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Civil Wars & Global Disorder: Threats & Opportunities



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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.

JAMES D. FEARON, a Fellow of the American Academy since 2002, is the Theodore and Frances Geballe Professor in the School of Humanities and Sciences, Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, and Professor in the Department of Political Science at Stanford University. He has written for such journals as *Foreign Affairs*, *American Political Science Review*, and *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*.

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-

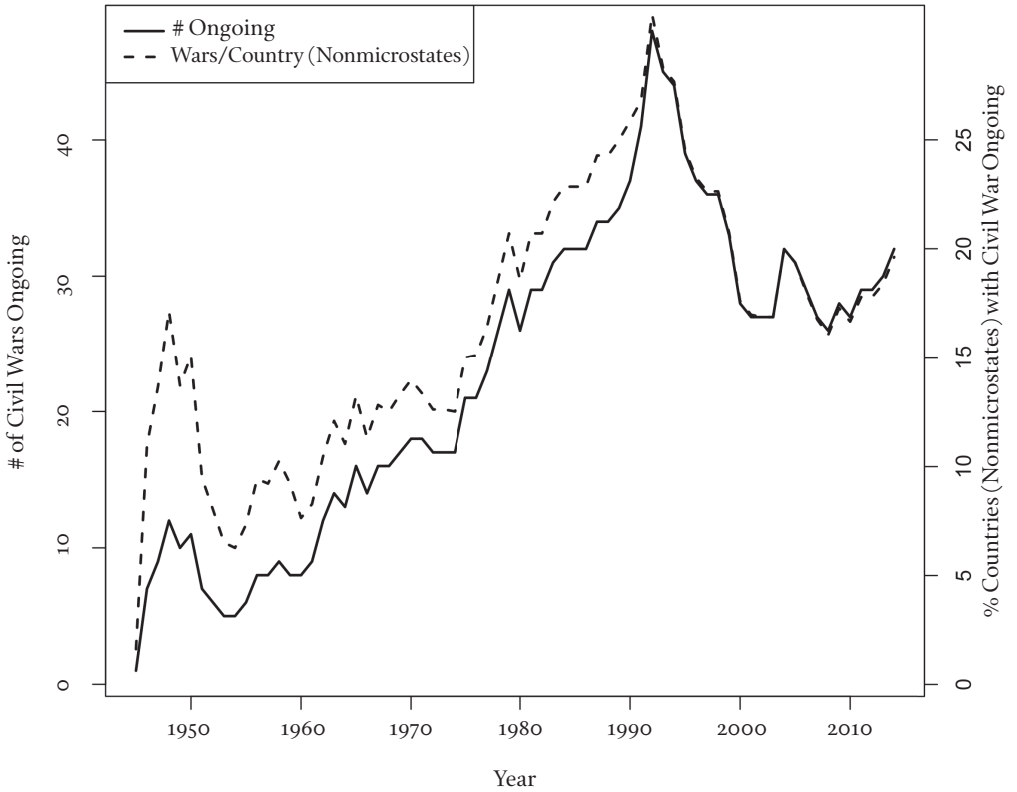
sically the same trends if we consider the share of independent countries with civil wars (the dotted line and right axis in Figure 1, calculated omitting microstates that had populations smaller than half a million in the year 2000). It is also clear from these data that “prevalence” is the right word. 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



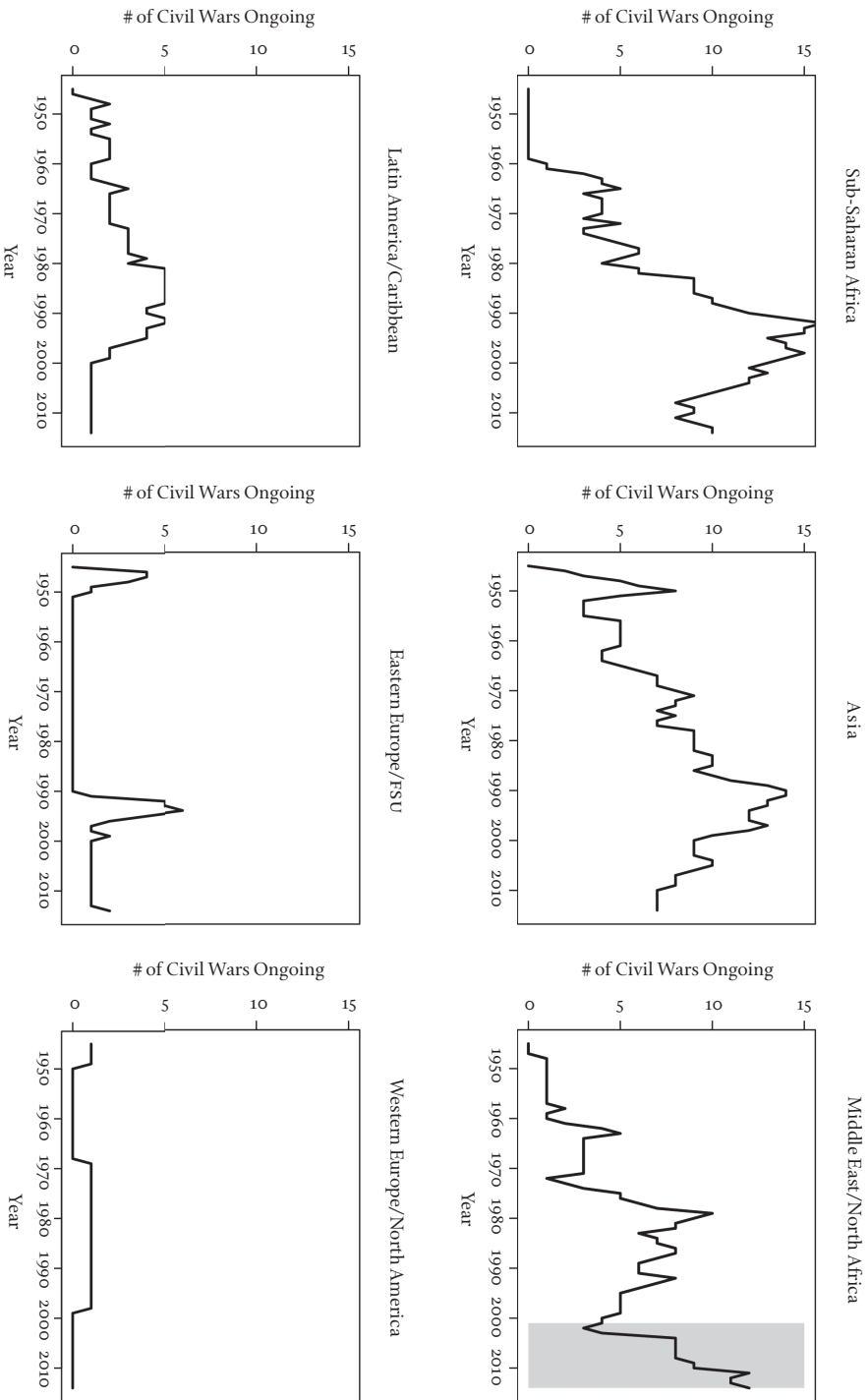
Source: Updated version of the civil war list described in James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review* 97 (1) (February 2003): 75–90. Available at <http://fearonresearch.stanford.edu/>.

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

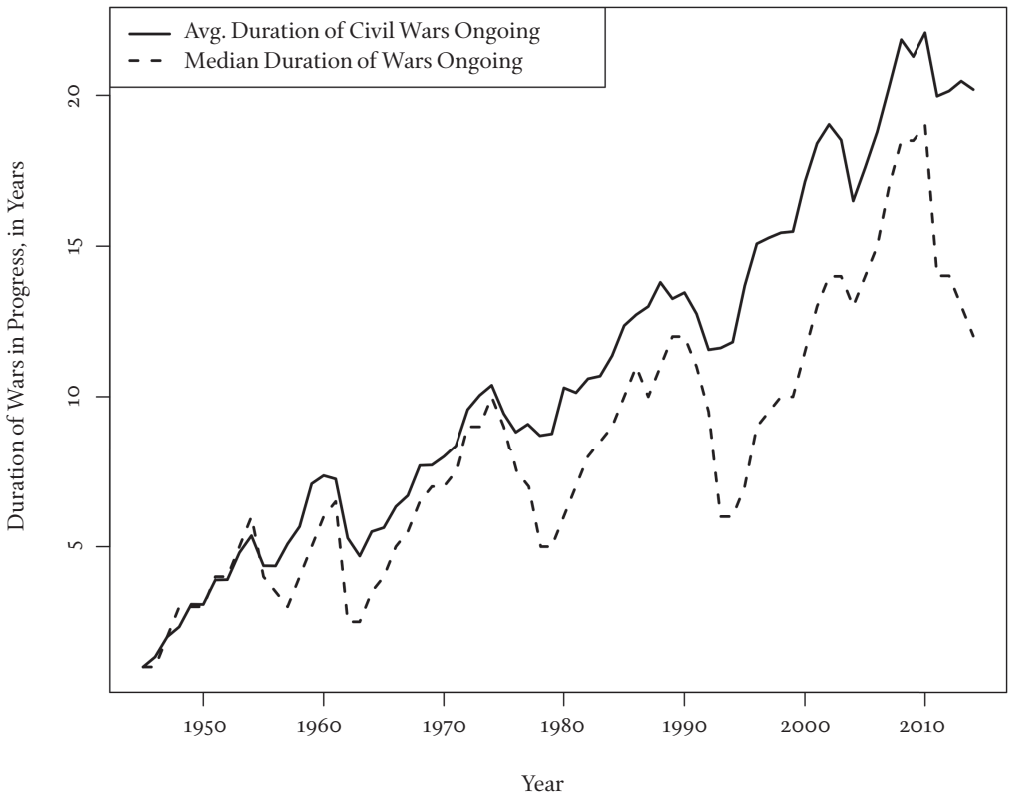
in which rebels have aimed to capture the central government, as opposed to winning greater autonomy or regional secession, has been fairly stable since the 1960s, varying without clear trend between 50 and 60 percent. The proportion in which the combatants have been organized primarily along ethnic 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).

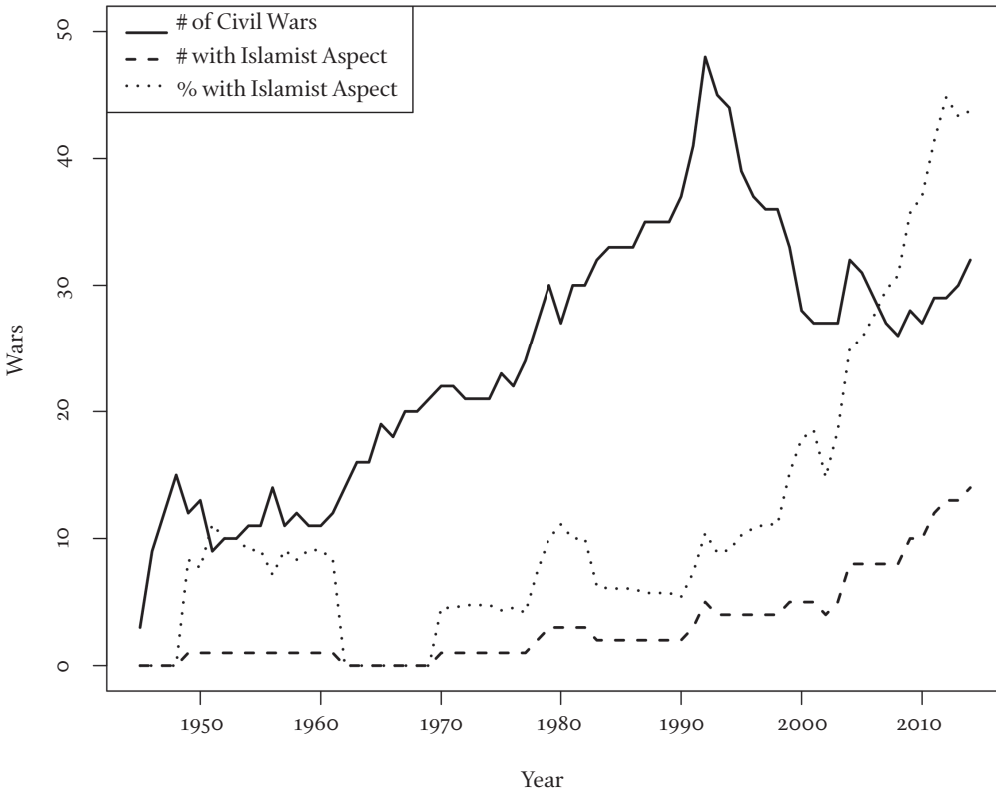
The spread and prevalence of civil war in the post-1945 UN system is related to the persistent gap between the rates at which civil wars have broken out and ended. But why have civil wars been easier to start than to end? This section sketches a two-part answer. First, decolonization produced an international 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

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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).

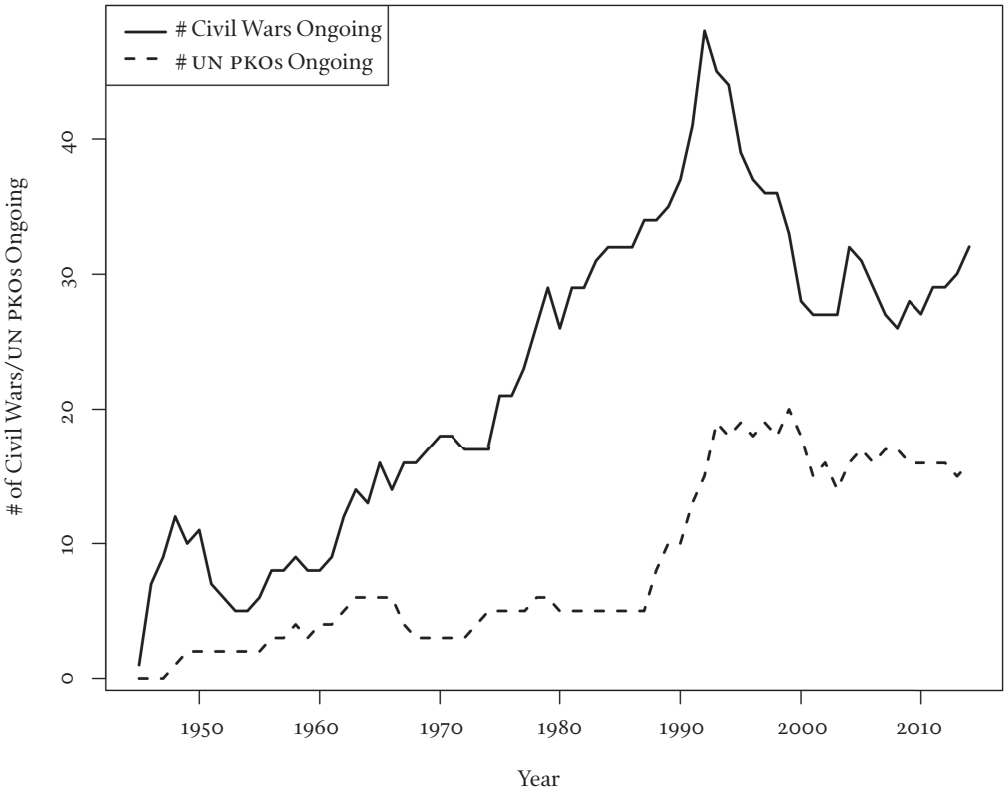
The international regime for civil war goes well beyond PKOs, however. They are supported and supplemented by the work and money of a host of intergovernmental, regional, and nongovernmental organizations, aid agencies, donor conferences, and election monitoring and human rights organizations – all with 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-

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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/Formal 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 Mashalauq, “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 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.

PAUL H. WISE is the Richard E. Berhman Professor of Child Health and Society and Professor of Pediatrics and Health Policy at the Stanford University School of Medicine, and Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University.

MICHELE BARRY is Senior Associate Dean of Global Health, Director of the Center for Innovation in Global Health, Professor of Medicine, Senior Fellow at the Woods Institute, and Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute at Stanford University.

(*See endnotes for complete contributor biographies.)

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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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-

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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& Michele Barry*

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

* Contributor Biographies: PAUL H. WISE is the Richard E. Berhman Professor of Child Health and Society and Professor of Pediatrics and Health Policy at the Stanford University School of Medicine, and Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University. He is the author of “The Epidemiologic Challenge to the Conduct of Just War: Confronting Indirect Civilian Casualties of War” (2017) and, with Gary Darmstadt, of “Confronting Stillbirths and Newborn Deaths in Areas of Conflict and Political Instability: A Neglected Global Imperative” (2015) and “Strategic Governance: Addressing Neonatal Mortality in Situations of Political Instability and Weak Governance” (2015).

MICHELE BARRY is Senior Associate Dean of Global Health, Director of the Center for Innovation in Global Health, Professor of Medicine, Senior Fellow at the Woods Institute, and Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute at Stanford University. She is a past President of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene and a member of the National Academy of Sciences, Medicine, and Engineering. She has published articles in such journals as *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, *Academic Medicine*, and *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

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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

STEPHEN BIDDLE is Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University. He is the author of *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (2004) and has published widely on national security and defense policy.

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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.
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- 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.
- ⁹ Douglass North, John Wallis, and Barry Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 20. For a similar analysis, see Stephen David, *Choosing Sides: Alignment and Realignment in the Third World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).
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- 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.
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- 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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- 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*.
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- 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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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.

AILA M. MATANOCK is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley.

MIGUEL GARCÍA-SÁNCHEZ is Associate Professor of Political Science at the Universidad de los Andes, Colombia.

(*See endnotes for complete contributor biographies.)

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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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.

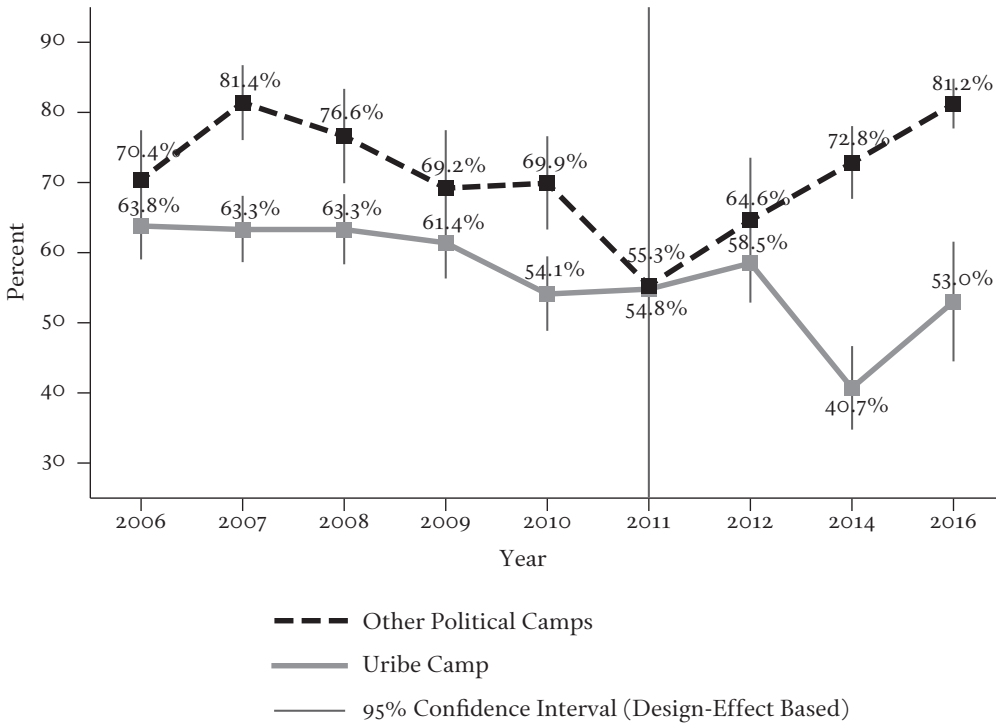
To further probe the plausibility of this argument, we map our variables by political camp in order to see if there are differences in opinions between Uribe supporters and other respondents. Using vote choice reports for the previous presidential election, we created a variable for the political camps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

Aila M. Matanock & Miguel García-Sánchez



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

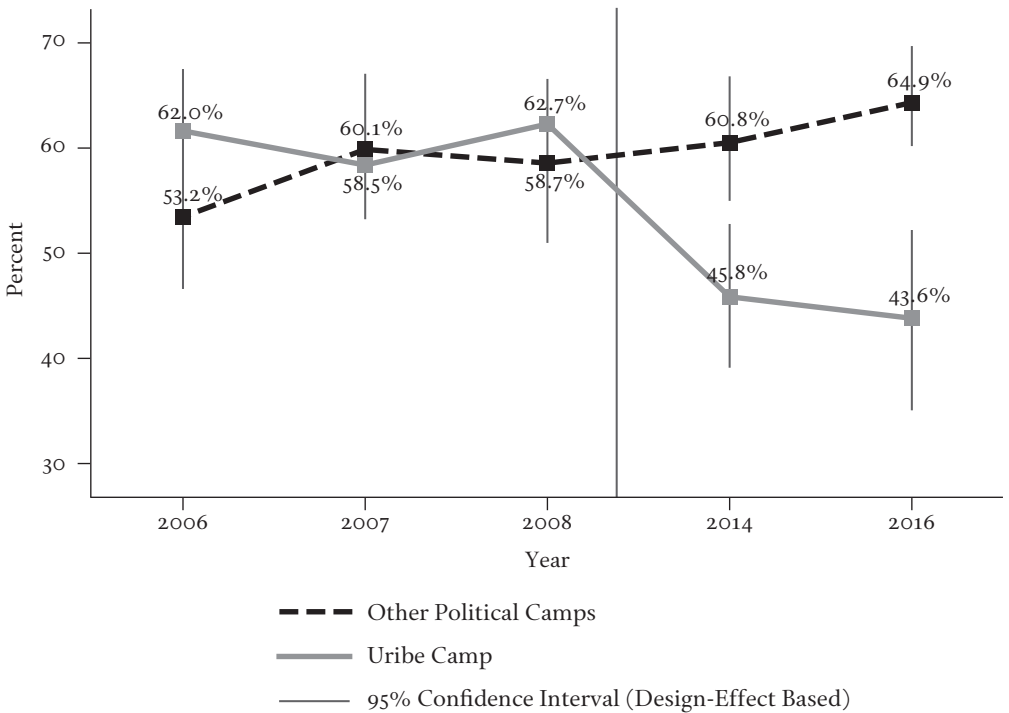
itudes toward a settlement has been greater than 50 percent for most of the period, though it was lower than the percentage of non-Uribistas supporting this option. In 2011, the two lines converged, perhaps because of mixed signals from the elites: the distance between the politicians' views on negotiations 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

* Contributor Biographies: AILA M. MATANOCK is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of *Electing Peace: From Civil Conflict to Political Participation* (2017) and has published articles in such journals as *International Security*, *Governance*, *Journal of Peace Research*, and *Annual Review of Political Science*.

MIGUEL GARCÍA-SÁNCHEZ is Associate Professor of Political Science at the Universidad de los Andes, Colombia. He is the author of *Los estados del país: Instituciones municipales y realidades locales* (with Mauricio García Villegas, Juan Carlos Rodríguez Raga, Javier Eduardo Revelo Rebolledo, and José Rafael Espinosa Restrepo, 2011) and has published articles in such journals as *Latin American Politics and Society*, *Política y Gobierno*, and *Revista de Ciencia Política*.

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- ³⁰ The coalition included the Liberal Party, *Cambio Radical*, the U Party, the Greens, segments of the Conservative Party and the left, and some social movements.
- ³¹ “Colombia Santos: FARC ‘to Keep Weapons until Referendum,’” BBC, September 7, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-23998567>.
- ³² Samples are representative of citizens of voting age. Information was gathered using stratified probability samples, with regions, municipality size, and urbanization as the main strata. Clusters were defined as house blocks (*manzanas*) for urban areas and hamlets (*veredas*) for rural areas. They were selected randomly in each municipality. In each cluster, six participants (three male, three female, divided into three age groups) were randomly selected by the enumerators. All samples consisted of approximately 1,500 face-to-face interviews.
- ³³ For example, on foreign policy, which may be removed from voters in a similar way to the conflict for many in Colombia (since it has been largely confined to rural regions in recent years), see John Zaller, “Elite Leadership of Mass Opinion: New Evidence from the Gulf War,” in *Taken by Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*, ed. W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 186–209; John Gray Geer, *From Tea Leaves to Opinion Polls: A Theory of Democratic Leadership* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Adam J. Berinsky, “Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites, and American Public Support for Military Conflict,” *The Journal of Politics* 69 (4) (2007): 975–997; and Matthew A. Baum and Philip B. K. Potter, “The Relationships between Mass Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 39–65.
- ³⁴ See, for example, Amanda Taub and Max Fisher, “Why Referendums Aren’t as Democratic as They Seem,” *The New York Times*, October 4, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/05/world/americas/colombia-brexit-referendum-farc-america-santos.html>.
- 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 Reconiliación*, 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/>.

⁴⁴ Kreutz, "How and When Armed Conflicts End."

⁴⁵ Monty G. Marshall, Keith Jagers, and Ted R. Gurr, "Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800 – 2004" (College Park: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, 2006).

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.

- ⁴⁸ On Colombia, see, for example, Javier Ciurlizza, “Post-Conflict in Colombia: The International Potential of Peace,” *Open Democracy*, March 9, 2016, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/colombia/post-conflict-colombia-international-potential-peace>; and “Colombia Creates Peace before Ending a War,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 22, 2016, <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/the-monitors-view/2016/0622/Colombia-creates-peace-before-ending-a-war>.
- ⁴⁹ Eli Berman and Aila M. Matanock, “The Empiricists’ Insurgency,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 18 (2015): 443–464.
- ⁵⁰ See Matthew Soberg Shugart, “Guerrillas and Elections: An Institutionalist Perspective on the Costs of Conflict and Competition,” *International Studies Quarterly* 36 (2) (1992): 121–151.
- ⁵¹ See, for example, Terry L. Karl, “Democracy by Design: The Christian Democratic Party in El Salvador,” in *The Central American Impasse*, ed. Giuseppe DiPalma and Laurence Whitehead (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 195–217; Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins University Press, 1986); and Barry R. Weingast, “The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law,” *The American Political Science Review* 91 (2) (1997).
- ⁵² Stephen J. Stedman, “Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes,” *International Security* 22 (2) (1997): 5–53; and Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” *International Security* 31 (1) (2006): 49–80.
- ⁵³ Wanis-St. John and Kew, “Civil Society and Peace Negotiations”; and Cunningham, “Responding to Multi-Party Civil Wars.”
- ⁵⁴ Elizabeth J. Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- ⁵⁵ Arthur Lupia and Mathew D. McCubbins, *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Lawrence LeDuc, “Referendums and Deliberative Democracy,” *Electoral Studies* 38 (2015): 139–148.
- ⁵⁶ See, for example, Taub and Fisher, “Why Referendums Aren’t as Democratic as They Seem.”
- ⁵⁷ See Nilsson, “Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace”; and Barnes, *Owning the Process*.
- ⁵⁸ Miguel García-Sánchez, Jorge Daniel Montalvo, and Mitchell A. Seligson, *Cultura política de la democracia en Colombia, 2015: Actitudes democráticas en zonas de consolidación territorial* (Bogotá: United States Agency for International Development, 2015); Ana Arjona, “War Dynamics and the ‘No’ Vote in the Colombian Referendum,” *Political Violence @ a Glance*, October 20, 2016, <http://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2016/10/20/war-dynamics-and-the-no-vote-in-the-colombian-referendum/>; and Michael Weintraub, “¿Qué Pasó?” *Foco Económico*, October 4, 2016, <http://focoeconomico.org/2016/10/04/que-paso-colombia/>.
- ⁵⁹ Nicolas Liendo and Jessica Maves Braithwaite, “Un paso hacia la paz? Determinants of Colombian Attitudes toward the Peace Process,” working paper at the University of Arizona, 2016; and Weintraub, “¿Qué Pasó?” Liendo and Braithwaite also find that political preference overwhelmingly predicts support; beyond that dominant predictor, they find some support for education and religion.
- ⁶⁰ See, for example, Thania Paffenholz, “Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Beyond the Inclusion–Exclusion Dichotomy,” *Negotiation Journal* 30 (1) (2014): 69–91.
- ⁶¹ Indeed, since peace agreements under democratic regimes cannot escape from the popular vote, even if a plebiscite is not used, general elections may easily turn into a referendum on the settlement, and such inclusivity may help shape attitudes when they do arise.