the sting operation in the Kandahar village.
- ² See also Stewart Patrick, "Civil Wars & Transnational Threats: Mapping the Terrain, Assessing the Links," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017).
- ³ Jason M. Breslow, "A Staggering Toll of Mexico's Drug War," *PBS Frontline*, July 27, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/the-staggering-death-toll-of-mexicos-drug-war/>; and author's interviews with U.S. government officials, Mexico City, September 2016, and Washington, D.C., March 2017.
- ⁴ See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Opium Amounts to Half of Afghanistan's GDP in 2007, Reports UNODC," November 16, 2007, <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2007/unisnar1016.html>.
- ⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Counter Narcotics, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013* (Vienna and Kabul: UNODC and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Counter Narcotics, 2013), 12, http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_Opium_survey_2013_web_small.pdf.
- ⁶ See Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Shooting Up: Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010).
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ See also William Reno, "Fictional States & Atomized Public Spheres: A Non-Western Approach to Fragility," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017).
- ⁹ See also Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Jihadi Rebels in Civil War," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018); and Tanisha M. Fazal, "Religionist Revels & the Sovereignty of the Divine," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).
- ¹⁰ These processes by which the FARC weakened its legitimacy provide an important background for the peace referendum analyzed in Aila M. Matanock and Miguel García-Sánchez, "The Colombian Paradox: Peace Processes, Elite Divisions & Popular Plebiscites," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017).
- ¹¹ For details, see Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Aspiration and Ambivalence: Strategies and Realities of Counterinsurgency and State-Building in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2012), chap. 9.
- ¹² The World Bank, *The Pirates of Somalia: Ending the Threat, Rebuilding a Nation* (Mogadishu: The World Bank, 2013), xiv, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFRICA/Resources/pirates-of-somalia-executive-summary-web.pdf>.

- ¹³ See also Sarah Kenyon Lischer, “The Global Refugee Crisis: Regional Destabilization & Humanitarian Protection,” *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017).
- ¹⁴ George B. N. Ayittey, *Africa in Chaos* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1999), 151.
- ¹⁵ See also Reno, “Fictional States & Atomized Public Spheres”; and Stephen Biddle, “Building Security Forces & Stabilizing Nations: The Problem of Agency,” *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017).
- ¹⁶ Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Water Theft and Water Smuggling: A Growing Problem or Tempest in a Teapot?* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, March 2017), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/water-theft-and-water-smuggling/>.
- ¹⁷ Vanda Felbab-Brown, *The Hellish Road to Good Intentions: How to Break Political-Criminal Alliances in Contexts of Transition* (Tokyo: United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, 2017), <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/the-hellish-road-to-good-intentions-how-to-break-political-criminal-alliances-in-contexts-of-transition.pdf>.

Civil Wars as Challenges to the Modern International System

Hendrik Spruyt

Abstract: The current international system is based on Westphalian principles in which authority is defined territorially. Within this territory, the state has sole jurisdiction. Adherence to these principles has contributed to the decline of interstate war. Conversely, applying these principles and correlated norms to states that gained their independence after 1945 has contributed to civil conflicts. These norms are opaque, as is the case with the principle of self-determination; or they lock in an unstable status quo, as with uti possidetis, the principle that borders inherited at the moment of independence should always be maintained; or they are inconsistently applied and often violated, as with the principle of noninterference. Consequently, they provide poor guidelines as to when, and on which grounds, external intervention in civil wars might be warranted. I argue that the degree to which the combatants challenge Westphalian principles should guide policy responses. Furthermore, the international legal regime should reconsider uti possidetis. In some instances, partition might be a reasonable solution to civil wars.

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The Westphalian agreements of 1648 set Europe on a course through which political authority became territorially defined and juridically autonomous within recognized borders. In the centuries since, these principles of order came to define the very notion of what qualifies as “domestic” politics and what is “international.” Through these principles, European states devised a mode of governance that demarcated spheres of jurisdiction and thereby facilitated regular interstate relations.

The treaties of Osnabrück and Münster set the foundations for the Westphalian system, articulating a particular logic of organization that differed in several key aspects from the preceding feudal order. The feudal legitimation of authority, based on personal ties, contrasted with the Westphalian territorial definition of authority. Moreover, Westphalia presupposed, in principle, a hierarchical government within the territorial space of a given state. Ju-

ridically, Westphalia recognized no higher authority than that of the sovereign ruler, in contrast to transterritorial imperial and religious claims of emperors and popes. As the conduit between the domestic realm and interstate relations, the sovereign ruler would handle international affairs.

Stephen Krasner has distinguished four types of sovereignty.¹ “Independence sovereignty” refers to the degree of a state’s sensitivity to globalization and international flows across its borders. “Domestic sovereignty” denotes the organization of political authority within the state and the extent to which this authority can de facto exercise effective control. Max Weber most famously articulated this aspect of sovereignty, defining the state as an entity that possesses a monopoly on the legitimate use of force.² “Westphalian sovereignty” signifies that juridical authority resides fully with the hierarchical authority of the territorial realm. No higher supranational authority exists, unless the given state has voluntarily recognized such an institution. Finally, “international legal sovereignty” refers to the recognition of the state by others as an independent entity.

Many states that were recognized as sovereign territorial states prior to World War II possess most of these traits. By contrast, many of the states that emerged in the wake of decolonization lack key features of sovereignty.

While the Peace of Westphalia hardly heralded the victory of these principles, by the end of the twentieth century, Westphalian principles had become the norm. Today, sovereign territorial states are the constitutive actors of the international system. Westphalian norms are thus not simply moral precepts, but serve as rules with material consequences.

The global spread of Westphalian principles in the course of the twentieth century has contributed to the decline of interstate war. Respect for mutually recognized bor-

ders has delegitimized the acquisition of territory by force. Consequently, the survival rate of states has increased significantly compared with earlier centuries.³ Material conditions have also increased the costs of warfare between the major powers. Combined, these dynamics have made interstate war, certainly among the major powers, virtually obsolete.⁴

Paradoxically, however, as interstate warfare has declined, intrastate war has been tragically common.⁵ In the half-century following World War II, there were almost 150 civil wars, averaging more than 143,000 casualties each.

I submit that the global expansion of Westphalian principles and correlated norms partially contributed to the frequency and intensity of civil wars after 1945. That is, even as it decreased interstate warfare, the very victory of the Westphalian system set the stage for the rise of intrastate conflict, particularly in those countries that became independent with decolonization. Moreover, Westphalian principles have not only created some of the precipitating conditions of civil wars, but the confusion surrounding their application and the contestation with rival sets of norms have confounded the search for policies that might address such conflicts.

I begin this essay by tracing how the extension of Westphalian principles has affected the occurrence of civil wars. Subsequently, I discuss how correlated norms have had pernicious effects. In the final section, I provide a typology of civil wars to assess the type of threat posed by a given conflict. Depending on the type of civil war, altering some of the correlated principles of the Westphalian order might serve as a partial guide for policy responses.

Developments in the last half-century have challenged the traditional understanding of sovereign territorial statehood in several ways. Prior to World War II, the

Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933) put preponderant weight on the factual control over territory and the monopoly of force.⁶ Article 1 proclaimed that “the state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: a) a permanent population; b) a defined territory; c) government; and d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.” The Convention emphasized that a state’s international legitimacy did not hinge upon recognition from other actors, thus endorsing the declaratory theory of statehood, as stipulated in article 3: “The political existence of the state is independent of recognition by the other states.” Thus, the Weberian conception of the state, emphasizing *de facto* capability, claimed primacy over the recognition of one’s own sovereignty by other states.

Developments following World War II enshrined the principle of territorial sovereignty by extending independence and juridical equality to former colonies and mandate territories. In the process, the international system separated the connection between *de jure* recognition and *de facto* state capacity. International legal, *de jure*, recognition was bestowed on the former colonies, irrespective of whether they factually met the earlier Montevideo criteria. That is, the former colonies were recognized as juridical equals of already existing states, and became fully independent, even though their governments lacked the institutional capacity to effectively govern their territories in the traditional Westphalian sense. Thus, paradoxically, shortly after the establishment of the Montevideo criteria, the constitutive theory of statehood gradually gained primacy in the decades following 1945.

There were several reasons for this shift. First, the colonial powers lacked the capabilities and will to hold subject territories. While some of the maritime empires withdrew in a process of calculated and negoti-

ated withdrawal, others got mired in the last colonial wars. Britain largely exemplified the first process, while Portugal, France, and The Netherlands exemplified the latter. Ultimately, the “Winds of Change,” to use Harold MacMillan’s phrase, blew decidedly against the imperial powers.⁷

At the same time, the colonies resisted efforts to make their independence contingent upon criteria of fitness. The fitness benchmark evolved in the interwar period, when the colonial powers asserted that their withdrawal, and subsequent recognition of independence for the colonies, hinged upon suitable conditions. But Lord Lugard’s claim that the imperial powers were bringing “the torch of culture and progress” to “the abode of barbarism” carried little appeal in the postwar era.⁸

The insistence of the superpowers further expedited imperial withdrawal. Both the United States and the USSR sought to capitalize on the nationalist sentiments in the colonies to enhance their respective positions in the Cold War. The Soviet Union hastened to support national struggles of liberation, while the United States exerted pressure on the European colonial powers through diplomatic and economic means, most notably Marshall Plan aid.

In addition, multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations, enshrined the principle of self-determination. The UN professed as one of its key objectives: “To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace.”⁹ Former colonies that had already gained their independence, such as India, subsequently used international organizations to further the cause of decolonization, equating self-determination of peoples with independence.

As a consequence, though some European powers were slow to recognize the changed conditions in the immediate after-

math of World War II, decolonization was swift. Dozens of newly independent states emerged in the decade and a half after 1945.

However, unlike the states that acquired independence prior to World War II, the newly independent states of the postwar era lacked Weberian characteristics, as James Fearon's essay in this volume notes.¹⁰ European dynasts historically expanded their control over rival warlords partially by competition and selection over many centuries of interstate war. The European process of nation-building that coalesced within the fixed territorial parameters of the given state was long and arduous. In mobilizing their populations for war, rulers needed to expand administration, taxation, and public education. In so doing, they affected every aspect of society. The bellicist theory of state formation has persuasively argued for the importance of centralization by warfare.¹¹ As rulers either defeated or bought off their rival lords, they acquired a monopoly over the means of violence. At the same time, local identities gradually transformed: individuals became citizens and members of the imagined community, the nation. For sure, this process included frequent internal conflict, as Francis Fukuyama describes in the English case. Yet, in the end, centralized state authorities and relatively homogeneous nations emerged.¹²

The territories dominated by the European colonial powers, however, did not undergo such dynamics. These states gained independence in the wake of decolonization, regardless of their capability to provide a meaningful level of public goods, and regardless of their heterogeneity. Borders were artificial relicts, particularly in Africa, largely demarcated by the maps of European powers as the metropolises divided the continent in the late nineteenth century.

Moreover, in most cases of decolonization, the colonial borders remained intact, no matter how artificial. Populations di-

verse in ethnicity, religion, race, and other markers of identity remained grouped together within the territorial boundaries created by the colonial powers.¹³

The historical legacy of combining heterogeneous communities within artificially evolved borders has complicated contemporary efforts at state-building and economic development. In many cases the newly independent states resembled capstone governments.¹⁴ In such polities, the ruling elite would share common traits but govern vertically stratified societies. They lacked the infrastructural power and monitoring capabilities that we have come to associate with the modern state. Maintaining control over diverse populations thus logically meant that the ruling elite had to tolerate considerable autonomy of local power brokers and instead hope to rule by ad hoc alliances with the local powers that be.

The desire to catch up to the Western nation-state model, and to develop their economies, subsequently influenced the relations between state elites and their heterogeneous societies. During the colonial struggles, indigenous groups might have forged a temporary unity by virtue of their anti-European or anti-Western stance. The nationalist leaders who had led the struggles, such as Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya and Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, could be revered and provide for coherence. However, as the initial unity receded, state attempts to capture greater resources from their societies increasingly impinged on local autonomies, leading to friction.¹⁵

The lack of interstate war further hindered many rulers of the newly independent states. Whereas warfare and state-making coincided in Europe, the maintenance of existing borders, and thus the absence of a security imperative in Africa, doomed many of the newly independent states to weakness. The very strength of the principle of international legal sovereignty, which delegitimized changes in preexisting terri-

torial borders, made it impossible for these weaker states to redress the problems they inherited from the colonial period.¹⁶

As a result, local affinities of village, clan, tribe, ethnicity, and religion remained salient, precluding the formation of a common national identity. As Benedict Anderson has shown, the creation of an imagined community, the nation, requires large-scale public education, a shared language, and high degrees of literacy in order to displace other sources of affinity.¹⁷ None of these conditions held in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

Decolonization expanded the Westphalian system and brought with it a set of related norms and expectations. Three norms in particular – self-determination, *uti possidetis*, and noninterference – would govern the subsequent international relations of the newly independent states. Decolonization entailed the right of self-determination of peoples. *Uti possidetis iuris* (as you possess under law) stipulated the maintenance of inherited borders: the newly recognized states were to leave the colonial borders in place, no matter how arbitrary. Noninterference meant that, in principle, no state should interfere with the domestic affairs of another state. In other words, states had to respect each other's juridical autonomy.

In addition to these norms, the expectation was that the newly independent states would gradually develop along the Western model with increasing economic capacity and a monopoly over the means of violence in their territory. Modernization theory thus predicted that, over time, traditional societies would transform into the Western nation-state model.

Unfortunately, these norms can be opaque, as is the case with the principle of self-determination; or they lock in an unstable status quo, as with *uti possidetis*; or they are inconsistently applied and often violat-

ed, as with the principle of noninterference. Moreover, the expectation that the Weberian model of statehood would emerge has proven illusory, and the attempts to impose it by external intervention have failed. The combination of these factors has exacerbated the problems posed by civil wars, and has provided little guidance for the settlement of some of those conflicts.

To begin with the principle of self-determination of peoples, as enshrined in article 1 of the UN Charter: How are we to understand peoples? Does this apply to any community that defines itself as a nation? If so, the number of potential states is far larger than the current number of existing states (almost two hundred). Indeed, hundreds more should be entitled to secession and deserving of international recognition.

However, for all the expansiveness of UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace*, he nevertheless argued for the maintenance of existing borders and states: "If every ethnic, religious, or linguistic group claimed statehood, there would be no limit to fragmentation."¹⁸ Read in this restrictive manner, the self-determination of peoples would thus refer only to the self-determination of subject polities, such as the colonies and mandates of the pre-World War II era.¹⁹

Which interpretation should prevail? Boutros-Ghali provided little help, observing that "the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of states within the established international system, and the principle of self-determination for peoples, both of great value and importance, must not be permitted to work against each other in the period ahead." How to resolve this paradox in practice went unanswered.

The rigorous application of *uti possidetis* has also come at a cost. To be clear: the new African rulers themselves were not eager to alter the inherited boundaries. By becoming the new rulers of the former colony, they acquired title to the resources, even if lim-

ited, that the preceding government left behind. Redesigning the territorial landscape to more accurately coincide with ethnic, tribal, or religious affiliations would threaten their own position. The new governments thus endorsed the external legal principle of *uti possidetis iuris* in order to maintain the inherited borders. At the Organization of African Unity (OAU) conference in Cairo in 1964, the heads of state thus accepted “to pledge themselves to respect the borders existing on their achievement of national independence.”²⁰

First applied to the independence of Latin American states in the early nineteenth century, *uti possidetis* subsequently played an important role in the international arbitration of border disputes. As the International Court of Justice noted: “The Chamber nonetheless wishes to emphasize its general scope, in view of its exceptional importance for the African continent. . . . Its obvious purpose is to prevent the independence and stability of new States being endangered by fratricidal struggles provoked by the challenging of frontiers following the withdrawal of the administering power.”²¹ The African states were thus condemned to work with the arbitrary borders formulated by the former colonial powers.

But *uti possidetis* itself is less obvious than sometimes imagined. To which borders does the principle apply? While secessionist movements of substate units have been deemed illegal, as in the cases of Katanga and Northern Cyprus, secession by units within a federal system might be acceptable, although to varying degrees.²² The international community has, with reservations, extended the right of secession to such units, provided the territorial borders that demarcated them within the federal system were retained, as was largely the case with the former Yugoslavia.

However, here again other preconditions confound the principle of self-determination. As Tanja Börzel and Sonja Grimm de-

scribe, the European Union guidelines on recognition stipulated several strict criteria. The seceding republics had to adhere to various international agreements, such as the UN Charter, and guarantee rights of minorities within their borders. Furthermore, they had to declare their respect for democracy and the rule of law.²³

The application of a third legal principle, noninterference, has similarly been fraught with inconsistency, facing challenges from rival sets of principles and norms. The principle of noninterference in other states’ internal affairs, including civil wars, is long-standing. States are obliged to refrain from interfering in insurgencies in other countries. Even if the insurgent group has been recognized as a belligerent party, third parties must refrain from premature recognition of the insurgency. For example, the British willingness to build Confederate warships and to receive these warships in British ports during the American Civil War constituted a violation of neutrality in the judgment of an international arbitration panel. Britain recognized the finding and settled the dispute with a substantial remuneration to the United States.²⁴

In practice though, the legal principle has more often been honored in the breach rather than in its observance. Particularly during the Cold War, the superpowers and their allies engaged in decidedly hot conflicts either directly or by proxy. Civil war combatants found diverse backing from the United States, Britain, France, the USSR, and the People’s Republic of China.

With the end of the Cold War, many of the recipients of external aid faced a loss of foreign support. With neither the United States nor the Soviet Union and their respective allies interested in supporting the central governments of beleaguered states, these governments became more vulnerable to internal rivals. At the same time, diminished resources curtailed the capaci-

ty of governments to provide for essential services, leading to the rise of alternate political organizations beyond the state. As James Fearon demonstrates in his essay in this volume, shifts in the balance of power in favor of potential rebel groups created windows of opportunity against an already weak central state.²⁵

Further, the current international legal regime regarding external intervention creates problems of its own. Given that military action against another country is *prima facie* illegal in international law – unless authorized by a multilateral organization, such as the United Nations Security Council – the great powers have often sought multilateral approval for their actions, as did the two Bush administrations for their actions against Iraq in 1991 and 2003. The need for multilateral approval inevitably raises collective action problems, complicating the possibility of united action by the international community. Russia, for example, opposed intervention in Yugoslavia, as it does today in Syria. Similarly, continued multilateral restrictions on the government of Iraq from 1991 to 2003 proved difficult to maintain given fissures in the alliance. Even when external intervention on humanitarian grounds might be needed, as with the Rwandan genocide, it has been difficult to realize. And as Barry Posen rightly notes, the shift from a unipolar world to a multipolar one will complicate collective action even further.²⁶

Moreover, the principle of noninterference – the respect for a state’s juridical autonomy – is not absolute. Competing international norms and various legal justifications challenge the supremacy of the nonintervention principle. First, one can argue that the failure of governments to provide rudimentary public goods to their own populations, while in the process creating negative externalities for other states, justifies external intervention.²⁷ The responsibility to protect (R2P) doctrine im-

poses an obligation upon the community of sovereign states to punish those governments that violate the basic rights of their peoples.²⁸ Following the World Summit Outcome 2005, the UN General Assembly thus affirmed that collective use of force against a state could be justified under UN auspices when national authorities failed to protect their citizens.

Extending this view, some have argued that good governance entails the ability of citizens to hold their own governments accountable. Thus, external intervention against a target state might be justified not merely on the grounds of a systematic violation of individual rights, but by the very nature of the target regime.²⁹

The strategic argument in favor of regime change finds another source in democratic peace theory.³⁰ The crux of the theory is the view that the long-term prospects for international peace depend on the spread of democracy to authoritarian regimes. This perspective has been a virtual bedrock for U.S. foreign policy since the end of the Cold War.

The Bush administration articulated an even more expansive rationale for interference in other states to justify its intervention in Iraq. While international law can justify a *preemptive* strike – if that state realistically fears an imminent attack by the target state – the Bush administration also advocated for the justification of *preventive* war.³¹ Though the United States did not face an imminent attack from Iraq, the Bush administration attempted to justify U.S. military action against Iraq by citing the dangers of the weapons of mass destruction the administration alleged were present there. By this view, states that acquire weapons of mass destruction – or, as in Iraq’s case, are suspected of attempting to acquire them – could be subject to military action, even if they were not otherwise poised to engage in war.

In this cauldron of competing norms and justifications for and against noninterfer-

ence, national governments and subnational actors have tried to leverage legal and normative changes in the international system to their advantage. Central governments have argued for a strict interpretation of noninterference and respect for Westphalian principles. Conversely, secessionist movements have used emerging doctrines such as R2P to obtain international support for their demands. For example, the secessionist components of Yugoslavia argued that Milosevic's crimes against humanity justified their claim to independence. Serbian violation of human rights and democratic principles served to invalidate Serbia's sovereignty, while it conversely validated the other republics' sovereignty claims.

In sum, opaque norms and conflicting principles present the international community with paradoxes, confounding the search for solutions to civil wars. Respect for Westphalian regulative principles, such as *uti possidetis*, has contributed to the reduction of interstate war. Meanwhile, the same principle contradicts the equally admirable goal of self-determination by locking in arbitrary borders of the colonial period. Noninterference respects a government's juridical autonomy, but also stifles the likelihood of external intervention in cases of civil and human rights abuses, or even genocide. Are any guiding principles possible given this complexity?

Reassessing several international legal principles as well as the goals of external intervention can provide some guidance for how the international community might respond to civil wars. I argue in particular that we might reconsider to what extent extant borders should remain in place in all circumstances. In addition, we might adopt a less ambitious agenda regarding external state-building.³² Reconsidering these principles alongside an assessment of the types of civil wars can provide some policy guidance.

No doubt each civil war presents many unique challenges. How external actors will respond to the challenges posed by specific civil wars will hinge on the geopolitical value of the country in question, the strength of the opposing forces, the target state's regime type, and domestic sentiments in the intervening countries, among other factors. The many modalities of civil wars make it infeasible to develop an all-encompassing theory to guide policy in all circumstances. Indeed, for that reason, predicting, let alone preventing, the outbreak of civil wars has met, at best, with limited success.³³

Nevertheless, I contend that we can aspire to develop a reflective equilibrium between abstract theories and the realities of case-by-case variation.³⁴ Rather than aspire to general overarching theories, we might classify cases by several patterns, which in turn might guide policy choices.

Any external response to civil wars first requires assessment of the type of threat posed by the conflict. In their essays in this volume, Karl Eikenberry and Stephen Krasner as well as Stewart Patrick analyze civil wars in terms of their negative effects on other states to determine whether we should view civil wars as relatively localized or with broader systemic effects. I submit that whether a civil war presents local or systemic threats also depends on the objectives pursued by the combatants. Specifically, to what extent do they challenge the general principles of the Westphalian international order?

With that in mind, one might rank various challenges along a continuum of threats to the regulative principles that underlie the Westphalian state system. One might distinguish, first, civil wars aimed at concessions by the extant government, such as increased participation in government or changes in revenue distribution. These do not singularly pose a systemic threat. No doubt these conflicts can have significant external effects, such as refugee flows, the

possible spread of pandemic diseases, and criminal networks, which might precipitate external actions.³⁵ But the combatants are involved in an internal conflict, and are not pursuing wider systemic objectives. In such cases, external intervention might have salutary effects by providing mediation, by election monitoring, and by facilitating credible commitments. As James Fearon points out, such interventions have achieved some success.³⁶

A second type of civil war, aimed at secession, challenges one corollary principle to the Westphalian system, specifically the principle of *uti possidetis*. However, actors in these civil wars do not oppose the concept of the territorial state per se; quite the contrary, they seek such a state for themselves. They object to the current borders and seek de jure recognition as an independent state. In cases in which ethnic conflict has erupted within these states, one solution might be to consent to or even actively aid the partition of the extant state and the separation of belligerents.³⁷

One must weigh the benefit of potential partition against the cost of weakening the principle of maintaining existing borders. Will intervention precipitate a move along the slippery slope, and potentially cause more civil conflicts? Standard arguments against relaxing *uti possidetis* predict that emboldening self-determination and legitimating secession would lead to the fragmentation of numerous states; the floodgates would open to innumerable secessionist civil wars. These concerns are reasonable but overstated.

I do not contend that partition should be seen as the first solution to secessionist conflicts. Prior to endorsing partition, institutional solutions might be pursued, such as increasing proportional representation or greater regional autonomy.³⁸ External actions might thus enhance the benefits for maintaining territorial integrity rather than pursuing partition. However,

we should reconsider the blanket rejection of partition. Contrary to *uti possidetis*, redrawing boundaries might be a solution if all else fails. Such proposals are already being discussed regarding fractured states such as Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and Syria.

One might also limit secessionist claims to specific categories, such as the republics or provinces of federal states, but deny claims by lesser administrative units within those states. For example, in the Yugoslav Wars, the international community recognized the republics that had delineated territorial borders in the old polity, but was less responsive to demands by smaller political entities.

Limiting secessionist demands to republics or provinces that form part of a federal structure also has advantages. The very existence of a federal system suggests a historical legacy in which diverse populations already had a degree of local autonomy within a given territorial space. Separation along those lines would thus simply recognize those preexisting historical features.

Moreover, such units would already have extant local institutions with some governing capacity. Recognizing the various separate components of a previously integrated federal state would not inevitably lead to a set of failed states. Hence, the international community might be more amenable to demands by federal units than to secessionist movements at lower levels.

Finally, some recognition of new states in the wake of civil wars has already occurred, as in Yugoslavia and Sudan.³⁹ Whether these constituted unique cases merits further research, but the decades of peace following the Yugoslav Wars suggest that separation, albeit with commensurate domestic reforms, might terminate civil wars with some long-term stability thereafter. Admittedly, as in the case of Sudan, partition by itself may not be a panacea.

A third category of civil wars consists of cases in which combatants do not seek

control over, or concessions from, the extant state, nor do they seek a state of their own. Instead, local power brokers seek to use public functions of the state for their own gain and for their followers, resulting in the quintessential fragile state with dispersed authority. State authorities themselves may even conspire with local power brokers and illicit networks, partially for economic rewards, partially to counter domestic rivals, as shown by Will Reno and Vanda Felbab-Brown in their contributions to this volume.⁴⁰

In these cases, the attempt to externally impose something resembling the Weberian state model has proven illusory, as demonstrated by the experiences in Somalia and Afghanistan. Indeed, given the historical legacy of capstone governments in these countries, the very notion of a high-capacity, centralized state is anathema.⁴¹ Anthropologist Thomas Barfield has suggested that the attempt of the Afghan government to increase state capacity in the post-World War II decades, and to limit local prerogatives, precipitated the ensuing decades of conflict.⁴² A large body of research suggests that external state-building is ephemeral at best.⁴³ For example, political scientist Ken Menkhaus has argued that, in Somalia, one can only hope that warlords will step in as intermediate power brokers and provide localized public goods. Some warlords in Africa might indeed already act in this capacity.⁴⁴

Because the interests of external actors do not correspond with the interests of domestic power brokers, external state-building efforts in these circumstances are unlikely to produce substantial results. Warlords might appear to accommodate settlements that aim to strengthen central authority, but they only appear to do so. As Stephen Biddle shows, the information asymmetries between external actors and local elites give the latter substantial advantages.⁴⁵

A more likely outcome is the emergence of hybrid authority structures in which public and private actors both seek to benefit from external connections, with few gains in central state capacity. Other states might engage with government officials and local power brokers, but without any illusion this will result in something resembling the Western state model.

Finally, the most problematic type of civil war is the one in which actors fundamentally reject the regulative principles of the Westphalian system and legitimate their authority in nonterritorial terms. For example, as Tanisha Fazal shows, religiously motivated combatants may seek to control their religious community irrespective of existing borders.⁴⁶ Consequently, they contest the extant government's legitimate authority and, indeed, the very existence of the state.

Whereas concessions to the combatants might resolve the other types of civil war, this last category diametrically contradicts the current logic of organization established by the Westphalian system. Mediation or relaxing the principle of *uti possidetis* might help resolve some civil wars, but such policies are ineffective responses to this type of conflict.

The ambitions of some Islamic groups to base political organization on the community of the faithful, whether in the form of a caliphate or other transnational composition, have provided a dramatic contemporary example of this type. In this they diverge from other violent groups, such as the Irish Republican Army or the Basque separatist ETA, whose objectives were state independence. These latter groups objected to the existing state structure but not the concept of territorial statehood.

Whether or not a specific Islamic group can be reconciled with Westphalian legal principles will depend on the group's interpretation of Islamic thought: specifically, whether Islamic law on the state, the

subcomponent of Sharia termed *Siyar*, can be reconciled with a Law of Nations.

Some scholars suggest that interpreting *Siyar* as compatible with contemporary international law anachronistically applies modernist concepts to older Islamic doctrine.⁴⁷ *Siyar* has a monistic legal view that does not distinguish between domestic and international legal regimes. It lacks the concept of juridical territoriality, and thus has no conception of a legal order between states.

Traditional Islamic doctrine also prohibited treaties with infidels. Temporary armistices of ten years were permissible if warranted by material conditions, but long-term treaties and the recognition of other sovereigns as equals were forbidden.

Other interpretations, however, suggest that Islamic views can be reconciled with the Westphalian order.⁴⁸ Admittedly, Islamic rulers, such as the Ottoman sultans, initially did not recognize sovereign equality. Moreover, these rulers did not sign long-term treaties with non-Muslims, and they did not permit any territorial delimitation of their authority. In practice, though, from the mid-sixteenth century on, as the Ottoman Empire expanded to its Western lim-

its, the Ottoman rulers came increasingly to recognize European sovereigns as equals. Correspondingly, Islamic legal doctrine and diplomacy went through a decisive transformation and rulers adjusted to the territorial states' system.⁴⁹

Various groups will thus have their own interpretation of Islam that informs their logic of organization. For some, there is no inherent tension between religious doctrine and the current nation-state system. However, other groups, particularly those who adhere to a fundamentalist view, such as the restoration of the caliphate, seem particularly irreconcilable with the logic of the Westphalian order. They resemble the early Ottoman *ghazi* warriors rather than the later more-accommodative Ottomans.⁵⁰

Combatants who seek to take over a territorial state or who seek to form their own state might be reconciled with the current international community, even if some principles of the Westphalian order need to be relaxed. However, settling a civil war with protagonists who challenge the very principles of the international state system, such as ISIS, is an altogether different matter.

ENDNOTES

Author's Note: I am indebted to Karl Eikenberry, Stephen Krasner, Stewart Patrick, and the participants at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences workshop for their comments. I also thank Maris Maeve O'Tierney for her superlative research assistance.

¹ Stephen Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 9–25. See also Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

² As articulated by Max Weber in his essay "Politics as Vocation." See H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, trans. and eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 78.

³ Tanisha Fazal, *State Death: The Politics and Geography of Conquest, Annexation, and Occupation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Mark Zacher, "The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force," *International Organization* 55 (2) (2001): 215–250.

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Building Security Forces & Stabilizing Nations: The Problem of Agency

Stephen Biddle

Abstract: After fifteen years of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, many now see “small-footprint” security force assistance (SFA) – training, advising, and equipping allied militaries – as an alternative to large U.S. ground-force commitments to stabilize weak states. SFA, however, confronts challenges of interest misalignment between the United States and its typical partners. The resulting agency losses often limit SFA’s real ability to improve partners’ military effectiveness. For SFA, small footprints usually mean small payoffs.

Security force assistance (SFA) – training, advising, and equipping allied militaries – is an increasingly common U.S. response to threats emanating from weak states. Many Americans have grown tired of large U.S. land wars in such places after more than ten years of continuous conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq involving as many as 160,000 U.S. troops. Yet the world remains a violent place, and the United States has interests in a number of unstable parts of the world. For many, SFA offers a means to secure such real but limited interests without the massive U.S. ground commitments of the last fifteen years. In fact, “small-footprint” SFA has become a major pillar of U.S. national security policy.

Yet its actual military efficacy has been little studied. This essay thus presents a systematic analysis of SFA’s ability to improve allies’ military effectiveness.

My central finding is that effective SFA is much more elusive in practice than often assumed, and less viable as a substitute for large unilateral troop deployments. For the United States in particular, the achievable upper bound is normally modest, and even this is possible only if U.S. policy is intrusive and conditional, which it rarely is. This is because SFA is best understood as a principal-agent problem, and one whose

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doi:10.1162/DAED_a_00464

structural conditions promote large agency losses for the SFA provider. That is, the conditions under which the United States provides SFA commonly involve large interest misalignments between the provider (the principal) and the recipient (the agent), difficult monitoring challenges, and difficult conditions for enforcement: a combination that typically leaves principals with limited real leverage and that promotes inefficiency in aid provision. To overcome these challenges requires atypical interest alignment between the United States and its SFA partner, a larger U.S. footprint than many would prefer, intrusive U.S. policies designed to monitor its ally's behavior and enable strict conditionality in aid provision, or ideally all of the above. These conditions are not impossible, but the combination has not been a common feature of U.S. security force assistance in the modern era. Nor is it likely to become so in the future: in principle, U.S. policy-makers can design SFA programs to be intrusive and conditional, but it is much harder to create political interest alignment, and this is often absent.¹

Principal-agent (PA) theory comprises a body of ideas originally developed by economists to explain interactions between parties to a contract and subsequently generalized and adapted to a wide range of situations in which one actor (the principal) delegates authority to another (the agent) to carry out actions on its behalf. In political science, it has been applied to explain interactions between elected officials and bureaucrats, legislators and committees, civil authorities and the military, domestic agencies and multinational organizations, or guerillas and state patrons, among many others.²

At their root, all such delegation decisions, and thus all of PA theory, are cost-saving strategies. They enable principals to undertake manufacturing, home repair, regulation, legislation, or national defense at

a lower cost than doing it themselves. But in exchange, the act of delegation creates problems. In particular, the principal's interests always differ from the agent's to some degree: homeowners want tireless work at low cost but carpenters want high wages for lighter work; civilians want interservice cooperation and low defense budgets, officers want generous funding for their own service and its priorities. Principals can try to overcome this *interest asymmetry* and impose their preferences through conditionality (paying only when satisfactory work is complete or cutting budgets for services that decline to cooperate) or other enforcement means. But enforcement requires monitoring to know whether and how well the agent is performing, and agents typically know more about their efforts and circumstances than principals do. To overcome this *information asymmetry*, principals must spend resources to gather data on the agent and its work. Yet the more the principal spends on monitoring, the more expensive the project becomes and the less well the arrangement satisfies the original purpose of reducing cost. Payment, moreover, is a promise of future benefit if the agent "works" (serves the principal's interests), whereas enforcement is a threat of future sanction if the agent "shirks" (serves the agent's self-interest instead); effectiveness in either role turns on the principal's credibility. Principals must reassure agents of their promises, but the more reassurance they provide the less credible their threat of sanctions becomes, and vice versa: a principal whose commitment to support the agent is unshakable encourages the agent to take advantage and shirk with less fear of penalty. *Moral hazard* on some scale is thus inevitable in all PA transactions. These problems of interest asymmetry, information asymmetry, and moral hazard thus impose an inherent *agency loss*, or divergence between the outcome the principal seeks and

the outcome the principal obtains: delegation to an agent can reduce costs, but it typically produces imperfect performance to some degree, and often the greater the cost saving, the more imperfect the performance.³

Security force assistance is a classic PA problem. In SFA, the United States is the principal, the ally receiving the aid is the agent, and the principal's aim is to meet a threat to American security more cheaply than by sending a large U.S. ground force to do the job directly. As with any other PA problem, SFA is thus subject to agency loss as a consequence of interest asymmetry, information asymmetry, and moral hazard; unfortunately, the particular circumstances of SFA promote agency losses that are much larger than many SFA advocates expect.

Large interest asymmetries, for example, are ubiquitous in U.S. SFA. Of course, no two states ever have identical interests. This is true even for close allies like the United States and Great Britain: during World War II, divergent U.S. and British interests led to tension over the priority placed on campaigns in Southern Europe and North Africa, for example, where British postwar geopolitical and colonial interests conflicted with America's.⁴ U.S. SFA, moreover, is rarely provided to allies as close as Britain. The top fifteen recipients of U.S. SFA between 1980 and 2009 have included Pakistan, which provides safe haven for Al Qaeda's global headquarters and for Taliban militants who have killed thousands of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan; Sudan, which has been accused of widespread ethnic cleansing against its non-Arab minority; four of the top seven state sources of foreign fighters for ISIL; and Afghanistan, which ranks fourth on Transparency International's list of the world's most corrupt states (placing behind only Somalia, a top-twenty-five recipient of U.S. SFA, Sudan, a top-fifteen recipient, and North Korea).⁵

In fact, this is a systematic phenomenon. If we use UN voting patterns as a proxy for interest alignment, then there is a statistically significant negative correlation between U.S.-partner interest alignment and U.S. SFA provision: the closer the interest alignment, the less likely the United States is to provide military aid.⁶ We see a similar relationship if we consider corruption: a state's rank on the Transparency International list of most corrupt states correlates directly with its rank on the list of U.S. SFA recipients, with an ability to reject the null hypothesis of no relationship at the 0.1 level.⁷

This relationship is not an accident. The United States rarely gives SFA to Switzerland or Canada because they do not need it; the states that need it are rarely governed as effectively as Switzerland or Canada.⁸ And the governance problems that give rise to the U.S. interest in SFA often simultaneously promote interest divergence between the United States and its partner.

Regional instability, terrorist infrastructure, and humanitarian crises – the kinds of real-but-limited threats to U.S. interests that SFA is often meant to address – are strongly associated with weak states and corrupt, unrepresentative, clientelist regimes. In such states, political order often requires what Douglass North, John Wallis, and Barry Weingast have called a “double balance,” wherein the distribution of economic spoils matches the distribution of power among potentially violent elites.⁹ Regimes that allow the internal balance of power to misalign with the balance of rents risk violent overthrow, and in such systems, the threat of violence from armed elites *within* the state apparatus often exceeds the real threat from foreign enemies, international terrorists, or antigovernment insurgents. Rational leaders of such states thus cannot treat their militaries as disinterested defenders of the state

against foreign enemies; the armed forces are natural rivals and potential threats. Order under such conditions thus requires regimes to undertake some mixture of appeasement, mutual implication, and enfeeblement toward their own militaries. Appeasement strategies buy off potential rivals with economic spoils proportional to the rivals' real power; for armed forces with ready access to violence, this can create an officer class accustomed to economic privilege as the price of obedience, with little incentive to pursue disinterested expertise. Mutual implication encourages loyalty by implicating officers in criminal or unethical regime behavior, tying officers' fate to the regime's. Enfeeblement shifts the internal balance of power by deliberately weakening armed forces' ability to seize power or intimidate rivals. For example, many such regimes create multiple, overlapping lines of military command, discourage lateral communication among officers, create redundant security organizations, and replace foreign-trained military technocrats with reliable political loyalists.¹⁰ Foreign military aid (such as U.S. SFA) is often welcome in such settings (especially when it takes the form of financial transfers or gifts of equipment), but not for the purposes the providers often assume; instead, regimes typically see such aid as a form of largesse, an additional source of benefits to be distributed to buy political loyalty.¹¹ More broadly, under the conditions common among U.S. SFA recipients, the regime's interests are typically focused less on external enemies than on *internal* threats from rival elites, and especially the state military itself, which is often seen as a threat at least equal to that of foreign enemies.

By contrast, U.S. interests in such states typically focus on *external* threats, and especially transnational terrorists or aspiring regional hegemons.¹² U.S. SFA is commonly intended to strengthen partner militaries' ability to meet these ostensibly com-

mon threats by improving the partners' military proficiency. But whereas Americans often assume that these external dangers threaten the partner as well as the United States, and that strengthening the partner military will therefore serve both parties' interests, this is often mistaken. In fact, the kind of powerful, politically independent, technically proficient, noncorrupt military the United States seeks is often seen by the partner state as a far greater threat to their self-interest than foreign invasion or terrorist infiltration. Increased military capability destabilizes the internal balance of power; diminished cronyism and corruption weakens the regime's ability to control the empowered officers. The result is a commonplace and major divergence in U.S. and partner interests that derives from the very issues that created the demand for U.S. SFA in the first place.

The monitoring and enforcement strategies normally employed to mitigate interest asymmetries in PA relationships, moreover, face systematic barriers in SFA. As a cost-reduction strategy, SFA's whole purpose is to limit the U.S. "footprint": that is, its presence on the ground in the partner country. Hence, by design, there will be few U.S. monitors in the country to observe the partner's behavior. And partners are adept at using U.S. aid to pursue their own interests rather than their provider's, employing techniques that 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 that can then be redirected to political allies as rents, leaving the host military no more effective 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;¹³ in SFA, 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 the United States is trying to minimize. The lighter the U.S. footprint, the harder effective monitoring becomes.

(In commercial PA relationships, principals can combat information asymmetries by paying agents based on outcomes rather than monitoring behavior directly: if the agent delivers a satisfactory product, the principal pays, and vice versa, whether the principal can observe the agent's level of effort or not. In SFA, however, outcome-based monitoring faces major causal attribution challenges: if the agent fails in combat, is this because the agent is shirking or because war is uncertain and outcomes are influenced by a host of exogenous variables beyond the agent's control? To overcome information asymmetries in SFA thus requires direct monitoring of the agent's behavior.)¹⁴

Monitoring, moreover, is useless without enforcement, which normally means conditionality: a credible U.S. threat to withdraw aid from allies who misuse it. For SFA, however, conditionality is often very hard to implement in practice. In the economics literature, conditionality is often proposed as a means of mitigating moral hazard: agents will not exploit their information advantages by shirking if principals can condition their payments on successful completion of the work. Yet

conditionality is subject to moral hazard problems itself, and these loom particularly large for SFA.

Conditionality involves two promises of future action: a promise to withhold payments if the agent shirks, and a promise to pay if the agent works. Because both are promises of future action, credibility is always an issue. But the credibility of the threat and the credibility of the promise are in tension. The more forcefully the United States threatens an ally with aid withdrawal in the event of shirking, the more a rational ally will doubt the U.S. promise to follow through with its commitment if the ally works. When a U.S. administration threatens an ally with aid withdrawal, this often undermines U.S. domestic support for the ally (as has been the case with Pakistan, for example). From the ally's perspective, why risk domestic instability by forcing reform on an unwilling military for the sake of an American patron whose commitment to your survival is so contingent and domestically controversial? How does the ally know that, if the result is a coup or internal schism, the Americans will save them, when U.S. polls show American indifference to their fate in the aftermath of a U.S. campaign of public pressure on your regime? Threats of conditionality thus create a problem of moral hazard on the *principal's* part: once the allied regime has reformed as the principal wanted and has accepted the associated internal risks, the apparently indifferent Americans may pocket the benefits to U.S. interests but then walk away and withhold critical assistance in the event of internal crisis.

Conversely, the more the U.S. principal seeks to reassure the agent that U.S. promises are good and aid will be forthcoming if only the agent accepts the internal risks of professionalizing its military, the greater the risk of moral hazard in the other direction. To build U.S. domestic support for aid, administrations often frame the ally

as vital to U.S. national security; a credible promise of aid is normally built on a foundation of American assurance – both to the ally and to the U.S. public and Congress – that the ally’s survival is essential to American self-interest. The more forceful these assurances, the more a rational ally will doubt the accompanying U.S. threat to halt aid if the ally shirks. From the ally’s perspective, why risk domestic instability by forcing reform on an unwilling military when the external threat such reform is meant to confront will presumably be met by the Americans on your behalf anyway? Promises and reassurance thus create a problem of moral hazard on the *agent’s* part: they encourage the agent to shirk on reforms, trading ineffectiveness against external enemies for internal stability in the belief that American aid will continue anyway and that American arms will ultimately save them if the external threat proves greater than expected.

And because conditionality requires both a credible threat *and* a credible promise, it is very hard in practice to overcome both problems of moral hazard at once. Success with one tends to undermine success with the other; efforts to balance the two run the risk that neither the threat *nor* the promise is fully credible. Conditionality in SFA thus poses a dual-commitment problem: it is difficult for the agent to credibly commit itself to work and not shirk if the principal “pays” the agent, but it is also difficult for the principal to credibly commit itself to pay the agent if the agent works.

This problem is compounded, moreover, if the agent has access to multiple principals and can threaten each with defection to the other if aid is withheld. For U.S. SFA to Iraq, for example, the Iraqi agent can respond to U.S. threats and conditions by turning instead to Iran for aid, and can use the opposite threat to reduce Iranian leverage in turn. The net result is a complex set of challenges that must be

overcome for conditionality to be effective in SFA.

In domestic commerce, by contrast, contracts are enforceable by law. Legal costs give rise to agency loss even here, but the availability of legal recourse gives conditionality by contract provision a degree of inherent credibility. In SFA, there is no meaningful legal authority to enforce conditionality, hence the moral hazards inherent in delegation loom larger.

The net result in SFA is major agency loss much of the time. Agents whose interests often focus on domestic power balancing commonly use U.S. aid not to work by professionalizing their militaries, as the United States prefers, but to shirk by reinforcing clientelism. Limited U.S. monitoring often provides only ambiguous evidence of such shirking, and conditionality to enforce U.S. preferences on the use of aid is often undermined by moral hazard, rather than mitigating it. In the end, U.S. aid has much less ability to improve partners’ real military effectiveness than the scale of U.S. assistance would suggest.

This is not to say that aid is irrelevant (or adverse) to the partner’s military performance; even poorly used aid can be better than none at all. And the theory above suggests that the *scale* of agency loss, while often large, will vary with local conditions. As PA theory implies, agency loss is proportional to the degree of interest misalignment between the principal and the agent: where U.S. interests are more closely aligned with the partner’s, we can expect greater improvement in partner military effectiveness per dollar of SFA expenditure. PA theory also implies that the greater the principal’s investment in monitoring and the more conditional the aid provision, the smaller the agency loss. Hence we can expect that where the United States monitors more intrusively and conditions aid more credibly, we should see greater

military impact per dollar of SFA expenditure. The analysis above suggests that close interest alignment, intrusive monitoring, and credible conditionality will be rare for U.S. SFA, but where observed, these unusual conditions should promote greater improvements in the partner's military than in more typical cases.

An illustrative example of these dynamics at work is the Second Iraq War. From 2003 to 2011, the United States invested over \$25 billion in the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), devoted tens of thousands of U.S. personnel to training and advising Iraqi forces, and, by 2007, deployed more than one hundred thousand other U.S. troops to provide security until the ISF could take over.¹⁵ Yet the Iraqi military that emerged from this immense effort collapsed in June 2014 when challenged by Islamic State fighters in Mosul. How could such a scale of assistance have failed to produce an ally who could defend its country against a militant group with only a fraction of its nominal strength?

The answer lies in a major interest divergence between the U.S. principal and its Iraqi agent. The U.S. and Iraqi governments had two very different visions for the ISF. The United States wanted a technically proficient force capable of defending all sects' interests and focused on counterinsurgency warfare against both Sunni insurgents and Shi'ite militias. By contrast, the Iraqi Ibrahim al-Jaafari and Nouri al-Maliki regimes were focused on preserving their position in a mostly intra-Shi'ite struggle for political power in which the ISF was seen as a potentially decisive arbiter in a potentially lethal contest. For the regime's purposes, a politically disinterested technocratic military of the kind the Americans sought would have been a danger, not an asset: not only would Jaafari or Maliki have been unable to ensure such officers' personal loyalty in internal political jockeying, but both men would be likely to see Amer-

ican-trained technocrats as a kind of Trojan horse, a tool of American influence and interference that might undermine the consolidation of power in Jaafari's or Maliki's office. By consistently elevating sectarian loyalists over those more professionally inclined, the Iraqi government created strong incentives for members of the military to learn only those skills required to be a good loyalist militia, which does not include the ability to conduct modern, large-scale combat operations.¹⁶ By cultivating deliberate corruption in the officer corps, the regime created a financial incentive for military cooperation, and by turning a blind eye to death squad activity by government forces, the regime tied the complicit officers to its own fate.¹⁷ The results created an ISF whose performance was largely insensitive to U.S. aid and training: Americans could provide weapons and teach tactics, but a corrupt, politicized officer corps could neither absorb the training nor generate the combat motivation needed to persuade troops to risk their lives on behalf of such a project. As a result, the ISF never gained the ability to independently plan and conduct even medium-scale combat operations effectively. And when U.S. leverage diminished with the progressive withdrawal of U.S. combat forces, regime incentives that had been an important brake on military proficiency all along now had free reign with even less U.S. interference. Particularly when the violence began to wind down after 2007 and the number of U.S. troops on the ground began to shrink, Maliki began to systematically replace the few apolitical officers the United States had managed to install.¹⁸ Realistic training became less frequent and corruption even more common, the combination of which thoroughly undermined the SFA program Americans had invested in so heavily.

El Salvador, by contrast, is often presented as an example of SFA's ability to substi-

tute for large U.S. troop deployments. Between 1979 and 1982, a combination of \$5 billion in U.S. aid and a small contingent of under two hundred American advisors helped the Salvadoran government survive the FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) insurgency. Without U.S. SFA, the government could well have fallen.

Yet even here the problem of interest misalignment and agency loss was serious. The Salvadoran regime shared the U.S. goal of preventing its overthrow, but sharply opposed U.S. pressure for military professionalization, economic reform, and political participation as means to this end, and were much less committed to ending the war than were the Americans. Salvadoran agrarian elites had relied for generations on an internal balance in which a handful of wealthy families shared rents from a sharply unequal economy that they controlled via repressive governance and a security apparatus that was both organized along semifeudal family lines to ensure its loyalty and bound to the regime by complicity in violence against political activists.¹⁹ American proposals for economic reforms that would undermine the financial basis of the traditional elite's power thus posed existential threats to them, as did U.S.-advocated military professionalization that would weaken plutocratic control. For the ruling oligarchy, the system of economic and social privilege it enforced and the intraelite balance this created was thus at least as important as defeating the insurgency; in fact, for them, the counterinsurgency campaign was chiefly a means to preserving their wealth and influence, and the regime preferred to terrorize opponents rather than accept what they saw as self-defeating reforms.²⁰ Once U.S. military aid had blunted the FMLN's early hopes of toppling the government, these interest divergences between the U.S. principal and its Salvadoran agent made further progress increasingly diffi-

cult, and the war lapsed into a long stalemate that resolved only when the Cold War ended and mutual exhaustion enabled a negotiated compromise settlement. The net result was a real – but limited – payoff for SFA, even in an example that many see as its strongest case in point.

Such cases show the limits on SFA effectiveness under many conditions. Better performance is not impossible, but it requires circumstances that have been rare in practice. The Korean War offers an opportunity to observe such unusual circumstances and their effects.

When North Korea invaded the South in June 1950, the United States rapidly expanded a small prewar assistance mission into a force of almost three thousand advisors plus the equivalent of almost \$1 billion in today's dollars in annual military aid, with weapons and equipment sufficient for fifty thousand men. This was coupled with unusual intrusiveness and conditionality. The United States insisted on assuming command of ROKA (Republic of Korea Army) forces in 1950, and used its advisors in part as a fact-gathering agency for the U.S. command by reporting on Korean unit behavior and capabilities.²¹ U.S. advisors were given control of ROKA units' budgets and were expected to oversee expenditures to ensure against black-market diversion of funds.²² The U.S. command took control of the ROKA's personnel policy from early 1951, preventing old factions from operating and allowing young, competent officers to assume leadership positions. These young leaders adopted American military practices and reinforced the new emphasis on professionalism and meritocracy.²³ U.S. leaders threatened withdrawal of weapons and support from underperforming ROKA units unless the Koreans demonstrated leadership and training worthy of that support; in 1953, American negotiators threatened total U.S. withdrawal if Korean

President Syngman Rhee refused to accept American preferences on armistice talks.²⁴

This program produced an unusual scale of improvement in allied military performance. Whereas the ROKA had offered minimal resistance to the initial invasion and scored systematically poorly in early U.S. advisor assessments, by 1953, ROKA battalions fought in coherent units, gave ground only when necessary, counterattacked with skill and motivation, and had proven themselves able to fight even Chinese regulars to a stalemate in head-to-head combat. Assessments from U.S. advisors reflected this improvement: reports from 1952 – 1953 frequently commented on the ROKA's increased competence, noting that Republic of Korea soldiers had "showed improvement in every field of military endeavor."²⁵ By January 1953, ROKA units occupied 59 percent of the front line, met 87 percent of the enemy's probes and attacks, and inflicted 50 percent of the enemy casualties.²⁶

The results suggest that SFA thus *can* catalyze important improvements in recipients' military effectiveness. But this does not happen simply because the patron provides resources. The ROKA had received nontrivial aid and training prior to the invasion, yet showed little ability to use it competently in the field until the military crisis of 1950 created appropriate incentives. The North Korean invasion and the ROKA's chaotic retreat to the Pusan perimeter posed an existential crisis for Rhee: hostile conquest now posed a more immediate threat than internal violence, and his personal interests now aligned with the Americans' in an urgent need to defeat an external enemy. With incentives aligned, U.S. aid became a powerful tool for improving allied effectiveness. But even then, interest alignment was not so perfect as to remove any potential for agency loss and inefficiency: aggressive monitoring and credible conditionality were needed to eliminate holdover corruption and limit subsequent backsliding

into clientelist behavior. The Korean case shows that where conditions are conducive, agency losses in SFA can be mitigated – but it also shows how difficult that can be to accomplish in practice.

SFA is best understood as a principal-agent problem wherein agency losses will often be high. Major interest asymmetries are the norm. Monitoring is difficult and costly. Conditionality must overcome credibility dilemmas that can be managed but never wholly eliminated. These challenges normally preclude big payoffs from modest aid, and even large investments commonly yield disappointing results. SFA thus faces major challenges as a solution to the twenty-first-century dilemma of weak states posing real but limited threats to U.S. interests.

This does not make SFA useless, however. As the Korean case shows, U.S. and allied interests will sometimes align in ways that reduce agency losses, especially if U.S. policy is intrusive and conditional. Such alignment is rare, but when it happens, it offers an opportunity for efficient aid that makes a real military difference.

And even inefficient aid with serious agency losses can sometimes be worthwhile. More training and equipment is usually better than less, so SFA will typically improve recipient capability at least somewhat. If little is needed, then SFA may suffice. In El Salvador, U.S. SFA never produced an ESAF (Armed Forces of El Salvador) that could actually win the war, but it could at least avert defeat and sustain a grinding stalemate until exogenous events eventually enabled a settlement. Though many hoped for more, this was better than the alternative. In Iraq and Syria today, SFA is unlikely to truly defeat ISIL, but it can help drive a weak opponent back underground even if it cannot enable U.S. allies to stabilize populations who distrust them.²⁷ If the mission is simply to contain ISIL rather than defeat it, then even

an inefficient SFA effort with limited pay-off could still suffice in a less demanding role. The less one asks, the better the odds that SFA can provide it.

It may also be possible to improve SFA implementation in ways that make it more effective in the future. Partly this means choosing one's battles carefully: more Koreas and fewer Iraq-scale interest misalignments would certainly improve the prognosis.

SFA policies should also be more attentive to the recipients' political interests and incentives. The policy debate tends to assume an apolitical capacity-building model for SFA in which military resources translate into military power in a straightforward way: the more training and equipment the United States provides, the better the ally's effectiveness. If the ally is underperforming, the natural implication is to provide more aid. By contrast, a PA approach highlights the ally's political interests as central for SFA. Hence, policies designed to realign the ally's interests and create incentives to work and not shirk are essential. This approach is inherently political, and can often be highly coercive. The whole point of conditionality in PA theory is to manipulate allies' incentive structures in ways that encourage them to work and not shirk; in a PA approach, if an ally is underperforming, the best response will often be to *reduce* assistance, not increase it.²⁸

A more political understanding of SFA might also emphasize elite special forces, rather than regular conventional soldiers, both as providers and as recipients of assistance. As SFA providers, special forces can offer language skills, cultural awareness, and intelligence-gathering skills to serve as more-effective monitors of partner behavior, as a more-conditional PA approach to assistance requires. As SFA recipients, partners' special forces are by definition small units whose very size makes them less destabilizing to the internal political balance in the host government. In the

Philippines after 2001 and in South Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s, host governments were more willing to tolerate professionalization for small special forces units than for their mass regular military, enabling more-efficient training with smaller agency losses per soldier trained.²⁹

But while SFA can help if done properly under the right conditions, there are important limits on its utility: much of the time, conditions will not be suitable. In particular, many recipient regimes fear internal rivals within the governing elite more than they fear the external threats the United States typically focuses on. For much of the U.S. experience in Iraq, this hamstrung SFA effectiveness, as it did in Afghanistan and in a range of cases from Vietnam to Mali to Nigeria to Pakistan.³⁰ Such regimes are disproportionately likely to be candidates for U.S. SFA and, in these contexts, the United States rarely has the leverage it needs for major military improvements: when allies see existential risks in reform, even the sweetest carrots and strongest sticks available are unlikely to outweigh such incentives. More training and more equipment will not simply solve the problem in such cases and yield a capable, professional military. Apolitical capacity-building that ignores underlying interest asymmetries is subject to large agency losses and can at times make things worse by fueling the corruption and clientelism that undermines effectiveness.

Even so, SFA is still cheaper than deploying one hundred thousand soldiers. In a world of imperfect options, "enabling partners" may be the least imperfect for a given contingency. But SFA's real costs and risks are easy to underestimate, and its military benefits have often been oversold. Overuse is thus a real danger: SFA *can* help, but only rarely will modest investments in training and equipment provide major improvements in effectiveness. And overdependence has real costs: ground force re-

ductions may be necessary, but an SFA alternative does not make them free of risk. Under many conditions and for many pur-

poses, a small military payoff is the most one can expect from a small SFA footprint.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The discussion below draws from the analysis in Stephen Biddle, Julia MacDonald, and Ryan Baker, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, published online April 12, 2017, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745>, and appears by permission. The analysis is based upon work supported by the U.S. Department of the Navy, Office of Naval Research, under Award No. N00014-14-1-0843.
- ² For example, see John Ferejohn and Charles Shipan, "Congressional Influence on Bureaucracy," *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 6 (1990): 1–43; Roderick Kiewiet and Mathew McCubbins, *The Logic of Delegation: Congressional Parties and the Appropriations Process* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Daniel L. Nielson and Michael Tierney, "Delegation to International Organizations: Agency Theory and World Bank Environmental Reform," *International Organization* 57 (2) (2003): 241–276; George W. Downs and David M. Rocke, "Conflict, Agency, and Gambling for Resurrection: The Principal-Agent Problem Goes to War," *American Journal of Political Science* 38 (2) (May 1994): 362–380; Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); and Idean Salehyan, "The Delegation of War to Rebel Organizations," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54 (3) (2010): 493–515.
- ³ For more detailed treatments, see Jean-Jacques Laffont and David Martimort, *The Theory of Incentives: The Principal-Agent Model* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Gary J. Miller, "The Political Evolution of Principal-Agent Models," *Annual Review of Political Science* 8 (2005): 203–225.
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- ⁵ Based on cumulative spending on Foreign Military Financing, the Military Assistance Program, "Section 1206," International Military Education and Training, and Excess Defense Articles. The data are a subset of those used in Michael McNerney, Angela O'Mahony, Thomas S. Szayna, et al., *Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventive Tool* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2014), and were derived from United States Agency for International Development, The GreenBook, <https://www.usaid.gov/developer/greenbookapi>. See also Stephen Watts, Jason H. Campbell, Patrick B. Johnston, et al., *Countering Others' Insurgencies: Understanding U.S. Small-Footprint Interventions in Local Context* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2014), 173. On Pakistan's support for the Afghan Taliban, see K. Alan Kronstadt, *Pakistan-U.S. Relations* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congressional Research Service, 2012), 4, 19. On ethnic cleansing in Sudan, see Ted Dagne, *Sudan: The Crisis in Darfur and Status of the North-South Peace Agreement* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, June 15, 2011), 23–24. On the nationality of foreign fighters in ISIL, see Aaron Y. Zelin, *ICSR Insight: Up to 11,000 Foreign Fighters in Syria; Steep Rise among Western Europeans*, International Center for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, December 17, 2013, <http://icsr.info/2013/12/icsr-insight-11000-foreign-fighters-syria-steep-rise-among-western-europeans/>. (Assuming Yelin's "high estimate"; his "low estimate" implies four of the top six states would be among the top fifteen recipients of U.S. SFA.) On Afghanistan, see Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2014, <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results>.
- ⁶ Patricia L. Sullivan, Brock F. Tessman, and Xiaojun Li, "U.S. Military Aid and Recipient State Cooperation," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 7 (2011): 275–294.

- ⁷ The Spearman's Rho is -0.14 with a p-value of 0.09. This calculation assumes that the fifteen countries in NATO at the end of the Cold War received essentially no U.S. SFA from 2000 to 2010. SFA data are derived from McNerney et al., *Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventive Tool*. Corruption was measured using the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, available at <http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/>. Stephen Biddle
- ⁸ For a more extensive discussion, see Daniel Byman, "Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," *International Security* 31 (2) (Fall 2006): 99–109.
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- ¹¹ In fact, under such conditions, U.S. aid can actually make things worse by fueling corruption. On this dynamic, see Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016); and Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Aspiration and Ambivalence: Strategies and Realities of Counterinsurgency and State-Building in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2012).
- ¹² Andrew Boutton, "U.S. Foreign Aid, Interstate Rivalry, and Incentives for Counterterrorism Cooperation," *Journal of Peace Research* 51 (6) (2014), argues that U.S. aid recipients prefer to arm against external rivals, whereas the United States prefers the opposite. Often, however, the recipients' nominal interest in arming against foreign rivals actually serves the internal interest of placating a domestic military that benefits from this, as in Pakistan. See Azeem Ibrahim, "How America is Funding Corruption in Pakistan," *Foreign Policy*, August 11, 2009; and Ayesha Siddiqi, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy* (London: Pluto Press, 2007). My usage of internal and external is relative to the government itself: internal threats are those posed to government actors by other factions within the government (such as the military or other rival elites); external threats are those outside it (such as insurgents or neighboring states).
- ¹³ See Feaver, *Armed Servants*, chap. 3.
- ¹⁴ For a more detailed discussion, see *ibid.*
- ¹⁵ Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations since 9/11*, RL33110 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2014), 62.
- ¹⁶ On ISF cronyism, see Catherine Dale, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress*, RL34387 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2009), 101.
- ¹⁷ On ISF corruption, see *Learning from Iraq: A Final Report from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2013), 95, 99. On death squad activity, see Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George W. Bush to Barack Obama* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012), 146–148, 185–187, 367, 542–543; and James A. Baker III and Lee H. Hamilton, *The Iraq Study Group Report* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 9–10.
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- ²⁰ Peceny and Stanley, “Counterinsurgency in El Salvador,” 73–75, 81–82; and Schwarz, *American Counterinsurgency Doctrine*, 45–49.
- ²¹ HQ Eighth U.S. Army Korea (EUSAK), *Special Problems in the Korean Conflict*, U.S. Army Military History Research Collection (Carlisle, Penn.: Army War College, 1952), 8.
- ²² Jongnam Na, *Making Cold War Soldiers: The Americanization of the South Korean Army, 1945–1955* (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 65–66.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 141–142.
- ²⁴ Bryan Gibby, *The Will to Win: American Military Advisors in Korea 1946–53* (Montgomery: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 173–174.
- ²⁵ Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAG) Command Report, December 1952, Section I, 1, as quoted in Gibby, *Will to Win*.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ For example, see Erin Banco, “ISIS Unable to Break through Shiite Militias Around Baghdad, Wages Urban Warfare with Suicide Attacks,” *International Business Times*, October 16, 2014.
- ²⁸ See also Walter C. Ladwig III, “Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency: U.S. Involvement in El Salvador’s Civil War, 1979–92,” *International Security* 41 (1) (Summer 2016): 144.
- ²⁹ On the Philippines case, see Linda Robinson, Patrick B. Johnston, and Gillian S. Oak, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2016); and Thomas Lum and Ben Dolven, *The Republic of the Philippines and U.S. Interests – 2014* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2014), esp. 2–4. On the South Vietnamese case, see Talmadge, *The Dictator’s Army*, 71–138.
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Fictional States & Atomized Public Spheres: A Non-Western Approach to Fragility

William Reno

Abstract: This essay explains why political order in some places gives way to especially persistent conflict and prolonged state institutional collapse. State failure is rooted in decades of personalist rule, as leaders have sought to fragment and disorganize institutions and social groups that they thought would be possible bases of opposition. This problem was considered particular to sub-Saharan Africa, but now parts of the Middle East and Central Asia exhibit this connection between a particular type of authoritarian rule and state failure. State failure in these countries produces multisided warfare that reflects the fragmentation upon which prewar regimes relied for their protection. Policy-makers are thus faced with the dilemma of propping up personalist regimes that present themselves as bulwarks against disorder at the same time that their domestic strategies of governance play a central role in creating the conditions of protracted multisided warfare in the event that they fail.

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Fifty years ago, many experts believed that countries like Liberia, Somalia, and the Congo faced promising futures. A World Bank mission sent to assess Liberia's economic record reported: "The Liberia we found was strikingly different from that of only a dozen years ago. Development is now widespread and there is a genuine commitment to it on the part of the government."¹ Somalia's Supreme Revolutionary Council, installed in a 1969 coup, impressed an experienced observer who found extensive infrastructure development and improved state service provision. "The most important thing to note about the new military regime is that it appears to be honest and public spirited," he advised.² One scholar praised the Congo's rapid development and newfound political stability. "The Mobutu regime's emphasis on economic rationality has produced positive results," he wrote. "Since the enactment of the 1967 plan for monetary stabilization, the Congo seems to have entered a period of unprecedented prosperity."³

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doi:10.1162/DAED_a_00465

Fifty years on, the situation in these countries is bleak. Liberia's public health system collapsed in the face of the 2014 Ebola epidemic, despite more than a decade of intensive international assistance that followed the country's fourteen-year civil war. Systemic failure in Liberia should not be confused with disorganized and corrupt administration. For example, Nigeria's public health service demonstrated the sort of capacity to participate in the shared global processes that Paul Wise and Michele Barry identify as critical for dealing with pandemic threats.⁴ The service was able to limit the virus's spread to nineteen confirmed cases (the first being a Liberian diplomat fleeing the epidemic in his home country), despite the government's overall poor reputation for inefficiency and corruption.⁵ Somalia, perhaps Africa's most ethnically homogenous country, has not had an effective central government since 1991. The Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index (previously the Failed States Index) labeled Somalia the world's most failed state for seven of its twelve rankings from 2005 to 2016.⁶ The Congo, host to the world's largest peacekeeping mission after a deal in 2002 that was supposed to end a six-year civil war, was described as exercising "minimal central government control over large parts of the national territory, poor transportation and electricity infrastructure, challenging terrain, and protracted local conflicts."⁷

The conflicts that accompany these collapses of state administration do not fit classic twentieth-century conceptions of rebel wars in which rebels devote considerable attention and resources to building a "liberated zone" controlled by their alternative government while they fight their way from the periphery of the country to the capital. These three failed states and a growing list of others would seem to be easy targets for rebels who wanted to establish their own zones of governance. At least it seems that it would not be difficult

for rebels to push aside and out-govern the fragmented and weak incumbent regimes. But actually, the condition of state failure produces a distinct type of persistent warfare in which many armed groups fight one another, focusing more on controlling social and commercial networks than on just ruling particular territories. The armies of these failed states dissolve into militias that behave very much like the fragmented rebel forces. Usually there is a prominent role for roving armed groups that plunder resources. Various external nonstate actors, including in illicit commercial networks, play important roles in the strategies of competing armed groups. Civilians are exposed to violence from these multiple sources, usually resulting in mass displacement.

This essay explains how and why political order in some places gives way to especially persistent conflict and prolonged state institutional collapse. This explanation focuses on the domestic factors that lead some states to break down. Breakdown is rooted in decades of personalist rule and the failure of mid-twentieth-century state-building projects, long considered particular to sub-Saharan Africa. Developments in parts of the Middle East and Central Asia, however, show that this connection between a particular type of authoritarian rule and state failure that produces a particular type of warfare are not exclusive to Africa. These conflicts are outgrowths of the failure of high-modernist state-building projects as rulers turned away from the earlier institutional bases of political order, relying instead on personalist networks that would play critical roles in the character of the warfare to come.

Most rulers, particularly those governing divided populations with legacies of political violence, readily understand the simple paradox of civil-military relations. They realize that creating an armed force

protects against outside armed challenges, but that the ambitions of the members of this armed force also represent a threat.⁸ Through the second half of the twentieth century, rulers of independent states in sub-Saharan Africa experienced the realities of this risk. Between 1956 and 2001, all but six of the region's forty-eight countries had experienced military interventions into politics. Successful coups occurred in thirty countries (62.5 percent of the total), and eighteen (37.5 percent) experienced multiple successful coups.⁹ Economist Paul Collier has noted that coups tend to legitimate further coups, and that "societies can collapse into political black holes of repeated regime change generated from within the army."¹⁰ Since coups, whether successful or not, often result in the death of the incumbent leader, this risk tends to be taken seriously indeed.

Prudent rulers recognize that their own survival might require them to undermine the formal institutions of the military that they also need for protection. This fear of the ambitions of skillful subordinates may extend to other state institutions, particularly ones that are critical to providing services to citizens. Determined politicians and civil servants might use these resources to build their own powerbases from which to launch challenges against the incumbent leadership. In short, the state institutions that the ruler requires to further the process of what one used to call modernization can become the most immediate threats to the ruler's political and even physical survival. Some rulers ignored or minimized this risk, preferring instead to focus on building state capacities in a bet that efficient state institutions and growing prosperity would translate into popular legitimacy soon enough to protect the regime. But the shock of a coup or uprising that nearly topples the regime often marks a decisive shift from building state institutions to undermining them. One such criti-

cal juncture occurred in Somalia in 1978 after the country's president survived a coup attempt among officers embittered by the Somali army's defeat in a failed irredentist effort to unite all ethnic Somalis in a single state. The president cast aside the pretenses of a socialist-inspired development project and a strong army that would unite all Somalis, doubling down instead on building patronage networks that he would pit against each other as they competed for his favor.

Bonds of dependence via personal or family ties and shady business offer rulers less risky means to manage the ambitions of military officers, state officials, and other important individuals. State institutions are still needed, but more as a façade to draw in foreign aid, loans, and the support of diplomatic partners, and as platforms to launch and shield insider deals, as Stephen Biddle observes in his essay in this volume.¹¹ Skillful manipulation of these prerogatives of state sovereignty generates the resources that the ruler needs to buy the support of those whose cooperation is necessary, such as individuals who control resources in their own right or who have powerbases within their own communities. The status as leader of a sovereign state gives the ruler the capacity to enforce laws selectively, to label those who fall out of favor as corrupt and subject them to prosecution while shielding those who were more favored from prosecution. Governments that are run in this manner can become a focus of concern from foreign security officials, such as when rulers go so far as to provide international criminals with passports and shield financial transactions. This can allow them to garner more resources and extend control of economic opportunities to include those in the illicit realm in an effort to limit the options and increase the dependence of political clients.

By the 1980s, Liberia's system of personalist rule had become the center of

a crime-conflict international disorder nexus of the sort described in Vanda Felbab-Brown's contribution to this volume.¹² The distinctions between those who were state officials and those who were members of criminal syndicates were becoming blurred. In a report of a task force set up in 1985 to recover arrears of \$150 million owed to government corporations, investigators found that most of the debtors were government officials, including two heads of then-President Samuel Doe's security services.¹³ Some U.S. government officials concluded that Liberia's entire system of governance rested on a dense system of misappropriated funds, insider scams, and illicit commercial activity under the protection of the country's political leaders, up to and including the president.¹⁴ Even after a massive internationally backed reconstruction program following the country's 1989–2003 civil war, UN investigators pointed to a growing problem of cocaine and heroin trafficking through Liberia. In 2014, they reported that "a considerable number of those individuals involved in this trafficking as couriers were former combatants and currently serving personnel of the military and police forces."¹⁵ Reports that South American traffickers have used Liberia as a transit point and tried to bribe Liberian officials suggest that these international criminal syndicates viewed corrupt politicians in Liberia as potential partners.¹⁶

This exercise of power behind the façade of formal state institutions plays a significant role in shaping the distinctive character of fragmented patterns of violent competition in failed states. Individuals who hold high offices, from the president downward, are often involved in these networks of patronage that are connected to underhand deals and illicit commercial activities. These networks of patronage serve to foreclose cooperation among members of the country's elite, their dependence and in-

security forcing them instead to compete among one another for presidential favor. This system of governance through the manipulation of an alternate noninstitutional realm of personal networks and tight control over other people's access to economic opportunities is terrible for the overall economy and commonly attracts widespread popular disdain. But this system works to maintain a sullen political stability so long as the ruler asserts tight personal discretion over access to these networks.

On occasion, this system of personal control breaks down, as in a coup d'état in Guinea-Bissau in 2012. Prior to the coup, foreign officials insisted that an upcoming electoral process had to allow opposition candidates to compete freely, given widespread concerns that the country's highest officials were using introductions to Latin American drug traffickers to buy the allegiance of key figures in the military and government.¹⁷ The prospect that a reformer would be elected threatened to upset this arrangement and led instead to the coup. Persisting suspicions that Guinea-Bissau officials were implicated in drug trafficking led to a U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) offshore sting operation that netted a former head of the navy who stood trial in a U.S. federal court. "They are probably the worst narco-state that's out there on the continent," explained a senior DEA official in Washington shortly after the coup.¹⁸

Guinea-Bissau shows how the process of institutional state failure is linked to regime survival strategies. But if the alternative personalist basis of domestic political order falters for any reason, political clients are unleashed from the domination of their patron and they begin to struggle with one another to claim more exclusive control over resources. The people who are best positioned in this struggle are those who are able to use their connections to commercial networks, often illicit, to recruit and arm supporters. It is unsurpris-

ing in this light that many of the leaders of armed groups in Somalia, the Congo, and Liberia in the 1990s had previous careers as government ministers and business partners of former presidents. They are not rebels in the old sense of fighting to construct alternative systems of governance to challenge the state. The focus of their fighting is the control of the networks of power that sustained the old personalist regime. In this regard, the conflicts that accompany state failure are more violent versions of the politics that preceded the collapse of a centralized personalist order. The patterns of violence in these conflicts also reflect the distinctive exercise of authority in these precollapse political systems.¹⁹

Patron-client politics is not enough to ensure political survival, particularly in poor countries where governments do not have enough resources to buy off supporters. Selective applications of violence and divide-and-rule tactics help to drive down the costs of patronage. Paradoxically, this violence does not have to come from the top of the political hierarchy to be effective. It is even more effective if the ruler's subordinates are allowed to exercise violence for their own purposes. The delegation of the exercise of violence in this manner is very different from using effective security forces to forcefully repress challengers. The critical benefit to the ruler is that this alternative political strategy undermines the capacity for those who wield violence to cooperate among themselves. This political strategy also atomizes the wider society, which undermines the ability of leaders from outside of this political establishment to mobilize social movements or build an armed alternative political force.

Violence in these settings often takes the form of politician partnerships with criminal gangs. Gangs that politicians use as vigilante forces to defend their supporters and to assert claims against local rivals can

double as enforcers and operatives in their bosses' shady illicit commercial pursuits. In most cases, this threat of violence across broad political and economic dimensions that intrude into people's everyday lives makes everyone less secure and prompts them to appeal to elements of these same personalist networks for protection. This parochialization of political contention and the intentional fostering of insecurity offer rulers opportunities to turn what normally would be private and even personal tensions of limited concern to a bureaucratic state into a powerful tool to disrupt societal capacities to act collectively. This is a crucial paradox of failed and failing states: Their political systems are very bad at performing tasks conventionally associated with the state, such as providing security and basic services. At the same time, these political systems are very good at interfering in even minor details of people's lives. They sweep up otherwise private or intensely local rivalries and disputes, turning them into points of tension that rulers manipulate to undermine cooperation. These parochial divides, along with the flow of resources in personalist networks, poison efforts to organize peaceful and violent political opposition alike, as they are intended to do. This political context also helps to further explain why the armed groups in conflicts associated with state collapse appear to be so fragmented.

This instrumental use of privatized violence appeared in Sierra Leone through the 1970s. Paramilitary groups under the control of politicians emerged in force in alluvial diamond mining areas of that country. These politicians enjoyed the protection of then-President Siaka Stevens to set up mining operations in partnership with Lebanese merchants in defiance of official regulations and to smuggle diamonds with impunity. The president expected these politicians to use these paramilitaries, which doubled as diamond-digging gangs,

as political muscle against his political opponents. By the early 1980s, membership in these paramilitaries, which were “encouraged from a high level,” outnumbered the national army four to one.²⁰ This decentralization and privatization of the exercise of violence, what two political scientists have called “disorder as political instrument,”²¹ was a terrible strategy from the point of view of building a state with strong institutions that could provide security to its citizens. But it made sense for Sierra Leone’s president, given that he had survived two coups d’état, one of which actually succeeded until a counter coup a year later restored him to power. He survived the second coup d’état only after inviting soldiers from Guinea to help secure his hold on power. A decade later, politicians’ armed gangs played important roles in suppressing a 1982 rebellion among supporters of an outlawed opposition party.²²

Democratic reforms leading to competitive elections do not necessarily remedy this privatization violence and instrumental exploitation of disorder, even if these tactics are highly unpopular among the electorate. Rulers have their own countermeasures: When faced with prodemocracy activists, Sani Abacha, Nigeria’s president from his 1993 coup until his mysterious nocturnal demise in 1998, popularly thought to have been the combined result of an overdose of Viagra and the attentions of acrobatic prostitutes, promoted an explosion of armed groups. These included what Nigerians called “campus cults,” heavily armed gangs that were immune from law enforcement. These gangs even moved into campus dormitories, teaming up with politically ambitious proregime students to attack students and academic staff who were active in prodemocracy campaigns. Students at the Obafemi Awolowo University, one of Nigeria’s most prestigious institutions of higher learning, alleged that violent cam-

pus cults received support from the university’s administration to attack and kill students who discussed political issues.²³ Violent gangs continued to act as political muscle after Abacha’s death and the 1999 transition to democratic multiparty politics. The violent deaths of six students at the University of Ibadan in 2004 prompted an editorialist to write that “intra-campus groups are being infiltrated by politicians who perceive the members cheap sources for recruiting thugs for their selfish ends.”²⁴ The “selfish ends” included using these armed groups as muscle to fight violent electoral campaigns on behalf of their politician patrons.²⁵

Developments after the introduction of multiparty elections in Kenya in 1992 highlight how political competition in personalist systems of rule can lead to greater violence and instability. In the prelude to Kenya’s reforms, an observer noted that “after the incidents of July 7th [1990], the government felt threatened by the existence of these shanties. It saw in slum dwellers a vulnerable and ready tool in the hands of crafty revolutionaries who might offer a better deal. . . . The government dreaded facing an organized people with common grievances.”²⁶ The incumbent ruler, President Daniel arap Moi, encouraged politicians to recruit local youth gangs in the communities that these politicians feared might otherwise support opposition candidates. Recruits were enlisted to join “tribal militias” and “cultural associations” that disrupted the organizing efforts of the opposition candidates. At the same time, these youth and their local patrons were allowed to use violence for private purposes, such as seizing properties and setting up local protection rackets. This merging of political and personal uses of violence looked to casual observers like the reemergence of deep-rooted ethnic tensions. It is more accurate to describe this development as the creation of neotraditional armed groups as

instruments to fragment otherwise threatening political environments.²⁷

Violence during Kenya's 2007 election led to the deaths of more than one thousand people in the Rift Valley area and displaced up to half a million people, adding to the estimated three hundred fifty thousand people who were still displaced from earlier violence.²⁸ An official inquiry into these events noted that the "gangs are devoid of ideology and operate on a willing seller basis. Given the hierarchical nature of gangs and the upward mobile hopes of their members to become as well off as their leaders, youth can be mobilized for a variety of reasons."²⁹ Subsequent investigation points to deeper and more durable effects of this political strategy on Kenyans. The cycle of electoral ordeals reduces Kenyans' desire to hold elections, makes them more likely to identify in ethnic terms, and more likely to accept the use of violence in support of what one considers a just cause.³⁰ These findings suggest that particular political strategies, rather than degrees of poverty or latent hatreds, are drivers of conflict, and that ethnic fragmentation is a consequence rather than a cause of this violence in the first instance.

This fragmented exercise of violence on the part of multiple competing armed groups that participate in Africa's conflicts is a by-product of the strategies of pre-conflict personalist authority. Gone are the classic rebels who fight the incumbent government while administering "liberated zones," in which rebel leaders are able to build their social control of civilians, co-opt local notables, discipline their own fighters, and chase away or kill their armed rivals. That model of rebel governance is difficult to organize in the contemporary fragmented environment. Agents of conflict now include many more competing armed gangs attached to various politician-patrons, communal militias, vigilantes, and armed illicit commercial actors. The pervasive

nature of this fragmentation is reflected in the finding that conflict agents other than government and rebel forces accounted for about 25 to 30 percent of violent acts in Africa's conflicts in the mid- to late 1990s – already a significant proportion – and increased to about half of all violent acts two decades later.³¹

The reality of the failing and failed state political environment is one of multitudes of violent local tensions that poison larger political organizations from within. This is manifest in the proliferation of a series of segmented and competing armed groups, usually rooted in increasingly rigid ethnic or narrowing kinship identities, the very presence of which is designed to inhibit attempts to organize broad-based political opposition. In addition to providing the contours of how political order will fragment in the event that the central authority collapses, this situation creates a deep-rooted social (dis)order that is the common critical element that defines contemporary state failure and the character of violence that accompanies this failure.

Effective broad-based armed opposition requires areas that are socially insulated from the incumbent regime's control. These social spaces are where movements are built to mobilize populations that will harbor and support rebels. But the dispersal of the exercise of violence and incorporation of parochial conflicts into personalist systems of political control intrudes into this social space, even if the formal institutional capacity of a state is very weak or even absent. These tactics of governance in failed and failing states severely limit public space in which people can debate and organize between the regime, the politicized economy (including its illicit sectors), and the ordinary household. Activists have to operate amidst the instrumental mobilization and the politicization of community divisions that tend to intrude into their orga-

nizations. Old-style Maoist revolutionary warfare, in which rebels build broad-based popular support in “liberated zones” that they use as strongholds from which to challenge state forces, is tremendously difficult to organize in the fragmented social environment of failed and failing states.

The organization of political protests in the Congo illustrates the difficulty of organizing broad opposition in a failing state, even when public opinion would seem to support such an initiative. The Congo’s capital city Kinshasa has a record of soundly rejecting the Congo’s president, a man who does not speak the local language of Lingala, in internationally mediated elections. Youth groups regularly stage protests, appearing to presage a broader opposition. But these groups encounter and have to deal with infiltration by gangs, described as *jeunes sportifs*, associated with martial arts and combative sports, criminal operations, and the militias of politicians.³² While these groups also express popular hostility to the regime, onlookers wonder whether youth leaders actually have been co-opted to advance the interests of political cliques outside of Kinshasa that are jockeying for position in the deeply corrupt political system.³³ These activists are forced to operate in a social terrain in which a security force commander under U.S. Treasury Department sanction for the violent suppression of mass protests serves as the chairman of the popular Kinshasa AS Vita football team and thus plays an important role in youth mobilization.³⁴ Leaders of armed groups have to struggle against these countervailing pressures that draw recruits to fight for politicians and a political system that even armed group members may detest. The overall environment of violence and insecurity drives people further into compromises with regime-friendly strongmen for protection and economic survival. Day-to-day politics in this environment remains relentlessly parochial, even while radical po-

litical change features in the ideas and discourses of popular culture. Reflecting this fragmentation, the Congo’s government estimated that it had registered 477 political parties in 2015.³⁵

Political scientist James Scott has pointed out, in the context of classic Maoist insurgencies in the 1960s and 1970s in Southeast Asia, that armed rebellion against the state works only if there are local social bonds that are independent of state authority and that insurgent leaders can co-opt and rely upon to help them rule the people and to legitimate their presence. This social connection is essential to assist armed groups to govern. Rebel governance through these legitimate networks and intermediaries is essential if the armed group is to keep at arm’s length the parochial and personal intrigues as rebels build a social movement alongside their armed force. Otherwise, fighters are drawn into people’s personal or purely local problems. The armed group, in turn, is infected with the acrimony of these divisions, leading members of the armed group to become involved in these various affairs to the detriment of discipline and pursuit of a common goal.³⁶

Leaders of some of the armed groups in failing and failed states recognize these dangers and try to find strategies to gain autonomy. For example, leaders of Mungiki, an armed “cultural association” that had a strong presence in the Kibera slum in Nairobi, were concerned about the involvement of Mungiki members who were recruited into violent campaigns of politicians running for election in 1992 and later. These leaders tried to lead a mass conversion of members to Islam and threatened to call for *jihad*, perhaps in hindsight not the most politic choice. But conversion appeared to be aimed at helping the leadership assert more exclusive control over their group’s members and to insulate the organization from politician interference. The hostility of some Mungiki leaders to-

ward what they called the “mental slavery” of their previous associations with politicians and their struggles was part of a search for a distinct political narrative that would supersede the violent ethnic divisions that had become such a prominent element of the country’s existing political system.³⁷ Insulation from and mastery of this social environment proved to be beyond the capacity of this leadership, as opportunities in petty crime and protection rackets continued to draw Mungiki members to collude with the politicians who shielded these and larger criminal pursuits. This failure of the Kenyan group to escape the gravitational pull of this crime-politics nexus suggests that the risks of radicalization may be overstated, such that many would-be jihadist groups collapse back into this degenerative political milieu before they can pose a serious threat.

The failed and failing state pattern of social fragmentation endures after the collapse of central authority. This effect tends to be strongest in the communities that bore the brunt of the precollapse regime’s most intense suspicions, and thus the most concerted efforts to undermine collective action at the broadest social level. The eastern regions of the Congo, host to several armed rebellions against Mobutu’s rule in the 1960s, provide such an example. Through the years of the Mobutu regime (1965 – 1997), particularly as domestic and foreign pressures for political reforms grew, Mobutu intensified his instigation of local disputes over land tenure and the rights of citizenship. He took particular care to selectively empower and then shift his support for local strongmen who would use violence in ways that would widen these parochial divides and ensure their centrality in politics. These strongmen featured prominently among the leaders of armed “rebels” that dominated the region after the fall of Mobutu’s regime. Similar patterns of intense politicization and militarization

of parochial conflicts appeared in communities that had histories of opposing the precollapse regimes in Somalia and Libya. In these cases, too, many of the most prominent “warlords” in the conflicts that followed state collapse were drawn from the ranks of those who appropriated and built upon their favored positions in commercial networks and in regime-sanctioned communal violence to field armed groups of their own.

The social atomization of failed and failing states shows how the recession of the formal institutions of the state does not simply leave ungoverned spaces in its wake. The dense networks of personalist political systems occupy that social space: ungovernable in a conventional sense, but an important element of a political system that is based upon using indirect means of domination to limit peoples’ capacities to organize politically. These regime strategies also highlight how what seem like flare-ups of ancient and recurrent ethnic or sectarian conflicts really are intended consequences of the instrumental use of violence by failing state regimes. It is more accurate to portray the parochial bases of these conflicts as “neotraditional,” in line with the dominant discourses to define group interests, rather than actual holdovers from the past. This alternative system of governance can maintain what seems like a significant measure of stability, at least so long as a ruler is able to uphold coordinated control over these disparate and contending elements.

At first glance, these regimes may seem much like any other authoritarian regime. But the internal workings of these regimes differ from old-style authoritarian regimes that rely upon capable institutions to suppress political challenges. Old-style authoritarians are less inclined to create the kinds of webs of insecurity and dependency that characterize failed and failing state regime strategies. Their institutional strategy, however, leaves more ground for insurgencies

to connect to and ride broad-based popular movements to power in a decisive defeat of the incumbent regime. A quick glance at the Middle East highlights this contrast in authoritarian strategies. The intense interest that Libya's Muammar Gaddafi took in manipulating conflicts through the use of kinship networks as vehicles for patronage and corruption created the social conditions that, by 2011, as Gaddafi lost his grip on this system of control, spawned a large number of militias. In contrast, the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes, while not strangers to nepotism and intense corruption, remained more dependent upon institutional military and security forces to address threats. That latter form of repression left autonomous social spaces for broad-based social movements to mobilize "silent majorities" who, unlike counterparts in failed and failing states, were not compelled to retreat to the relative safety of neotribe or neoclan protectors.

The same social forces that undermine collective action against the regime also undermine popular insurgencies. Militias based in narrow neotraditional identity communities constantly hedge their bets, readily switching sides to balance against any armed group that threatens to become strong enough to dominate all of the others. This behavior acts as a sort of anti-insurgency, constantly frustrating would-be indigenous state-builders and foreign groups that are drawn to politically unstable areas as venues in which to act out their own political narratives. For example, the internal records of Al Qaeda operatives who tried to organize the "silent majority" in Somalia in the 1990s and 2000s tell a story of poorly disciplined local recruits who remained obsessed with obligations to their clans, entangling the foreign activists in their parochial battles and causing other Somalis to worry that the foreigners were becoming the instruments of narrow clan interests. With growing disdain

for their supposed partners, Al Qaeda organizers realized that these social conditions contaminated the ideological underpinnings of their efforts and reinforced local suspicions of the foreign group.³⁸

This social fragmentation has important implications for foreign intervention. Foreign intervention forces initially find it easy to push back these armed groups. But the social forces that undermine popular rebellion also plague subsequent counterinsurgency operations. Intervening forces, such as the African Union Mission in Somalia, find that they cannot mobilize neighborhoods to sustain hard-fought security gains. These counterinsurgents, which this author observed, did not have to invest a great deal of effort to win over a civilian population. But when the counterinsurgents needed to identify and destroy militant networks of questionable local popularity, this task became unexpectedly difficult. Endemic social atomization, exacerbated by years of violence, led tight-knit kinship groups to hedge their bets. In this social environment, one's best protection is to maintain links to all groups that are likely to be important at some point, trading information and infiltrating them with one's own family members as a guard against future risk. Thus, it is not surprising when government officials in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia are suspected of collusion with insurgents, militias, and criminal networks, sometimes all at once. This microlevel strategy results in behavior that, from the counterinsurgent's perspective, suggests duplicity among the people that the counterinsurgents are supposedly helping. In undermining insurgents and counterinsurgents alike, this social context continues to defeat broad-based collective action more generally.

Another lesson from this analysis of failing and failed state politics and conflict is that external pressure for reform can lead instead to collapse and much greater and

prolonged violence. Mobutu warned foreign officials who pressured him to hold democratic elections: *Après moi, le déluge*. No doubt Mobutu reflected on the dangers of empowering subordinate members of patronage networks to challenge their central patron. The sudden introduction of competitive elections in this setting is a powerful accelerant of instability, as some have observed.³⁹ Tanja Börzel and Sonja Grimm highlight similar negative consequences of poorly thought-out democratic reforms in the Western Balkans.⁴⁰ This situation leaves foreign officials and local activists with a quandary of whether to support risky elections or support a dictator who has created what is a very dangerous situation in the long run but is a guarantor of a rough stability in the short run.

What are the future prospects of seemingly stable regimes that employ tactics such as the decentralization of violence alongside insider networks, including in illicit commerce to disrupt collective action through the promotion of intense social fragmentation? To the extent that these precollapse patterns are prominent features of political life in Central Asian countries, these countries may face a risk sudden collapse and protracted conflict like those in Somalia, the Congo, and Libya. The rulers of these countries are allergic to the institutions of their own states and tend to favor personalist networks. They exercise authority through controlling people's access to economic opportunities and, in some cases, manipulating community tensions while preserving presidential roles as arbiter.

A nonviolent transition from failed state politics is very difficult, given the overlapping and fragmented nature of armed networks and the danger to rulers of building strong institutions that are able to rein them in. Anxieties about leadership succession plague these regimes, as stability rests increasingly on the networks and personal discretion of the incumbent ruler.

The death or the ouster of the ruler creates a free-for-all as the different armed elements of these networks compete to renegotiate their places in this hierarchy and to gain more exclusive control over resources, with the possibility of violent stalemate. These problems should give pause to state-builders, particularly when conventional solutions such as democratic elections and institutional reform risk sparking multisided conflict. The historical solution to this problem is to routinize these personal connections so that they survive the ruler's demise. Because generational succession maintains continuity in the control of personalist networks and thus reduces uncertainty, monarchy makes sense in this situation. This may explain why republican monarchies appear as features of the contemporary political landscape. Gabon and Togo, for example, saw sons of presidents assume office after the deaths of their presidents-for-life, as did Syria when Bashar Hafez al-Assad became president in 2000 after the death of his father, Hafez al-Assad, president since 1971. Republican monarchical lineages can include daughters. This is suspected to be the intention of Nursultan Nazarbayev, the current president of Kazakhstan, a man who came to power under very different circumstances in 1989 as First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Kazakh SSR.

Monarchism is small comfort for those who worry about the collapse of authoritarian regimes of the type discussed in this essay. Gaddafi's effort to groom a son to inherit the residential office in Libya did not work as planned, for example. Most people really are not that enamored with monarchies, at least not with new ones, in an age in which people expect to have some choice about who leads them. The genie of popular sovereignty is hard to put back in the bottle. The difficulty of implementing even this unconventional (from a contemporary perspective) state-building strategy

is discouraging. The careful analysis of the politics of state failure points to a different focus that is likely to be no less discouraging to external promoters of state-build-

ing: that real progress will come only when societies discover ways to stand up to the forces that divide them from within.

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The Colombian Paradox: Peace Processes, Elite Divisions & Popular Plebiscites

Aila M. Matanock & Miguel García-Sánchez

Abstract: Ending civil conflict is difficult, particularly through political settlements. Conflicts now often occur in states with elections, and voters have sometimes been directly involved in the process, potentially in efforts to overcome elite divisions. Yet, according to evidence from the 2016 popular plebiscite in Colombia, referendums and other tools of direct approval by voters seem to amplify elite divisions and therefore are not a useful mechanism to strengthen peace processes in this way. Focusing instead on traditional elite-led negotiations that seek to satisfy each faction may have a better chance of producing signed settlements, although the Colombian case also suggests some alternative forms of inclusivity that may help increase the overall legitimacy of the process and improve the odds of implementation.

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Ending civil conflict is difficult. While settlements negotiated between combatants have become the most common form of termination since the end of the Cold War – more common than victories by either side – they are especially hard to secure and stabilize.¹ What will yield peace? Conflicts now often occur in states with elections, meaning that various actors may be involved in peace processes that seek settlements. Settlements can be approved by empowered elites alone, by institutional mechanisms like congressional votes, or by direct voter involvement, perhaps as part of an effort to overcome elite divisions or increase legitimacy. Direct voter involvement in the approval process may also be a component of a trend toward greater inclusivity around all aspects of settlements.²

In Colombia, direct voter involvement through a 2016 plebiscite was employed, in part, in an effort to offset an elite challenge and add legitimacy to a settlement. Our analysis of this case, however, suggests that a referendum may paradoxically provide an important platform for elites seeking to upend

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doi:10.1162/DAED_a_00466

the peace process, and that it may be especially easy to mobilize voters against a settlement when components can be framed as offering concessions to rebels. Using case evidence, including survey data from 2004 to 2016, we show that elite opposition to the peace process, based on division among elites, could be part of the explanation of the plebiscite's rejection in Colombia.

We posit that referendums and other tools of direct voter approval can amplify elite divisions and, therefore, should not be employed to overcome elite opposition in order to strengthen peace processes. Focusing on traditional elite-led negotiations – seeking to satisfy the necessary factions and using the simplest approval processes available to provide for the required constitutional changes – may have a higher chance of producing successful settlements. Such negotiations remain the central component of most peace processes, and our results suggest maintaining that exclusive structure.³ The Colombian case, however, also suggests that other forms of inclusivity can help increase legitimacy for the process, potentially improving the odds of implementation, which merits further study.

In our examination of the 2016 Colombian popular plebiscite, which sought direct voter approval of a peace process, we first overview the Colombian conflict and how it compares with other civil conflicts. Next, we describe the elite division. We then present survey data on public opinion toward a settlement prior to the plebiscite and results from the plebiscite, demonstrating that support decreases with the elite division and suggesting that running such a referendum may paradoxically provide a platform for elites seeking to upend the peace process. We then show evidence from a survey experiment that indicates that components of peace agreements that are framed as concessions for rebels are especially unpopular, making referendums or other di-

rect voter involvement a risky strategy. Finally, we address the implications of these arguments for other states seeking an end to civil conflict through a settlement.

In many ways, the Colombian case looks like other civil conflicts, but it also presents a unique opportunity to account for voter attitudes in the peace process. For more than fifty years, Colombia has experienced a bloody armed conflict between the government, left-wing guerrilla groups, and right-wing paramilitary bands. On the left, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) emerged in 1964, followed over the next two decades by other leftist guerrilla groups, including the National Liberation Army (ELN), the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), and the 19th of April Movement (M-19).⁴ The FARC, however, secured a position of strength due to its expansion strategy, as well as its eventual involvement in drug trafficking.⁵ On the right, organized paramilitaries emerged in the 1980s, clashing with the leftist guerrilla groups and, at times, the government.⁶ This internal confrontation resulted in thousands of deaths, millions of displaced citizens, and tremendous economic and environmental destruction.

While a complex and important case in its own right, Colombia is also very similar to other civil conflicts, despite having one of the longest-running insurgencies in the world. Colombia is a clear case of asymmetric conflict – the most common civil war type – and it has featured varying levels of conflict, including many strong combatant groups in the beginning, but fewer weaker groups more recently, reflecting the composition of most other wars in the current era.⁷ By the late 1990s, the United States and Colombia teamed up to fight insurgency, initially through broader regional programs and then through the targeted Plan Colombia. Between the 1990s and 2000s, most left-wing guerrilla groups signed ne-

gotiated settlements with the state, and most right-wing paramilitary bands demobilized, but the FARC persisted.

Colombia is a most likely case for the use of direct voter involvement in the approval of a peace process, and it thereby serves as a potential example for other similar cases. A long-standing electoral democracy, Colombia's regime dates back to 1957, but it was further opened in 1991, when a new constitution reorganized state structures and promoted a more pluralist and competitive political system.⁸ Most armed actors developed a relationship with political parties and electoral politics. Even throughout the conflict, Colombia remained one of the most stable Latin American democracies.⁹ And as we will discuss later, civil conflict often occurs in states with elections, making Colombia an early but not unique case.

Prior attempts to establish a settlement between the FARC and the government have failed. In the mid-1980s, the government negotiated with many of the leftist groups.¹⁰ The Belisario Betancur administration and the FARC signed a 1982 agreement to transform the guerrilla group into a political party and to make the political system more competitive.¹¹ As a result of this process, the FARC formed the *Unión Patriótica* (UP) party, and the government implemented reforms such as the popular election of mayors. Nonetheless, over just a few years, thousands of UP members were assassinated, primarily by right-wing paramilitaries but with plausible government complicity, and the FARC split from the party and continued fighting.¹² However, other left-wing guerrilla groups signed settlements and became political parties in the democracy reshaped by the constituent assembly that changed the constitution in 1991.¹³ These concessions were tailored to these rebels who, in return, agreed to demobilize, disarm, and renounce violence. The agreements, however, did not include the FARC.

Instead, the government launched a major offensive against the FARC in 1992.¹⁴ In 1999, President Andrés Pastrana initiated a new cycle of peace talks with the FARC. During this period, the organization created a new political wing and even held territorial control, but the talks failed to produce a settlement as each side accused the other of focusing instead on strengthening itself on the battlefield. In 2002, President Álvaro Uribe recognized the political status of right-wing paramilitary bands and initiated peace talks with these groups, disassembling most of these organizations.¹⁵ But, with regard to the FARC, the administration established an aggressive counterinsurgency strategy that debilitated, but did not defeat, the remaining guerrillas.¹⁶

A new peace process began in 2012, but elite divisions threatened to upend it, despite its reliance on a popular plebiscite for approval. After decades of failed negotiations, the FARC and the Colombian government returned to peace talks in 2012. The government announced a "road-map" (*Acuerdo General para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera*) that established six points of negotiation: rural development policy; political participation; end of the conflict; solutions to the problem of illicit drugs; victims; and the implementation, verification, and referendum to put the deal in place. A negotiating team representing each side, facilitated by multilateral mediation, met in Oslo and then Havana.¹⁷ In May 2013, a joint communique from the team showed agreement on the first point, and, by November, reports stated that political participation had been negotiated: the FARC was to be designated as a legal political movement, a provision that has facilitated peace in other contexts,¹⁸ and political representation in territories most affected by the conflict was to be expanded, potentially reducing grievances but also representing FARC constituencies.¹⁹ Over the next two years, the negoti-

ating team worked through the remaining points, despite pauses, and the government and the FARC showed their commitment to the process by declaring ceasefires. Other actors, including delegations of victims, were also consulted during the process.²⁰

Even prior to the negotiations, however, the elites on the government side fractured, led by President Juan Manuel Santos against his predecessor President Uribe, the former ultimately supporting the settlement and the latter opposing it. Before the Santos administration, the popular, and populist, Uribe administration held office; Santos had been the defense minister during the Uribe administration, and he had implemented the hardline security policies that were part of Plan Colombia. President Uribe, who was denied a constitutional amendment that would have allowed him to seek a third term, initially backed Santos. Santos won with 69 percent of the vote in the 2010 presidential elections.²¹

However, relations soured between Santos and Uribe by early 2011. A rift first appeared in 2010, only a few weeks after his inauguration, when Santos reestablished diplomatic ties with Venezuela, a decision that Uribe criticized. As Santos took a more conciliatory approach, including moving toward peace negotiations with the FARC and loosening laws used to prosecute members of the group, relations between the two politicians deteriorated.²² Santos's 2012 announcement of negotiations with the FARC, however, triggered a formal rupture with Uribe, who created an organization (Colombians against Terrorism) and later a party (*Centro Democrático*) to oppose Santos.²³ Uribe called the government insufficiently patriotic, claimed the settlement gave too many concessions to the FARC, and, ultimately, accused Santos of treason against his legacy.²⁴

Peace talks with the FARC progressed, however, and, in January 2013, Santos had proposed a referendum to approve a pro-

spective settlement.²⁵ This proposal stood in contrast to a constituent assembly that had been used to make the 1991 changes to the Constitution, which the FARC preferred.²⁶ Indeed, when Santos sent legislation on the referendum to Congress in August of that year, the FARC called for a pause in negotiations to examine it.²⁷ Although the process was meant to be inclusive, especially once the comprehensive settlement was negotiated, this mechanism for approving that final deal was unexpected. Uribe also came out against this proposal, suggesting that Santos was using a referendum on peace as an electoral ploy (and it was initially set to coincide with the next elections).²⁸

By the 2014 election, and without a comprehensive settlement yet negotiated, Santos finished behind Uribe's new choice, Óscar Iván Zuluaga, in the first round of voting; in the runoff, however, he clinched a reelection with 50.25 percent of the vote.²⁹ This election merely marked what had become a clear division between a camp united behind Uribe's hardline agenda against insurgency, and a pro-peace coalition that included various parties led by President Santos.³⁰

Despite FARC opposition, and Uribe's skepticism, Santos succeeded in establishing a plebiscite, which was approved by Congress in 2015 and by the Constitutional Court in 2016. During the process, he referred to Uribe and his supporters as "enemies of peace," saying that those opposed to the settlement were "trying to demonise the process and create fear in the country," but that voters would have their say, suggesting that voter approval of the peace process might overcome these elite divisions.³¹ A popular plebiscite that succeeded may indeed have overridden the Uribe opposition and provided the needed legitimacy to the peace process.

Attitudes toward the peace process shifted as the elites split. Although the 2012 –

2016 negotiations between the Santos administration and the FARC produced an agreed-on settlement, the plebiscite failed, reflecting opposition from the Uribe camp. But to what extent did this division among elites shape voter attitudes so that a narrow majority rejected the plebiscite, a mechanism paradoxically designed in part to overcome these very divisions? And what about the plebiscite made it so easy for elites to lead an effective opposition campaign?

The Observatorio de la Democracia of the Universidad de los Andes and the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) of Vanderbilt University collected public opinion data from twelve national representative surveys between 2004 and 2016.³² To assess public attitudes toward a peaceful solution to the conflict, and thereby probe the plausibility of elite divisions in producing changes in public opinion, we examined the evolution of two questions that have been regularly included in the Americas Barometer survey, before and after the elite division: the first captures the percentage of Colombians who support a negotiated solution to the conflict with guerrillas, compared with a military solution or a combination of both strategies; the second measures the percentage of individuals who think forgiveness and reconciliation with FARC members is possible. Complementing these data is the actual vote in the 2016 plebiscite.

We expected to see a downward trend in these attitudes, primarily after the division between Santos and Uribe, but before any components of the settlement were negotiated and made public by political camps (Uribe's camp versus other political camps). Our expectations build on previous research showing that the public is responsive to elites' opinions and their cues to voters.³³ Referendums and other mechanisms for direct voter involvement may be especially afflicted by elite framing, as we will discuss further.³⁴

The majority of Colombians have supported a peaceful solution since data collection began in 2004. Such support was well above 60 percent before the 2011 elite division, but then dropped to 55–58 percent, reaching its low in 2011, before finally rising again in 2016, after the settlement was actually signed. Similarly, attitudes toward forgiveness and reconciliation with the FARC were initially high, ranging from 58 to 64 percent between 2006 and 2008, before decreasing to their lowest at 40 percent in 2014 (the surveys in intervening years did not ask this question, unfortunately), and then increasing slightly in 2016.³⁵

These national averages have shown the expected downward trends, reaching their lowest points after the Santos-Uribe division (2011 onward). The decreases are apparent before particular components of the settlement were negotiated and announced (the first point made public in 2013), suggesting that the elite division rather than the revelation of the settlement's specific policies may account for the changes. These trends, of course, cannot prove that Uribe's opposition was the cause—other factors such as the visibility of FARC members and their crimes after the start of the peace process may have played a role—but the evidence is suggestive of the public responding to the cues of a divided elite.

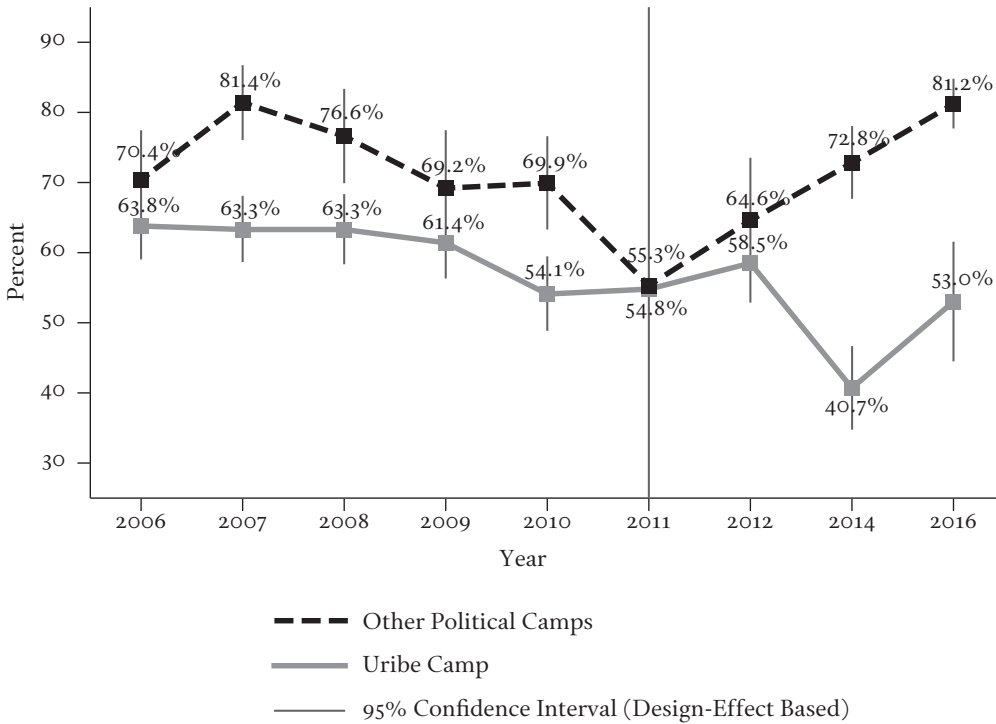
To further probe the plausibility of this argument, we map our variables by political camp in order to see if there are differences in opinions between Uribe supporters and other respondents. Using vote choice reports for the previous presidential election, we created a variable for the political camps of respondents, a dichotomous indicator that takes the value of one for Uribe supporters and zero otherwise.³⁶

The comparison by political camp demonstrates the expected relationship with respect to support for a political solution to the conflict (Figure 1). The percentage of those in the Uribe camp with favorable at-

Figure 1

Percentage Supporting a Negotiated Peace with Insurgents by Political Camp, 2006 – 2016

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Source: The authors produced this figure using data from the Americas Barometer survey by LAPOP/Observatorio de la Democracia.

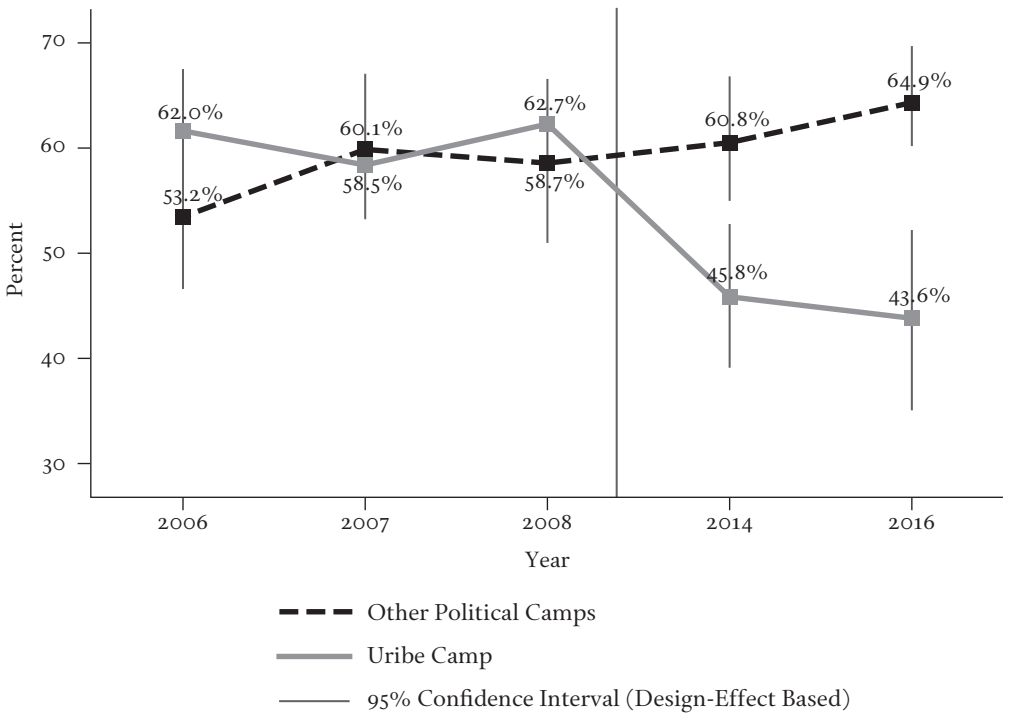
itudes toward a settlement has been greater than 50 percent for most of the period, though it was lower than the percentage of non-Uribistas supporting this option. In 2011, the two lines converged, perhaps because of mixed signals from the elites: the distance between the politicians' views on negotiations was not as evident until the next year, when talks began. Thereafter, Uribistas' support drops off, reaching its lowest level in 2014.

Attitudes toward forgiveness and reconciliation with the FARC show a similar pattern (Figure 2). Between 2006 and 2008, these attitudes were not significantly different between political camps. Uribe pro-

moted a peace process with the paramilitaries during that period, so part of the convergence may be explained by a contamination effect across armed actors. By 2014, when peace talks with the FARC were in motion, the camps had substantially diverged and, by 2016, when the settlement was signed, only 44 percent of those in the Uribe camp believed forgiveness and reconciliation with the FARC was possible.³⁷

Finally, we examined the extent to which votes in the recent plebiscite also reflected elite divisions. At the municipal level, we ran a simple correlation between the 2016 plebiscite results and the outcomes for the 2014 presidential election.³⁸ The

Figure 2
Percentage with Positive Attitudes Toward Forgiveness and Reconciliation with the FARC by
Political Camp, 2006 – 2008 & 2014 – 2016



Source: The authors produced this figure using data from the Americas Barometer survey by LAPOP/Observatorio de la Democracia.

vote share for the *Uribista* presidential candidate, Zuluaga, positively correlates with the percentage of “no” votes, and Santos’s vote share with the percentage of the “yes” (both are statistically significant).³⁹

These attitudes and votes in the popular plebiscite show evidence of the possible impact of the Santos-Urbe division on voters, even though it was meant to overcome elite divisions.

Other factors contributed to opposition to the popular plebiscite, but they do not seem to explain the shifts in camps that coincide with the division between elites; rather, if anything, they further reinforce

the risk of directly involving voters in the approval process.

While attitudes in the Uribe camp began dropping, turning against a settlement, even before specific components were announced, the support rates dropped to the point of producing a statistically significant difference between the camps only after some of those specific components were made public (for example, Figure 1 shows less than 50 percent support in the Uribe camp in 2014, which was after the announcement of the first provisions). All settlements include concessions to the rebels, wherein *de jure* power is brought

more in line with de facto power, making these settlements easy for elites or other actors to oppose. Even Colombians who were generally supportive of a settlement prior to the plebiscite were less supportive of particular provisions that may have been construed as concessions. For instance, while a majority in both camps typically supported a settlement as the solution to civil conflict (Figure 1), that support did not extend to creating the conditions to allow the FARC to participate politically (just 13 percent of *Uribistas* and 35 percent of other camps supported this provision, according to the 2016 AB-LAPOP survey) or forming a political party (11 and 23 percent support, respectively).

The perception that the government was making concessions seemed to have shaped voter attitudes: in a survey experiment run in areas most affected by the conflict, Aila M. Matanock and Natalia Garbiras-Díaz show that support for a proposal to provide more political representation to those areas is much lower when it is reported that the FARC had endorsed the proposal (than when the proposal had simply been made).⁴⁰ Endorsement by the FARC produced a drop in the percentage of respondents supporting the proposal from 44.4 percent to 31 percent.⁴¹ These results are even more surprising given that all respondents would have directly benefited from increased political representation (because this sample covers regions set to receive more seats). Overall, the revelation of these components may have helped solidify voters' preferences against the settlement, and they were framed as concessions by Uribe during the opposition campaign (framing the transitional justice as not sufficient, for example: "the lack of justice doesn't produce a feeling of reconciliation").⁴² But the timing of the downturn in attitudes, beginning prior to the announcement of the components, tentatively suggests that the elite division played a central role.

Another possible explanation for the split is that those in Uribe's camp turned against the settlement because they predicted that land reform provisions would be a component of it, rather than cue off Uribe's attacks on aspects of the peace process that he labeled "concessions." However, while Uribe and some of his political coalition are against land reform, he did not often attack this component of the settlement – and with good reason, as land reform is very popular among Colombians, receiving approximately 80 percent support in the 2016 AB-LAPOP survey. Socio-economic status and preferences toward redistribution (something land reform would accomplish) also do not correlate with support for the settlement.⁴³ Land reform was always likely to be a component of a settlement with the FARC, due to its popularity and the FARC's leftist platform. Attitudes toward it do not seem to be an omitted variable in our analysis. Likely knowing these preferences among the population, Uribe's attacks focused mainly on the transitional justice and FARC political participation provisions.

Despite the fact that the failed plebiscite was seemingly established in part to overcome elite divisions, this evidence suggests that it amplified those divisions instead.

But the Colombian case also provides important implications for other peace processes. Modern civil conflicts often occur in countries with elections, even in democratic countries, so other states may be tempted to follow Colombia's lead in using referendums and other tools of direct approval by voters. Among ongoing civil conflicts that reach a twenty-five battle-death threshold,⁴⁴ the mean level of democracy rose six points on a nineteen-point scale from 1974 (the beginning of the third wave of democratization) to 2010, and a majority of countries experiencing such conflict in 2010 were more democratic than au-

thoritarian.⁴⁵ The Arab Spring may have decreased the relative share of civil conflicts in democracies somewhat, but many fully democratic countries are still fighting their counterinsurgencies, including India, Kenya, and Turkey (as of the latest democracy data in 2013).⁴⁶

So far, the use of referendums to approve peace processes has been relatively rare: fewer than 20 percent of the settlements in the UCDP Peace Agreement Dataset over the past four decades.⁴⁷ Most of these cases are in territorial conflicts wherein voters later weigh in on succession, such as in South Sudan, rather than an approval mechanism for the settlement overall.

Other states with elections, however, may be tempted to use referendums and other forms of direct voter participation in the approval of a peace process, perhaps especially when elites are divided and the government is less than popular.

Just as lessons may be drawn from successful dimensions of settlements, unsuccessful dimensions also hold important implications for settlement design in other cases.⁴⁸ Specifically, we posit that this failed popular plebiscite suggests that, if elite divisions exist, these mechanisms for direct voter approval may amplify splits, rather than provide additional legitimacy to and strengthening of the peace process. While mass action is crucial in many stages of conflict and postconflict contexts – for example, during wartime, when civilians can provide essential information and resources to combatants – this type of inclusivity at the approval stage of a settlement may not be one of them.⁴⁹

Focusing instead on traditional, elite-led negotiations that seek to satisfy necessary factions may be more likely to yield a signed peace agreement. In fact, to secure a settlement, leaders on each side of a conflict must perceive the share of power they will receive through a settlement as comparable to what they *would* receive

from continued fighting.⁵⁰ Similar to any negotiated regime transition, elite pacts will create new state structures, producing changes that are acceptable to elites even if they slow the speed of change.⁵¹ In contrast to recent recommendations on inclusivity during peace processes, this case suggests that focusing on meeting the expectations of sufficient elite factions – so either all factions that may wield a veto or a sufficient number of factions to override any vetoes – may be the best option to obtain a signed settlement in many cases.

Ultimately, the Colombia case sought to follow a similar strategy, although the failed plebiscite made it more difficult. After the vote, the government called meetings with the opposition to discuss their objections to the agreement. Santos and Uribe finally met face-to-face to talk about peace. Later, the two negotiating teams met again in Havana to renegotiate the agreement. After a few weeks, the FARC and the Colombian government announced a new deal that included modifications reflecting some points highlighted by Uribe and the opposition. Finally, the new agreement was approved in Congress at the end of 2016. The opposition, however, remained unsatisfied with the settlement and now accuses the government of betraying the people's will and democratic principles. There are, of course, cases in which it will be difficult to get necessary elite factions on board, as it was in Colombia, and having a failed plebiscite certainly does not help. But there remain some inclusivity strategies to deal with minor elite factions that are still opposed.

While many studies of spoiling in peace processes (that is, upending a bargain that the major factions would otherwise agree on to end the civil conflict) focus on the rebel side, the Colombian case makes it clear that factions on the government side can also spoil a settlement.⁵² Again, this suggests that incorporating the elites of

as many major factions as possible before isolating minor ones may be the best path forward. Other studies have suggested a similar strategy, arguing that ensuring the leaders of the major government and rebel factions can find an option they prefer to conflict may require exclusivity, in order to limit the number of actors who have to agree and, thereby, to provide those crucial elites with the most possible options to terminate conflict.⁵³

Many cases, including El Salvador and South Africa, for instance, match this template: both feature a coalition of elites who accepted negotiations and, ultimately, a settlement (and those elites who were recalcitrant were neutralized through a wide pro-peace coalition that included middle-class segments).⁵⁴

Beyond the main implication that a focus on elite factions may be useful in securing a signed settlement, we draw two important lessons from the Colombian case about seeking inclusivity in this step of the process to help overcome minor elite factions that remain in opposition to the agreement. First, we suggest not using a referendum or other direct vote on approval of the peace process. These mechanisms generally may not overcome elite divisions, perhaps in part because peace processes are complex issues, so voters look for elite cues. Given the uncertainty in these processes, elites opposed to the settlement may have the easiest time framing terms as concessions and the status quo as the safest option (factors like elite popularity seem to play an important role in these contexts, rather than the issue itself).⁵⁵ Some have noted that referendums and the like are “risky” strategies.⁵⁶ When components of settlement can be framed as concessions, which are unpopular, as the Colombian case makes clear, the strategy may be even riskier.

Second, the Colombian case also suggests that some inclusivity may be possible, even at this stage of the conflict. Oth-

er work has suggested that inclusivity, although not yet common at most stages of ending a conflict, is useful for increasing legitimacy and even improving the odds of implementing (if not securing) a settlement.⁵⁷ In terms of process, Colombia suggests that including representatives of the voters, either through a constituent assembly as in the 1990s or directly through Congress as after the failed plebiscite, may be a way to achieve some degree of inclusivity without the same risk of amplifying elite divisions. This proposition, however, would need to be further tested.

In terms of audience, the Colombia case also suggests that if a referendum is held, it could be restricted to certain areas – specifically those areas most affected by the conflict – to achieve direct voter involvement with less risk of elite cues driving the outcome. Colombians directly affected by armed conflict, particularly at the hands of the FARC, measured through displacement and attacks in particular areas, have been among the most supportive of the peace process.⁵⁸ Both victims and non-victims in these areas tend to have more positive opinions about peace and reconciliation than do those in areas less affected by political violence. Rural regions that have most recently been the areas most affected by violence also show strong support for the peace process.⁵⁹ More important, these regions may be least affected by elite framing because they live the conflict and thus are more likely to seek a deeper understanding of a settlement that will affect them on a day-to-day basis. This would fit with theory on elite framing in other contexts, which suggests that topics that voters tend to know less about, such as foreign policy for U.S. voters, is more susceptible to this type of influence. Colombians living in Bogotá would fit this model, since they currently experience very little of the conflict’s violence and have weaker incentives to pay close attention to its

potential solutions. This proposition, too, should be further tested.

Aside from these potential lessons from the Colombian case, mediators may be able to find other ways to increase inclusivity, perhaps at other stages in the process, even while focusing on elite factions at the stage of settlement approval.⁶⁰

The deference to solving elite divisions in many settlement processes may indeed be why such settlements are often successful. The Colombian case suggests that a popu-

lar plebiscite or similar mechanism may not solve elite divisions but may actually amplify them. While this essay counters policies recommending inclusivity at every stage of a peace process, and instead recommends focusing on satisfying necessary elite factions when seeking to approve a settlement, it nonetheless identifies other mechanisms by which voters, especially in conflict areas, can still be included, potentially increasing the legitimacy and even the chances of success of a peace process.⁶¹

ENDNOTES

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- ³⁵ See figures A1 and A2 in the authors’ online appendix at <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/matanock>.
- ³⁶ The lagged measure of choice means that we reduce any risk of seeing differences between groups driven by sorting into different camps once the division becomes clear. Camps are held constant until the next election, making Uribe’s potential camp more than his actual camp, which, if anything, should reduce the size of our effects. There is no consistent ideological question that is applicable to Colombia that we could use instead. This is, therefore, the

best political camp measure. Individuals interviewed between 2006 and 2010 were coded as in his camp if they voted for Uribe in the previous presidential election (2002 and 2006). For the 2011 and 2013 surveys, the Uribe camp consists of those who voted for Santos in 2010. For the 2014 and 2016 studies, the Uribe camp consists of those who intended to vote for Zuluaga. The 2013 survey was excluded from the analysis because the question on previous vote choice was not included in that year.

³⁷ Using support for a settlement as the dependent variable, we also more rigorously examined these patterns through logistic regression analysis (see the authors' online appendix for complete results and predicted probabilities). The interaction between two crucial independent variables, "political camp" (a binary indicator coded one for Uribe camp and zero otherwise) and "breakup 2011" (a binary indicator coded one for interviews conducted after the split in 2011 and zero otherwise), we found that after 2011 and among the Uribe camp, the predicted probability of supporting a peaceful solution with the FARC reached its lowest point: about five out of every ten supporters of the former president agree with a negotiated peace. We control for being a resident of an urban area, years of education, age, and gender (male) in these models.

³⁸ Electoral results, at the municipal level, for the 2014 presidential elections and the 2016 plebiscite vote were obtained from the website of the National Registry Office (*Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil*).

³⁹ Respectively, the correlations are 0.77 ($p < 0.00$) and 0.61 ($p < 0.00$).

⁴⁰ Aila M. Matanock and Natalia Garbiras-Díaz, "Running Candidates after Using Violence? A Survey Experiment on the Colombian Peace Process," working paper at the University of California, Berkeley, 2016.

⁴¹ See Figure A4 in the authors' online appendix.

⁴² "El plebiscito en las frases de Santos y Uribe," *La Nación*, October 2, 2016, <http://www.lanacion.com.co/index.php/actualidad-lanacion/item/277462-el-plebiscito-en-las-frases-de-santos-y-uribe>.

⁴³ Nicolás Galvis Ramírez, Omar David Baracaldo Orjuela, Miguel García Sánchez, and Catalina Barragán Lizarazo, *Barómetro de las Américas Colombia: Paz, Posconflicto y Reconciliación*, 2016 (Bogotá: Observatorio de la Democracia, Universidad de los Andes, Colombia, and USAID, 2017). However, there are certain regions where opposition to land reform was concentrated and that voted at high rates against the plebiscite; see Juan Tellez and Kyle Beardsley, "Santos' Gambit and the Shadow of Domestic Politics in Peace Processes," *Political Violence @ a Glance*, November 9, 2016, <https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2016/11/09/santos-gambit-and-the-shadow-of-domestic-politics-in-peace-processes/>.

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⁴⁶ Democracy, or audience costs more broadly, seems to have surprisingly little effect on the termination type of civil conflicts, although some have hypothesized that settlements may be less likely, including because citizens in democracies may see concessions as undesirable. See Joakim Kreutz, "Why Can't Democracies Settle Civil Wars?" *Political Violence @ a Glance*, May 20, 2014, <https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2014/05/20/why-cant-democracies-settle-civil-wars/>. Initial evidence, however, counters this proposition: we examined whether democracies were less likely to have a settlement that provides for concessions (the closest measure to our question of interest in available data). See Jason Lyall, "Do Democracies Make Inferior Counterinsurgents? Reassessing Democracy's Impact on War Outcomes and Duration," *International Organization* 64 (1) (2010): 167 – 192. We found no difference compared with other regime types (see Table 1 in the authors' online appendix).

⁴⁷ Natalia Garbiras-Díaz and Aila M. Matanock, "Elite Cues and Endorsement Experiments in Conflict Contexts," working paper at the University of California, Berkeley, 2017.

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Civil Wars & the Structure of World Power

Barry R. Posen

Abstract: The “policy science” of civil wars, which emerged in the early 1990s, included deeply embedded assumptions about the nature of the international political system. It was taken for granted that the United States would remain the strongest power by a wide margin, and that it would lead a liberal coalition that included virtually all the other strong states in the world. Some students of international politics believe that the nature of the system is changing. Though the United States is likely to remain much more powerful than its global competitors, several consequential powers have emerged to challenge U.S. leadership and produce a multipolar system. As power begins to even out at the top of the international system, the influence of middle powers may also grow. This new constellation of power seems likely to magnify disagreements about how states suffering civil wars should be stabilized, limit preventive diplomacy, produce external intervention that will make for longer and more destructive wars, and render settlements more difficult to police.

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Over the last seven decades, civil war has become much more prevalent than interstate war as a form of organized military conflict. On the average, 2.2 new civil wars break out every year, with nearly fifty such conflicts ongoing today.¹ Since the end of the Cold War, scholars, diplomats, and soldiers have poured enormous energy into understanding the causes, courses, and consequences of civil wars, even as coalitions of outside powers have intervened in civil wars to terminate them altogether, or at least to ameliorate the collateral damage. Much of this thinking and practice emerged during what international relations scholars dubbed “the unipolar moment,” the unusual concentration of all forms of power in the hands of the United States in the 1990s. This concentration of power enabled, though did not demand, U.S. efforts to manage civil wars. It also created a kind of gravitational force that subtly affected theories of conflict management. The possibility that

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doi:10.1162/DAED_a_00467

another great power would be a player in these civil wars, an opponent of negotiated settlements, or a spoiler in the aftermath of such settlements was seldom considered.

Because some knowledgeable observers believe that the unipolar moment is waning, this essay first discusses uni-, bi-, and multipolarity, and how international politics may vary as a consequence of different structures of power. It then deduces the plausible effects of these different structures on the three phases of potential external intervention in civil wars: prevention, termination, and peace enforcement. It draws exemplary material from the Balkan Wars of the 1990s and the ongoing Syrian Civil War. In general, if multipolarity is in our future, then I believe external intervention to manage civil war is going to become much more difficult.

Scholars, policy analysts, and policy-makers have used “polarity” as an organizing concept since at least the beginning of the Cold War. It captures the intuition that the distribution of power in the international political system affects the behavior of the states that compose it, and that though there may be many nation-states in the world, power tends to cluster at the top. The distribution of power is taken to be somewhat measureable and, for meaningful periods, to be fixed in character. In modern times, the size and dynamism of an economy of one state relative to that of another is often taken as a good, though imperfect, proxy for relative power, since it is from the economy that hard power – military power – is ultimately distilled. Territorial extent, geography, population, and the level of development also matter, as does a state’s willingness on a regular basis to convert these assets into military power.

Scholars often mark the birth of the modern international system with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which ended the horrendous bloodletting of the Thirty Years’

War and established the principle of state sovereignty.² From then until the end of World War II, states operated in a multipolar world, in which three or more states typically jockeyed for position on approximately equal terms. Occasionally, one state became much stronger than the rest, bid for hegemony, and was thwarted at great cost. The Cold War is usually described as a bipolar world: the power of the United States and the Soviet Union dwarfed that of the remaining states, and each was obsessed with the threat posed by the other. The emergence of the bipolar distribution of power was seen as so unusual that it prompted scholars to begin thinking about how systems of different polarity might behave differently.³ In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse, scholars and pundits quickly began to describe the world as unipolar. The U.S. government’s National Intelligence Council has forecast that unipolarity is on the wane, to be replaced by a new multipolar world.⁴

Polarity matters particularly to those international relations theorists who style themselves as “realists.” Realists argue that all states must deal with one overarching problem: anarchy. They live in a political system without an overarching authority. States must look to their own security because there is no agreed-upon global police force to call if they find themselves the victims of a crime. States thus live in a “self-help” system, and power, especially military power, is a key means of self-help. It is also the key means for despoiling one’s neighbors. Power is both problem and solution. States eye one another warily, and when they can improve their own insurance – by expanding their national power or reducing the power of another – they will often do so, subject to calculations of benefit and cost. They compete particularly in the realm of national armaments, and depending on structure, in the realm of building and/or eroding alli-

ances. Not all states will play the game. But states that fail to play the game often suffer for their abstention. As the game is constant, there are plenty of learning opportunities. The anarchical condition makes polarity a particularly important variable. In a world in which there is no overarching authority to prevent or punish the use of force, the distribution of power – the ability to use force – casts a long shadow. Realists like to say that the distribution of power, the structure of the system, “shapes and shoves.” It presents constraints and creates incentives, even for the most powerful states in the system. Structure influences state behavior, but it does not determine it.

Unipolarity is a world in which the power of one state dwarfs that of the rest. Most scholars seem to agree that the U.S. position in the 1990s is the only example we have of a unipolar system. Unlike bipolar and multipolar systems, the “unipole” faces few constraints; rather, it lives in a world of temptation. Facing little meaningful opposition, the United States was tempted to organize the world according to its own, mainly liberal theories. The order of the day was the spread of democracy and market economies, and preservation of the unusually happy power position enjoyed by the United States. Though the tremendous difference in power between the United States and others constituted a temptation, it at the same time made the United States quite secure. This introduced an element of caprice into U.S. behavior. The United States took up some causes and not others; it did not intervene in every civil war to protect liberal principles or remake governments. During the unipolar moment, the United States intervened most often in civil wars that occurred close to other existing U.S. interests. The Balkans exerted a magnetic attraction because of its proximity to NATO, and Haiti became a priority because thousands of its unhappy citizens could attempt

a boat trip to the United States. And the expansion of the borders of the NATO alliance in Europe, while impressive, nevertheless slowed as it approached the borders of the much weakened, but still nuclear capable, Russian remnant of the Soviet Union. Though other states occasionally tried to “balance” U.S. power, or throw wrenches in U.S. projects, these states did not have many cards to play, and they knew it. They might oppose the United States in the UN Security Council, or simply not show up to assist with some U.S. projects, but in general, the principal costs the United States encountered were exacted by the designated “villains” in those military interventions the United States chose to undertake, and these costs were low until the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Unipolarity was noteworthy for the way it affected thinking about intervention. To begin, the United States or the coalitions that it led could intervene in a civil war without having to think about threats elsewhere. No one could argue that one could not afford to have troops tied down in the Balkans because those military forces might be needed elsewhere. Indeed, then-UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright famously asked: what were the troops for if not intervention? Second, no one could argue that the designated villains in these civil wars were protected by other great powers, for there was no other great power to protect them. Third, the decision to intervene, and the appropriate strategy of intervention, was mainly a negotiation among like-minded middle powers: long-standing members of the U.S. Cold War camp who were themselves too weak to either oppose the United States or to force its hand. Fourth, given the tremendous U.S. superiority in military power, the United States and its coalition partners typically expected that the wars would be cheap, and that the United States would pay most of the costs anyway.

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The unipolar moment also affected international norms. Norm entrepreneurs, most of them dedicated to the spread of liberal norms, seem to have presumed that power would continue to be concentrated in the hands of a liberal state. For example, those who advanced the notion of the “responsibility to protect” (R2P) – which asserts that outsiders have a perfect right to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries whose governments, in the eyes of outsiders, abuse their people – were unconcerned about the concomitant erosion of the traditional sovereignty norm. The notion that the older sovereignty norm may have helped dampen international conflict among great powers was not much discussed.

A bipolar structure of power is equally rare, and the Cold War is our only example. When two states overshadow the rest, they eye one another warily because each is the greatest threat to the other. The competition tends to become all-encompassing. As each power tries to preserve or improve its position, the other scrutinizes these moves for how they might become a threat, and how they might be exploited. Countermeasures are taken rather quickly when the other superpower seems to be up to something. In the Cold War, the competition included military means, science and technology, the accumulation of allies (despite their modest utility), and competitive interventions in civil wars. Of course, structure cannot explain everything about the intensity of the Cold War competition; the parties had vastly different ideologies and visions about how the world should work, adding energy to an already fraught situation. And the two sides confronted one another with unfamiliar but extremely frightening nuclear weapons. Fear of nuclear escalation seems to have put downward pressure on the competition: the two sides struggled for advantage but seemed mindful of the possibility of disaster. It is noteworthy that despite direct involvement in many wars,

and indirect support of the opposing sides in many others, there was no direct violent clash of U.S. and Soviet forces. Finally, the bipolar nature of the competition seems to have had a strange liberating effect on each side’s willingness to get involved in local conflicts. Instead of fearing that involvement in a civil war would reduce capabilities that might be needed elsewhere to oppose the other great power, these conflicts were perceived as part of the central competition. One posited reason for this is that, due to the nuclear competition, each side had a very strong interest in credibility. Thus, a fight for credibility anywhere could be viewed as contributing positively to the credibility of one’s commitments to risk nuclear war worldwide.

Competitive Cold War interventions produced particularly tragic outcomes. The parties to these civil wars were rendered artificially strong by outside assistance, so the wars were more intense and longer-lasting than they might have otherwise been.⁵ Once they had chosen sides, the superpowers might find themselves in one of several kinds of traps. If one’s preferred side fared poorly, there was a strong temptation, as happened in Vietnam and Afghanistan, to intervene directly to save one’s proxy. This presented a tempting opportunity to the other superpower to add resources to its client in order to bleed its principal opponent. This was an inexpensive way to improve one’s own power position. At the same time, when the two superpowers were involved directly or indirectly in a civil war, they feared escalation to direct engagements between their own forces. As both parties were major nuclear weapons states, a direct clash would produce risks and costs far in excess of anything to be gained from the civil war. Thus, the two sides tended to focus more on “not losing” than on winning, further prolonging the suffering of the civilians living in the war zone.

Multipolar systems have three or more great powers. But measuring relative power in the twenty-first century is a tricky proposition. By many measures, the United States is still comfortably ahead of its closest competitor – China – though the gap is narrowing quickly. My criteria for a great power are a large and diverse economy, capable nonnuclear forces, some ability to project power beyond borders, and nuclear deterrent forces with the ability to retaliate against a state's most plausible adversaries and maintain that ability in the face of a determined arms race. (Possession of an assured retaliatory capability is essential for a state to pursue an independent security policy in the nuclear age.) By these criteria, the key powers are currently the United States, China, and Russia. France, Britain, and India constitute a second tier of important powers. By mid-century, Russia and India will likely reverse positions. Strict parity among great powers is not a requirement for viewing a system as multipolar; historically, there has often been a very large gap between the most and the least capable "great powers." This analysis assumes that the world is trending toward multipolarity and asks what difference it makes.

States compete for power and security in multipolar systems, but the sheer number of players changes the game. First, in multipolar systems, allies matter more than they do in other systems. With a handful of powers at the top of the global order, coalitions can often significantly outweigh the capability of any single state. Thus, though states in a multipolar world must look to their own armaments in order to be alliance-worthy, they must also look to the diplomacy of coalitions. A second property of multipolar worlds is divided attention. With many possible allies or adversaries, states will tend to see the possibility for incremental gain; for example, if State A concludes that State B is otherwise occupied with State C, that presents opportu-

nity. Third, the fear of countervailing coalitions imposes caution. In our time, the presence of nuclear weapons imposes still further caution. Fourth, it is plausible that multipolarity mutes ideological competition. The need to make one's own alliances and undermine those of an adversary may cause states to submerge their ideological differences.

If the world is trending toward multipolarity, this should affect external intervention in civil wars. The great powers will be more concerned about other great powers, which should make civil wars generally less important to them and thus make early preventive intervention less likely. The exception to this generalization may arise when civil wars occur in regions of particular political importance for geographical, economic, or ideological reasons, such as the greater Middle East. But in these cases, great-power competition will be intense from the outset, exactly when cooperation would be most useful for prevention. When multilateral intervention is proposed in the collective interest of the international community, the principal powers will still be concerned with relative gains. This will further complicate the prospects for collaborative efforts to settle the civil war. States may still wish to involve themselves in particular civil wars, for their own selfish reasons; because the problems posed by civil wars are often local, the most proximate great powers will be the most tempted to intervene. Finally, once one great power does intervene, and if its effort goes awry, it will be tempting for others to exploit the situation to improve their own position. Other great powers may aid the opposing side simply because the opportunity to enfeeble their competition is too tempting. Alternatively, they may offer assistance to continue the intervention or offer to create a diplomatic fig leaf to cover a disengagement, at a high cost to the intervener.

A final property of the emerging multipolar world that will affect intervention lies just outside the realm of the great powers. The National Intelligence Council grounded its forecast of a multipolar world in a larger discussion of a diffusion of power: the post-Cold War spread of economic, technological, and military capabilities to states and to nonstate actors.⁶ Middle and small powers themselves often intervene in civil wars, especially in their own neighborhoods, and their capabilities will also grow. Their interventions can produce some of the same negative consequences as great-power interventions.

The unipolar moment plausibly affected the theory and practice of preventive diplomacy, direct intervention, and postwar settlements. First, decisions to intervene could then be made in a kind of geopolitical vacuum. The argument for nonintervention based on scarcity of resources and a concomitant fear that being tied down in a small war might make one vulnerable elsewhere to a large challenge was irrelevant. At the same time, given the great security enjoyed by the victorious Cold War liberal coalition, the security case for intervention was usually weak. The situation caused analytic attention to be focused elsewhere. The main problems became how to get great powers to pay attention to emerging civil wars and engage in preventive action of some kind. The responsibility to protect is the expression of this problem. Advocates of R2P seem to have hoped that an agreed-upon international norm would create a predisposition to act, if it seemed that a government had lost its willingness or ability to look after all of its citizens. The existence of this normative predisposition would also motivate great powers to develop early-warning indicators so they could substitute early preventive diplomacy for the use of military power later. These two strands have in some sense come to frui-

tion. Though arguments continue on what R2P means practically, and how strong the norm is, the notion that outside military intervention is warranted in cases of extreme violence is a part of the foreign policy debate. Western intelligence agencies have tried to develop better an ability to warn of impending civil wars and of mass atrocities. Given the low interests that great powers have in most civil wars, these tools were never destined to be particularly effective.⁷ But a multipolar world will likely make them even less effective.

Preventive diplomacy often either does not occur, or is ineffective. Attention then turns to how outside powers can help bring a civil war to an end. Once a civil war begins, the combatants hope to decisively defeat one another and do so quickly. Such splendid victories are rare, and it is more often the case that the wars settle into attrition battles.⁸ In such battles, the combatants must “measure” relative power and relative will. This helps them assess the future costs of fighting relative to their perceived benefits and the odds of achieving them. Analysts suggest that “hurting stalemates” can develop: a combination of high costs and perceived futility that will make the warring parties more prone to negotiate, if given a nudge by outside powers, and assurances that outsiders will police any agreement to prevent defection.

The values that underlie the R2P norm suggest that it can be difficult for outside observers to wait for a hurting stalemate. This has led some analysts to suggest that outsiders should intervene militarily to terminate the conflict and midwife a settlement. Intervention could involve aiding one side to defeat another, or simply intervening militarily to choose the winner and the loser. Outsiders are often motivated to intervene because one side is seen to be committing more human rights violations than another, and that side becomes the chosen target. The important

thing to note about this kind of thinking is that it assumes that outsiders could agree on a strategy, and could bring to bear overwhelming power if they chose to do so. It also assumes that once outside powers targeted their villains, they could simply isolate them from significant outside support. The military involvement of the powerful United States would ensure that the costs of the intervention would remain low, and thus induce other states to join a coalition.

After prevention and termination, the search for a stable settlement is the third phase of outside intervention in civil wars. Civil wars have a tendency to recur, and there is a risk that an ostensible settlement is really only a kind of break for rest and recuperation. The combatants retreat to their corners, and perhaps each hopes for the best; but insofar as they have been living in a Hobbesian state of nature for the duration of the fighting, each assumes the worst of the other. They arm against the possibility of the others' defection, they view any evidence of preparation for defection in the worst possible light, and they are tempted to engage in a preemptive or preventive return to war. Practitioners and scholars alike have concluded that outside interveners might be able to sustain peace agreements by acting as an enforcer of the peace agreement and the protector of any party victimized by another's cheating. The term "peace enforcement" was added to the term "peacekeeping" to capture this more muscular form of external assistance. The peace enforcers would need to be more capable and more willing to fight than traditional UN peacekeepers. It helps if they are also significantly more capable militarily than any of the combatants in the war. There are only a few militaries in the world large enough, competent enough, and with the strategic reach to do this kind of work, especially following wars in which the combatants themselves have developed some real capability.⁹

The experience of the Balkan Wars in the 1990s provided both the object lesson of failure to engage in preventive diplomacy, and the template for intervention and peace enforcement. Outsiders did little to forestall the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and let the Slovenian and Croatian armed rebellions and secessions proceed without much diplomacy to prevent them. Secretary of State James Baker famously averred that the United States did not have a "dog in this fight." Bosnia similarly disintegrated, and after years of bloody warfare, the United States and several allies helped to build up the Bosnian and Croatian forces against the Serbs, and then contributed NATO airpower as these revived forces went on the offensive. Though Russia supported Serbia diplomatically, it had few cards to play at the time, and thus the central obstacle to Western direct intervention was the inability of Western countries to decide on an appropriate objective. The Europeans would have been content to partition Bosnia; the Clinton administration was not. It took additional years of bloody warfare, covert U.S. assistance to the Bosniaks and Croats, and the emerging possibility of a large prestige loss to NATO to produce agreement among outsiders about a political objective. At the same time, the Bosniaks and Croats were subjected to some outside discipline during the final battles of the war, and were told by the United States that the complete defeat of the Serbs would also not be tolerated. As part of the Dayton Accords, nearly sixty thousand Western peacekeeping forces and political administrators were committed to Bosnia, with another twenty thousand nearby in support, to police a settlement that gave each of the three sides some of what it had fought for, but left all somewhat unsatisfied. Though admirers of the peace settlement observe correctly that the killing stopped and has not resumed, the Bosnia-Herzegovina thus created is politically unstable. De facto partition, proxim-

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ity to Europe and its power, the EU's constant supervision, and Bosnian dependence on Europe for a livelihood keep the country together, but only in name.¹⁰

Kosovo did see an effort at preventive diplomacy, but the political solution recommended in the Rambouillet Accord amounted to the Serbian surrender of Kosovo to NATO. Though a bit of a surprise to NATO, the Serbs tested NATO's seriousness in battle, and by all accounts the war was a surprisingly close thing. A UN resolution provided a face-saving exit for Serbian troops from Kosovo, after which NATO installed the peace-enforcement operation KFOR (Kosovo Force) to assure that Serbian forces would not return, a mission that continues with some 4,500 troops today. Kosovo has since formally seceded from Serbia, though many countries do not recognize its independence. Responding to the arrival of NATO's troops in Kosovo, a small unit of Russian troops in Bosnia raced for the Pristina airport to protect what the Russians perceived as their equities in the conflict. This could have precipitated a major crisis, but the KFOR commander on the ground, British Army Lieutenant General Michael Jackson, chose to avoid a confrontation. The episode was a harbinger of how the intervention problem is likely to change as more great powers emerge and begin to see the course, management, and outcome of civil wars as matters of national interest.

For several reasons, early intervention to forestall outright civil war is less likely to occur in a world with more than one consequential power. First, simply because more traditional security challenges exist, even those liberal powers most prone to intervene have more to worry about from a security standpoint than they did in the "unipolar moment." Potential civil wars will receive even less attention. Second, when a state becomes politically unstable, other

consequential powers are likely to look at that instability through their own power and security interests. If one of them wishes to organize preventive diplomacy, others may ask how the outcome might affect their power and security. Third, because of these concerns, it will likely be more difficult to get the issue in front of the UN Security Council and produce a resolution authorizing legitimate preventive diplomacy. Finally, as we have seen, new consequential powers do not wish to legitimate certain kinds of intervention. As Chuck Call and Susanna Campbell observe in the forthcoming companion to this volume: "Many states are therefore extremely focused on avoiding any transgression against the principle of state sovereignty that might set a precedent for intervention (including against their own government)."¹¹ If an intervention is couched in terms of the responsibility to protect, these states are likely to mobilize the traditional sovereignty norm as a counterargument.

The coexistence of several consequential powers should also influence the course of civil wars. If the notion of a "hurting stalemate" has any traction as a potential source of settlements, then competitive outside interventions may make this less likely. Not all political instability that erupts into actual warfare will attract the interest of major powers, but some will. Though hardly dispositive, the number of civil wars that feature direct outside intervention has grown noticeably over the last decade.¹² Outside powers could have a range of motivations attracting them to support one side or the other in a civil war. These include the possibility of actual gain of an ally or base in the event that their side wins, the cultivation of a "proxy" who might serve their interests at a later date, the domestic or international reputation that may emerge from demonstrating one's ability to influence such conflicts, or the desire simply to stymie the perceived

interests of those outside powers that support the other side. Though the number of such cases cannot be predicted, it is likely that there will be some civil wars in which all the combatants attract outside backing, and thus they can call upon a steady stream of financial and military assistance. Civil wars that measure the power and will of the combatants must now measure the power and will of their external supporters. And the longer the wars go on, the more the citizens of the societies hosting the conflicts will suffer, and therefore the greater the number of internally displaced persons and refugees. These refugee populations are often seen as a security problem, which may motivate some of the neighbors to advocate more intensively for a settlement, but given the complexity of negotiating such a settlement with insiders and outsiders simultaneously, refugee-receiving countries may themselves be tempted to pick a side in the war.¹³

Finally, a changed structure of power should affect the nature of any achieved settlement, though the implications are a bit less clear. If one legacy of a war supported by consequential powers is that the combatants have become more capable than they would have otherwise, then settlements will require a visiting “leviathan” to police them. In other words, to keep such combatants safely in their respective corners, the peace-enforcement force will need to be quite capable itself. Those outside powers who supported one side or the other in the civil war probably possess the best forces for such a mission, but by virtue of their partisanship, they would not be trusted. Hence the peace-enforcement force may lack the capability to enforce against plausible spoilers. On the other hand, there may be a selection effect that cuts the other way. Any civil war with outside intervention that does achieve a negotiated peace will do so because the outsiders have agreed to it. Thus, the outsiders may

have the greatest influence on their respective sides keeping to the peace agreement. *Barry R. Posen*

The Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, has proven long, bloody, and immensely destructive. Disputes among the great powers stymied international preventive diplomacy, while direct and indirect military intervention by great and middle powers increased the strength of all sides, contributing to their ability and will to sustain the war. By 2016, there were at least four sides fighting within Syria, and at least five external states or clusters of states that had intervened on one or more sides.¹⁴ The war has many unique properties, and it would be wrong to attribute its terrible trajectory solely to the emergence of multipolarity.

Resurgent Russia made it difficult to coordinate international action to stabilize Syria. By spring 2013, Moscow had “issued three UN Security Council vetoes, bent over backwards to water down the Geneva Communiqué calling for a peaceful transition of authority, and fastidiously avoided joining the call for ‘Assad to go.’”¹⁵ Close observers suggest that Russia has many overlapping interests in Syria, an important one of which seems to be normative. Russia opposes regime change, including regime change under the rubric of humanitarian intervention or R2P, partly because of the risk that this could ultimately legitimate an international effort to bring about regime change in Russia.¹⁶ China seems to share Russia’s view, and also cast a veto in the UN Security Council in October 2011.¹⁷ Brazil, India, and South Africa all abstained from supporting the resolution because they, too, oppose outside intervention in internal political disputes.¹⁸

In this arena for normative contestation, Russia and China have both exploited the legitimacy of the Security Council to stifle the effort to develop a new intervention norm. In contrast to its role in the Balkans, in which the United States and its Western

allies bypassed the Security Council and attempted to assert that the victorious Cold War liberal coalition could legitimate its own wars, the United States has seemed less willing to go around the Council in the Syrian context. This may be because in a multipolar world, it is more important to the United States to protect the integrity of the sole institution in which great powers cooperate as equals; or it may be, as some have suggested, that Barack Obama was simply personally disinclined to go around the Council.

From the outset, the Syrian Civil War saw a pattern of external intervention in which bids for quick victory, in many cases enabled by outside aid, precipitated more outside intervention to stalemate initially successful offensives. These external interventions were often motivated by outsider interests in regional strategic objectives.¹⁹ Rather than producing either a victory or a hurting stalemate, competitive interventions produced a dynamic military competition, in which the competitors could always believe that with a bit more outside help, they might prevail. In contrast to the Bosnia endgame, in which the United States built up the Bosniak forces and then orchestrated a hurting stalemate to bring all to the table, no diplomatically useful balance of military forces has yet emerged in Syria. In Bosnia, almost all outside interveners worked in favor of the Croats or the Bosniaks; the Serbs could slowly be strangled. This is clearly not the case in Syria.

Precipitated by political activity across the Middle East associated with the “Arab Spring,” regime opponents in Syria launched protests and demonstrations starting in March 2011. Regime repression was often violent, but the regime also attempted to deal with the demonstrations politically, both with messaging and modest reforms. By May, however, the interactions between demonstrators and security forces became increasingly violent. The

United States and Europe imposed a range of economic sanctions on Syria in response to the regime’s behavior, but Russia and China vetoed the UN Security Council resolution calling for an end to the regime’s crackdown. During these early months of the struggle, regime opponents themselves turned increasingly to violence. The history of external intervention in this period has not been written, but by the last quarter of 2011, the “rebels” appeared well-armed and well-funded.²⁰ Observers focus on the rebels’ many weaknesses relative to the regime, which are real. But we should also note the rapid escalation of the fighting. Once the rebels began to have success against the regime, the regime found support abroad from both Iran and Russia. Iran seems to have committed itself to the regime in January of 2012.²¹ This precipitated still more outside assistance to the rebels, which prompted still more assistance to the regime. Theorists have observed this pattern in other wars, finding that it generally contributes to duration and destruction.²²

Finally, the complexity of the battle map, featuring multiple international actors, seems to be affecting Western notions of a settlement. As previously noted, the Syrian Civil War consists of four major internal players. From a simple conflict between regime and rebels, the map is now characterized by a multiplicity of rebel groups, many of which are at war with each other. The “Islamic State,” in fact, formed when one rebel faction split from the others and aligned with like-minded Iraqis. Of the remaining rebel groups, the other offshoots of Al Qaeda seem to be the strongest, though they do not control the larger coalition, which is loosely organized at best. The Kurds have emerged as a faction in their own right, aligning themselves with the United States to fight the Islamic State, but, to the extent possible, staying out of fights with other groups while they try to carve out an autonomous zone. Given the military power of

all these groups, outside interveners would have a difficult peacekeeping task ahead of them, even if those who had backed different sides could agree on a settlement. Increasingly, one hears of proposals based on *de facto* partition of the country.²³ In the early phases of the war in Bosnia, the United States in particular would not support such an outcome, though the Dayton Accords ultimately produced a nominally unitary state that left the principal combatants in control of their own regions. Even this agreement required enormous policing in its first years. In Syria, it appears that observers now have even smaller ambitions: stabilizing group borders along the existing battle lines, with the exception of the Islamic State, which insiders and outsiders seem to agree must be annihilated.

Recent and plausible future changes in the global distribution of power demand analysis of their potential impact. Here I have probed how a shift from a unipolar to a multipolar world might affect the problem of international cooperation to prevent, terminate, and settle civil wars. This was mainly a deductive enterprise, supplemented with examples from two cases: the Balkan Wars of the early 1990s and the Syrian Civil War. Cases selected for their strong exemplary utility cannot prove an argument. The analysis is, however, suggestive. Preventive diplomacy will likely be fraught with competitive behavior among the strong powers possessing the capacity to suppress an escalating civil conflict; and this same competitive behavior will likely add military and diplomatic resources to the competing civil war factions, allowing them all to believe that another round of fighting and external assistance will bring victory. Finally, the Darwinian process of extended warfare may so increase the combat power of the parties that any negotiated settlement will require very capable peace-enforcement/peacekeeping forces to separate the combatants

long enough for political and economic reconstruction to take hold. These problems will not characterize every civil war, because multipolarity also means that consequential powers are often busy with their own particular security problems. But they will be more prevalent than they were during the short lived “unipolar moment.”

If this analysis is correct, it provides a bit of advice for those statespersons who wish to take up the cause of the international management of civil wars. Diplomats may find it useful to be more circumspect in their purposes. Rather than assuming agreement, or the potential for agreement, among ideologically like-minded great powers, diplomats may need to return to a more traditional approach of finding elements of agreement among powers who largely see themselves in a competitive relationship. Post-Cold War approaches to civil war management tended to combine humanitarian and ideological (usually liberal) purposes. People needed help, but it was often believed that short-term help had to be combined with major political reform to ensure against future violence. Finding agreement on both sets of issues is difficult in any case, but will be much harder as more capable powers see more security interests at stake in these conflicts. The diplomacy of civil war management is no easier than any other kind of diplomacy, and cannot be reduced to a formula. But perhaps if outsiders reach for less, they will get more.

- ¹ James D. Fearon, "Civil War & the Current International System," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017); and Chuck Call and Susanna Campbell, "Is Prevention the Answer?" *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).
- ² Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 23–31; and Hendrik Spruyt, "Civil Wars as Challenges to the Modern International System," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017).
- ³ For the seminal discussion of the bipolar influence, see Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Causes and Military Effects," in *Theory of International Politics* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1979), 161–193; and Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Dædalus* 93 (3) (Summer 1964): 881–909.
- ⁴ See the graphs under "Aggregate Power of Developing States Set to Surpass U.S. Power by 2030," in National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, December 2012), 16. Challenging the notion that unipolarity is waning is Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers in the Twenty-First Century: China's Rise and the Fate of America's Global Position," *International Security* 40 (3) (Winter 2015/2016): 7–53.
- ⁵ Noel Anderson, *Competitive Intervention and Its Consequences for Civil Wars* (Ph.D. diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, September 2016) argues that the bipolar competition incentivized great-power intervention in civil wars, but fear of escalation to war between great powers at the same time made the superpowers chary of helping their clients achieve complete success, thus tending to lengthen civil wars. Anderson demonstrates this dynamic mainly during the Cold War, with reference to the bipolar U.S.-Soviet competition.
- ⁶ National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030*, 15–20; and National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends: Paradox of Progress* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2017), 25–28.
- ⁷ On the political barriers to preventive action within states and multilateral organizations, see Call and Campbell, "Is Prevention the Answer?"
- ⁸ Fearon notes that the average duration of civil wars has been going up, but those wars that do end are more likely to end with victory by one side than by negotiated settlements. See Fearon, "Civil War & the Current International System," Figure 3, "Accumulation of Long-Running Conflicts, 1945–2014." This tells us that civil wars are hard to end under any circumstances, but military success is often the key. In his essay in the forthcoming Winter 2018 issue of *Dædalus*, Sumit Ganguly notes that the twenty-five-year-long Sri Lankan civil war was brought to an end only with an extremely brutal offensive, after the Tamil Tigers were entirely isolated internationally and the regime received significant assistance from China and Pakistan. Sumit Ganguly, "Ending the Sri Lankan Civil War," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018).
- ⁹ Jean-Marie Guéhenno, "The United Nations & Civil Wars," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018) observes that local combatants have become sufficiently strong that even UN peacekeeping operations require "a much greater engagement from the best-equipped armies of the world, which must provide the UN with the mobility, firepower, and intelligence that will allow UN peacekeepers to act early and decisively."
- ¹⁰ Tanja A. Börzel and Sonja Grimm discuss the EU missions in Bosnia and Kosovo in "Building Good (Enough) Governance in Postconflict Societies & Areas of Limited Statehood: The European Union & the Western Balkans," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018). Their assessment tracks roughly with mine.
- ¹¹ Call and Campbell, "Is Prevention the Answer?"
- ¹² Internationalized armed conflicts are "conflicts in which one or more states contributed troops to one or both warring sides." Therése Pettersson and Peter Wallensteen, "Armed Conflicts, 1946–2014," *Journal of Peace Research* 52 (4) (2015): 536. See also Nancy Lindborg and Joseph Hewitt, "In Defense of Ambition: Building Peaceful & Inclusive Societies in a World on Fire," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018), in which the authors suggest: "Today internationalized inter-

nal conflicts account for one-third of all global conflicts, have contributed to the 500 percent increase in global battle deaths over the past ten years, and have pushed conflict deaths to a twenty-five-year high.” These data understate the problem, because they omit strictly indirect foreign intervention in the form of money and weaponry. Barry R. Posen

- ¹³ In her contribution to this volume, Sarah Lischer reviews why refugee-receiving states often perceive their guests as security problems, and how these concerns may contribute to the regional spread of conflict. Sarah Kenyon Lischer, “The Global Refugee Crisis: Regional Destabilization & Humanitarian Protection,” *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017).
- ¹⁴ Max Fisher, “Straightforward Answers to Basic Questions about Syria’s War,” *The New York Times*, September 18, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/19/world/middleeast/syria-civil-war-bashar-al-assad-refugees-islamic-state.html?_r=0.
- ¹⁵ Samuel Charap, “Russia, Syria and the Doctrine of Intervention,” *Survival* 55 (1) (2013): 35–41, esp. 36.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.* See also Roy Allison, “Russia and Syria: Explaining Alignment with a Regime in Crisis,” *International Affairs* 89 (4) (2013): 795–823, which reviews the range of reasons that Russia has supported the Syrian regime and suggests that an unwillingness to legitimate UN action to change regimes is one of the most important (817–820).
- ¹⁷ Allison, “Russia and Syria,” 799–800.
- ¹⁸ Howard La Franchi, “Syria Vote May Prove Costly for Three Countries Seeking More UN Clout,” *Christian Science Monitor*, October 5, 2011.
- ¹⁹ For a review of the interests and actions of the principal regional powers, especially Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar, and, to a lesser extent, Turkey, see Emile Hokayem, “Iran, the Gulf States and the Syrian Civil War,” *Survival* 56 (6) (2014): 59–86. Dating Turkey’s intervention to fall 2011, see Aaron Stein, “Turkey’s Evolving Syria Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2015-02-09/turkeys-evolving-syria-strategy>. On Turkey’s motivation to expand its regional influence, see International Institute for Strategic Studies, “Turkey’s Diminishing Policy Options in Syria,” *Strategic Comments* 22 (7) (2016).
- ²⁰ Roula Khalaf and Abigail Fielding-Smith date arms deliveries from Qatar through Turkey beginning in “early 2012,” which, by mid-2013, may have been worth \$3 billion. Roula Khalaf and Abigail Fielding-Smith, “How Qatar Seized Control of the Syrian Revolution,” *Financial Times*, May 17, 2013, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/f2d9bbc8-bdbc-11e2-890a-00144feab7de.html#>. See also “German Magazine says Libya Arms, Funds, Trains Syrian Rebels,” *Focus*, December 5, 2011, accessed through BBC Monitoring Europe, December 6, 2011; and “Lebanon: Arms Smugglers Thrive on Syrian Uprising,” *The Daily Star*, November 25, 2011, accessed through BBC Monitoring, November 26, 2011.
- ²¹ Hokayem, “Iran, the Gulf States and the Syrian Civil War,” 73–75.
- ²² Max Fisher, “Syria’s Paradox: Why the War Only Ever Seems to Get Worse,” *The New York Times*, August 26, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/27/world/middleeast/syria-civil-war-why-get-worse.html?_r=0.
- ²³ David Iaconangelo, “Would Decentralizing Syria Offer a Path to Peace?” *Christian Science Monitor*, September 17, 2016.

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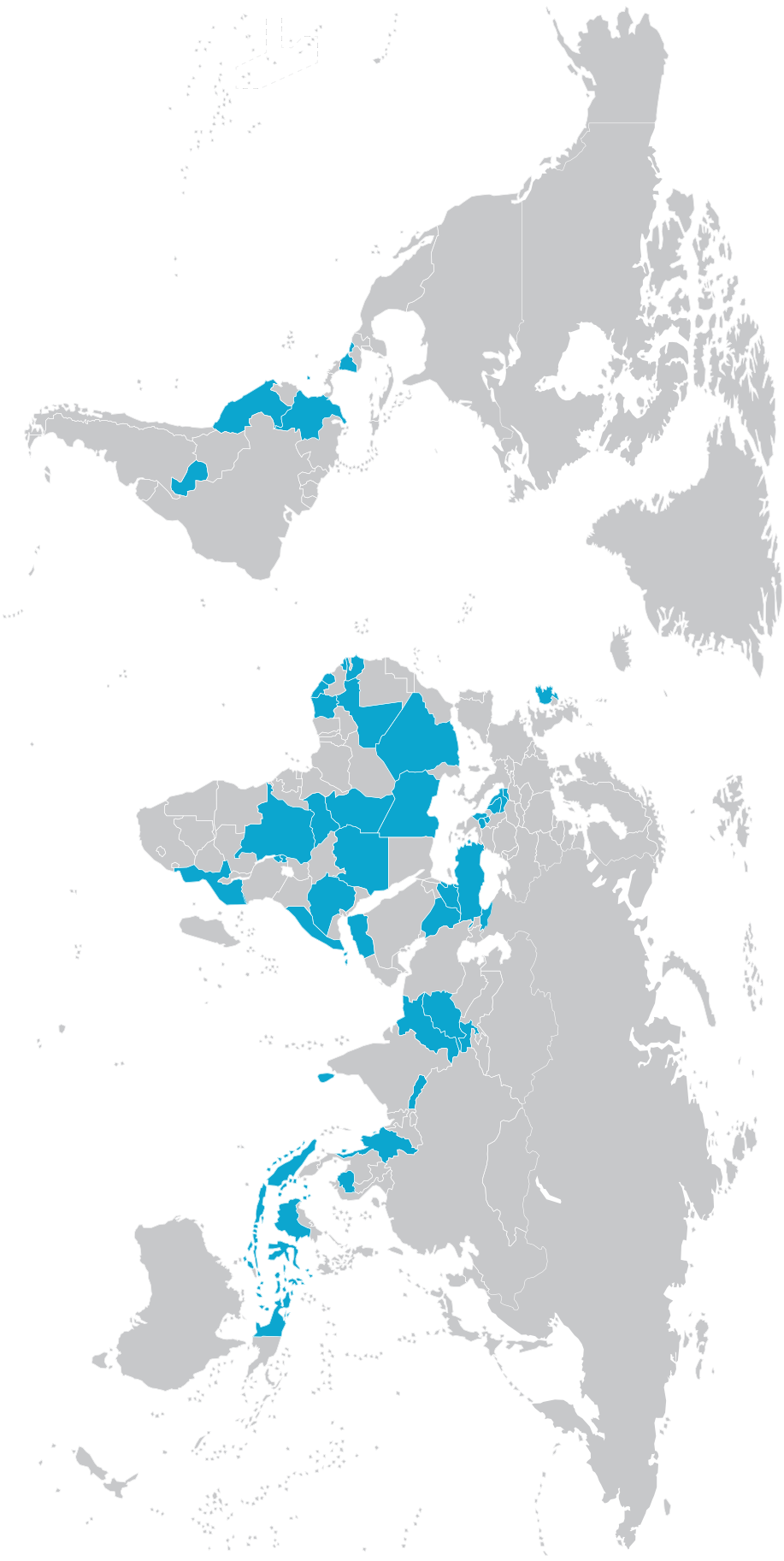
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Inside back cover: "Civil Wars around the World since 1990" depicts all of the countries engaged in civil war since 1990 (excluding Russia). Note: Although the First and Second Chechen Wars were fought between 1994 and 2009, and both resulted in large numbers of casualties, fighting was restricted to the North Caucasus. Given the size of Russia's landmass – one-eighth of the habitable world – color-coding all of Russia would have skewed the visual representation.

CIVIL WARS AROUND THE WORLD SINCE 1990



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