

“Good Enough” Governance

Humility and the Limits of Foreign Intervention in Response to Civil Wars and Intrastate Violence



Karl Eikenberry and
Stephen D. Krasner

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES

“The question shouldn’t be
what we ought to do,
but what we can do.”

—Rory Stewart, Member of Parliament
of the United Kingdom¹

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Cover images: *Top row, left to right:* Zambian peacekeepers from the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) patrol streets lined with looted items awaiting collection in Abyei, on the border of Sudan and newly independent South Sudan, May 24, 2011. UN Photo/Stuart Price, https://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/5832684753/. After crossing the Greek Macedonian border and having their papers processed, migrant families walk out of a transit area toward Gevgelija train station to find transport north to the Serbian border, September 3, 2015, Gevgelija, Macedonia. Photo by Dan Kitwood/Getty Images. *Bottom row, left to right:* U.S. Army soldiers share tactics and training with Nigerian Army soldiers in a remote military compound in Jaji, Nigeria, March 2, 2018. Photo by Capt. James Sheehan. Fighters from the former Al-Nusra Front—renamed Fateh al-Sham Front after breaking from Al Qaeda—advance on a road after they seized key positions south of Aleppo, August 6, 2016. Photo by OMAR HAJ KADOUR/AFP via Getty Images.

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Acknowledgments

The American Academy’s project on Civil Wars, Violence, and International Responses has sought to provide new tools to analyze, respond to, and, where possible, prevent the threats posed by the collapse of state authority associated with civil wars. The project has focused its work on two broad goals:

- To examine the transnational security threats emanating from civil wars and weak states; and
- To identify policy options to mitigate these threats and address civil wars in which U.S. national security interests are at stake.

This capstone publication, *“Good Enough” Governance: Humility and the Limits of Foreign Intervention in Response to Civil Wars and Intrastate Violence*, represents the work of the project cochairs, Ambassador Karl Eikenberry and Professor Stephen Krasner, to distill the policy implications from the essays included in the two issues of *Dædalus* published as part of the project. It also incorporates insights from a series of outreach and engagement activities with scholars, policy-makers, and practitioners across the United States and around the world.

The project has highlighted that civil wars can generate regional instability, great-power conflict, large-scale migration, and transnational terrorism while also contributing to the emergence of pandemic disease across the globe. While the characteristics of civil wars may vary, in most cases the opportunities for external international interventions are limited. Therefore, modesty and humility must drive the development of goals for any such attempts at intervention.

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David W. Oxtoby

President, American Academy of Arts and Sciences

Introduction

Since 1945, the major problem in the international system has been civil war rather than war among the major powers. While intrastate rather than interstate conflict is the defining characteristic of civil wars today, their consequences are far-reaching and carry implications for many actors outside those directly involved in the conflict. For many Americans, the events of September 11, 2001, brought to light the notion that actors from and developments in poor states can do a great deal of harm.

States with civil violence can generate threats that include, but are not limited to, transnational terrorism, pandemics, mass migration and refugee flows, and regional instability. The extent of these threats and what can be done about them is still a matter of debate. The threats are complex and do not solely originate from civil wars. However, the severe risks they pose warrant reevaluation of existing U.S. approaches and careful evaluation of future options for preventing and mitigating intrastate violence. The risks cannot be mitigated by quixotic interventions unrealistically undertaken in the hope of quickly and cheaply delivering externally engineered political and societal change to target states. Nor are risks abated by building walls high and defending at the shoreline. More modest and specific goals aimed at realistic outcomes might allow the United States and the international community to successfully prevent or limit the damage that can result from civil wars.

In 2015, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences invited a group of experts to reflect on these questions as part of a project titled “Civil Wars, Violence, and International Responses.” The results of this project, which we cochaired, are found in two issues of *Dædalus* that were published in Fall 2017 and Winter 2018. The authors’ essays are referenced throughout this paper. In addition, with select *Dædalus* contributors, we held meetings with experts around the world. These included sessions in New York with representatives of the United Nations (UN) and the Council on Foreign Relations; in Washington, D.C., with U.S. government officials; and in Beijing, Geneva, and Abuja with academics and research analysts. This paper is a synthesis of these conversations, data, and observations; the policy recommendations are our own and not necessarily those of the *Dædalus* authors.

A surprising theme emerged through this work. The universal adoption of the sovereign state system coupled with weak institutions in many new countries has often led to instability and civil strife. Nevertheless, in

the post–Cold War era, this strife has not generally threatened the stability of the system or more powerful states with stronger institutions. The threats to stability and the international system seen today primarily come from one region: the broader Middle East and North Africa. Other areas, too, have suffered from civil wars, but these conflicts, while devastating for the people in the affected areas, have not threatened the overall stability of the international system in the same way. This could change for the worse, however, should the world experience several years of economic depression with a concomitant rise in popular discontent in already-poor states and the growth of proxy warfare on behalf of major and regional powers, as witnessed in Syria, Yemen, and Libya. Richard Gowan and Stephen Stedman argue in their *Dædalus* contribution that in many places the “standard treatment” (a combination of mediation and UN or regional peacekeeping forces, along with some foreign assistance) has worked surprisingly well for responding to civil wars in the post–Cold War era.² However, external actors are still seriously limited in their ability to put countries confidently on the path to consolidated democracy and prosperity. This leaves unresolved challenges and the potential for future violence.

The Academy’s “Civil Wars, Violence, and International Responses” project has yielded several major conclusions:

- Under certain circumstances, civil wars pose threats to major powers and regional stability. Two of the key threats are transnational terrorism and pandemic disease, both of which can have devastating global reach. In their *Dædalus* essay, Paul Wise and Michele Barry explore the “potential that civil wars can elevate the risk that an infectious outbreak will emerge.”³ The same logic applies to transnational terrorism. Civil wars can also generate mass migration, regional instability, and conflict among major powers.
- The nature of civil wars varies largely based on the motivations of participants. Where combatants are motivated by material objectives and accept the principles of the existing international order, most notably state sovereignty, the “standard treatment” can be effective. This is especially true in situations where the great powers are in agreement and the combatants have reached a stalemate, or where one of the combatants wins, as was the case in Sri Lanka in 2009. However, in situations where combatants reject the existing international order, as with some transnational ideological movements today, the “standard treatment” will not work.

- Intervention presents a variety of potential pitfalls for foreign powers who set goals that are unrealistic, overly ambitious, or not shaped by local political realities. This is true not only for interventions employing military force but for other types of intervention, including technical assistance and foreign aid. Ambitious efforts to sustain and increase economic growth, eliminate corruption, and consolidate democracy may be counterproductive if they are incompatible with the interests of local elites. Externally brokered political settlements enforced by the UN or regional peacekeepers have proven to be a relatively low-cost option for achieving security and stability over the last thirty years. However, the “standard treatment” works only under certain circumstances.

Civil wars are complex and present the United States, its partners, and the decision-makers in multinational and international organizations with difficult choices. These are complex problems that the U.S. government cannot ignore. This paper discusses the following policy principles that we, as project cochairs, identified over the course of the project’s research and outreach phases:

- Goal-setting should be approached with modesty and humility because there are limits to what external intervention can achieve.
- Even modest goals should come with strict periodization to avoid overreach.
- External intervention should focus on what is realistically achievable: “good enough” governance. This means prioritizing relative security, stability, the functioning of some essential institutions, and moderate economic growth, even when that means accepting some difficult trade-offs.
- Military development assistance, diplomatic doctrines, and associated training must be revised in accordance with this emphasis on modest, realistic goals.
- When conditions make the prospects for success realistic, support UN-led application of the “standard treatment.”

Civil Wars and Threats

Trends in and the Nature of Civil Wars and Intrastate Violence

Since the end of World War II, the number of wars among great powers has dropped precipitously. With the exception of the Korean War, no war since 1945 has directly involved more than one major power. Various explanations have been offered for this decline, including changes in fundamental values, the spread of nuclear weapons, economic growth and increasing economic interdependence, and the strength of international norms and institutions.⁴ We have not attempted to adjudicate this discussion.

As the number of wars involving great powers has decreased, however, the number of civil conflicts has increased just as precipitously. That number peaked in 1992 at 48 but has since decreased and stabilized at around 30 civil wars at any given time.⁵ Despite this decline, as James Fearon points out in his *Dædalus* essay, one region has remained particularly afflicted: the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The number of civil wars associated with jihadi movements has also increased.

The increase in civil wars is partly the result of the triumph of sovereignty. At the end of World War II, there were about sixty states. Today the UN has 193 members. Many of these new states are poorly governed, as William Reno argues in his *Dædalus* essay. Numerous states have assumed the responsibilities of modern states but lack the resources to meet these responsibilities effectively. Power is highly personalized in many of these states, and their leaders seek to weaken or dissolve institutions and undermine social groups that might breed opposition.⁶

Historically, civil wars have typically ended in one of two ways: outright victory by one of the parties or power-sharing.⁷ Power-sharing is difficult; without a third party, it is challenging to make and execute credible commitments. Since the end of the Cold War, the UN has been the most important facilitator of credible third-party commitments. The UN's ability to act is constrained, however, by the need to first reach agreement among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. The "Peacekeeping Operation Plus" (PKO-plus) regime, which involves mediation, peacekeepers, *and* foreign assistance, has not worked in every case, but it has worked in many.⁸

The decline in the number of civil wars since the mid-1990s is plausibly related to the PKO-plus regime, which has brought an end to many

intrastate conflicts. However, as Fearon argues, the PKO-plus regime is especially difficult to implement in the MENA region because of disagreements among the five permanent Security Council members and other regional powers and because external intervention is likely to increase the appeal of jihadi movements. Proxy wars have become more common, complicating policy responses by major powers operating primarily through the UN. Peacekeeping operations have been more common outside the Middle East, as Table 1 shows.⁹

Table 1: Number of Peacekeeping Operations since 1989, by Region

Region	Number of peacekeeping operations ended or ongoing after 1989
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	6
Asia	10
Sub-Saharan Africa	30
Eastern Europe	8
Latin America/Caribbean	9

Notes: Regional groups are defined based on UN geographic regions, except for the MENA region, which is based on the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies regional grouping. Specific countries and subregions included are: **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)**—Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE, and Yemen; **Asia**—including Central Asia, Eastern Asia, Southeastern Asia, Southern Asia (except Iran), and Western Asia; **Sub-Saharan Africa**—including Sudan, South Sudan, and Western Sahara, plus all other Eastern Africa, Middle Africa, Western Africa, and Southern Africa countries; **Eastern Europe**—including Eastern and Southern Europe; and **Latin America/Caribbean**—including Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. We are grateful to James Fearon for highlighting this regional variation prior to 2014 in his *Dædalus* essay for this project.

Sources: Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, “Middle East and North Africa,” accessed November 13, 2020, <https://fsi.stanford.edu/research/region/middle-east-and-north-africa>. UN geographic regions are drawn from UN Statistics Division, “Methodology: Standard Country or Area Codes for Statistical Use (M49),” United Nations Statistics Division, accessed November 13, 2020, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49>. UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, “List of Peacekeeping Operations, 1948–2019,” accessed November 13, 2020, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/unpeacekeeping-operationlist_3_1_0.pdf.

Civil wars have also ended because of a decisive victory by one side, as in the case of Sri Lanka. As Sumit Ganguly writes in his essay for *Dædalus*, government forces destroyed the Tamil rebels who began the war in 1983 in response to repressive policies dating back to the colonial era. Decisive victory did not, however, mean that the grievances that led to civil war had been resolved. The victory of government forces over the rebels brought a definitive end to the war but did not remove the seeds of the conflict.¹⁰

Assessing the Threats to International Security and to U.S. National Security

Specialists disagree about the threat posed by failed states and weak regimes to international and, especially, U.S. national security. Some argue that the threat to those outside the state in question is minimal, even when internal misery is great. In their contributions to the project, for example, Stewart Patrick, Bruce Jones, and Stephen Stedman express skepticism about the external threats posed by failing states. Smaller states possessing weapons of mass destruction (WMD), such as North Korea and Pakistan, may be categorized as weak but do not represent a case likely to be replicated in failed states wracked by civil war. Jones and Stedman point out that close monitoring of these government actors could help mitigate the threat posed by weaker and possibly brittle states with WMD. If Pakistan or North Korea were to collapse into civil violence, the consequences could be particularly disastrous. Nonstate actors might procure nuclear weapons, with severe consequences, though the chances of this happening are limited.

Other authors see the threats as more substantial. Martha Crenshaw, Tanisha Fazal, and Stathis Kalyvas point out that jihadi rebels pose a particular problem. Such actors reject the modern state system and the idea of sovereignty and are often loath to make compromises. The “standard treatment” has not proven effective for ending conflicts involving such groups.

Thomas Risse and Eric Stollenwerk argue that poor governance has been the norm rather than the exception in many parts of the world. However, some problems are more likely to be spawned by poorly governed states. Thus, Wise and Barry note that global health structures are “largely incapable of operating effectively in countries with poor health systems and weak governance” and that global pandemics can threaten international order. States experiencing internal violence pose significant risks for the spread of easily transmittable, lethal infectious diseases.¹¹ Polio, for example, has persisted in war-torn regions of Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Pakistan.¹²

As Wise and Barry point out, most new diseases have jumped from animals to human beings. Further, research shows state failure can aid the spread of infectious disease, as with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the

rise in *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* drug resistance. Vegard Eldholm, John H. Pettersson, Ola B. Brynildsrud, and colleagues argue that armed conflict and population displacement are likely to have aided the export of this drug-resistant bacteria from Central Asia to war-torn Afghanistan and beyond.¹³ And, as we saw in 2020, even China, which has invested extensively in its public health system, can become the source of a global pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2 has made even clearer the scale of the threat posed by infectious disease. While the effects of the current healthcare crisis are yet to be fully assessed, they will likely include severe political and economic consequences, particularly as the pandemic worsens in those countries with poor healthcare systems. Moreover, novel pathogens that are more contagious than COVID-19 and have higher mortality rates will likely evolve in the years ahead—or be artificially engineered.

Transnational terrorism associated with civil war poses a challenge for states and international institutions. Crenshaw writes that civil wars can benefit terrorist organizations by offering safe havens, increasing opportunities to expand their recruiting base, and providing justification for strikes against their homelands and the interests of intervening states.¹⁴ Fazal offers that negotiations with religionist rebels who profess a belief in the sovereignty of the divine can be futile, making conflict termination difficult.¹⁵

Additionally, refugee flows from states with high levels of intrastate violence, as Sarah Lischer points out, have increased.¹⁶ This has posed a challenge to some developed states where humanitarian ideals have proven to be shallow. Opportunities for transnational crime and illicit economies, including the illegal drug and arms trades, increase in countries with poor internal security, but law enforcement still operates in a world of sovereign states. Vanda Felbab-Brown argues that attempts to control transnational crime may be counterproductive, undermining counterterrorism efforts or causing further spillover of criminality to other nations, sometimes worsening the everyday reality for common citizens as well.¹⁷

Additional Considerations

One of the defining characteristics of the contemporary period is the break between the ability to do harm and underlying capabilities. The ability to do harm is limited by available technology. An individual with a knife or handgun can kill only a few people. In the contemporary world an individual armed with nuclear weapons, dirty nuclear bombs, or biologicals could kill hundreds, thousands, or even millions. As the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, in which commercial airliners were turned into missiles that killed about three thousand people, have

shown, individuals or a small number of people can now cause death at levels previously associated only with wars and organized violence.

Two of the defining international developments of this century have thus not been events engineered in Washington, Beijing, or Brussels, but, on the one hand, a terrorist attack masterminded by the leader of Al Qaeda from an impoverished and internationally isolated Afghanistan, and, on the other hand, the spread of the novel coronavirus like a bolt out of the blue. Hence, policy-makers are faced with the difficult problem of knowing how to allocate resources to deal with problems in regions of the world about which they know and usually care little until the moment of crisis arrives.

Additional uncertainties arise with a dictator's sudden demise, either as the result of internal revolt or because of an outside power's intervention to effect regime change. The collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001 led to a boom in Afghanistan's poppy cultivation. The ouster of Saddam Hussein in 2003 ushered in years of mayhem and large numbers of civilian deaths in Iraq; it also opened the door to Iranian influence and the eventual rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) caliphate. President Barack Obama declared in 2011 that Bashar al-Assad, Syria's despot, must go. Implicit in his declaration was the belief that good governance and stability would follow.¹⁸ Assad remains in power, but his weakened grip has led to immense human suffering, contributed to the rise of right-wing nationalist parties in European countries that received waves of Syrian refugees, and provided both Moscow and Tehran with regional influence unimagined one decade earlier.

The same argument can be applied to the collapse of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya. The toppling of such tyrants as Gaddafi and Hussein may offer a sense of justice to those who suffered under their oppression but does not necessarily prevent even greater humanitarian suffering, high levels of intrastate violence, significant displacement of people desperate to reach areas of political stability and economic opportunity, and openings for America's global rivals. Given these security risks, the United States and other countries cannot ignore poorly governed or weak malign states; nor can it simply transform them into well-governed democratic polities on a path to Denmark.

Possible Policy Responses

Factors Impacting Policy Options and Responses

Shifts in the Balance of Global Power

Following the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, the United States was the dominant power in the international system. Since about 2005, some scholars have argued, the international system has been shifting toward multipolarity. Several powers have emerged to challenge U.S. leadership. Moreover, the United States under President Donald Trump seems to be accelerating its diplomatic and military disengagement globally, save for the Indo-Pacific region. This trend may be slowed but likely not reversed by subsequent American administrations. Moreover, the rise of more ambitious regional powers moving into vacuums created by the waning U.S. influence and physical presence further complicates the geopolitical landscape.

Barry Posen observes that this shift in the distribution of power “seems likely to magnify disagreements about how states suffering civil wars should be stabilized, limit preventive diplomacy, produce external intervention that will make for longer and more destructive wars, and render settlements more difficult to police.”¹⁹ This leads to more complicated interventions, negotiated settlements, and an increased likelihood of proxy wars. Agreement among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council is elusive, making the “standard treatment” or PKO-plus regime less accessible as a solution to civil conflict.²⁰ We have seen this in Syria, Yemen, Libya, and elsewhere in the Middle East. Rising multipolarity also increases the likelihood that external spoilers will be present and will make peace processes more complex.²¹

Fearon points out that not only are civil wars lasting longer, but the average duration of UN peacekeeping operations is also increasing.²² During a series of outreach conversations that the Academy’s project on Civil Wars, Violence, and International Responses conducted with the UN in New York, experts there expressed concern about the UN’s limited logistical capabilities and capacity to respond to conflict. UN PKOs have worked very successfully under certain circumstances, but we are hearing more frequently that they might not be a sustainable solution going forward.

First, because American military interventions during the post-World War II era have often transformed what in reality are excruciatingly complex, intractable sociopolitical problems into binary armed struggles

between the forces of good and evil, UN decisions to commit forces to maintain peace often serve to delay, indefinitely, the harder task of negotiating a lasting end to the violence. Second, there is no consensus regarding what models of political and economic development are appropriate. The United States, Canada, and the West European democratic states have traditionally employed classic liberal approaches emphasizing the establishment of inclusive political and open-market systems, whereas China and other donors focus on infrastructure and economic growth. During conversations between our project members and experts in Beijing and Geneva, practitioners and scholars reinforced the notion that the current model of humanitarianism (developed during the Cold War) no longer works as it was intended. They argued for the adoption of more limited objectives.²³

Ruling Coalitions and Elites' Goals and Interests

Lacking language skills and cultural awareness, and often unwilling or unable to create needed expertise over time, outsiders have great difficulty truly understanding the political realities in poorly governed states ruled by factions driven to retain and not share power. Moreover, elites have every reason to prevaricate, especially if they believe this will benefit them financially or politically. In his *Dædalus* essay, William Reno writes, “state failure is rooted in decades of personalist rule, as leaders have sought to fragment and disorganize institutions and social groups that they thought would be possible bases of opposition.” Reno adds that personalist authoritarian regimes in states with histories of political violence differ from traditional authoritarian regimes because personalist regimes “rely upon capable institutions to suppress political challenges.”²⁴ This makes outside attempts at system-level transformation particularly difficult.

Typically, at least some amount of foreign aid comes with running a government. However, Steven Heydemann remarks that patterns of economic governance during civil wars do not vary significantly from prewar patterns of economic governance, as seen with Syria, Libya, and Yemen. Further, “parties to conflict compete to capture and monopolize the benefits that flow from international recognition.” Violent conflict does not necessarily allow for postconflict institutional reform and, as with civil wars in the Middle East, does not easily yield to negotiated solutions.²⁵

While negotiated settlements and power-sharing agreements are viable avenues through which to end a civil war, they can be difficult to construct, especially when both sides are vying for control at the national level.²⁶ External checks such as election monitors can be manipulated. In Iraq, the United States attempted to install a government that shared power among Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish parties. Elections, however, gave power to

the majority Shia sect, which preferred “exclusion, peripheral Sunni insurgency, and reliance on Iranian-allied militias to the more risky course of power-sharing at the center.”²⁷

Aila Matanock and Miguel García-Sánchez do not argue against elections but caution that referendums can “amplify elite divisions” and thus “should not be employed to overcome elite opposition in order to strengthen peace processes.”²⁸ Instead, elite-led negotiations that “seek to satisfy each faction” may have a better chance of resulting in a signed agreement. As efforts in Colombia demonstrated, “including representatives of the voters . . . may be a way to achieve some degree of inclusivity without the same risk of amplifying elite divisions.”²⁹

Other factors can also hamper efforts to impose change from the outside. Corruption is hard to eradicate. Rent-seeking practices designed to increase profit for politicians and other elites can easily be moved from one part of the government to another. Existing institutional frameworks are used to maintain corrupt systems even after ruling powers are removed. Reno calls attention to the fact that the recession of formal state institutions does not leave ungoverned spaces in their wake; rather, “the dense networks of personalist political systems occupy that social space: ungovernable in a conventional sense, but an important element of a political system that is based upon using indirect means of domination to limit peoples’ capacities to organize politically.”³⁰

Citing West Africa as an example, Felbab-Brown highlights the fact that many ruling elites, fearing coups, allow their militaries and political institutions to crumble, leaving states susceptible to dangerous criminal flows.³¹ External pressure to reform can lead to internal collapse and greater, prolonged violence.³² This, in turn, can lead to regional instability and international criminal networks that are nearly impossible to contain.

Even countries such as Brazil and Turkey, with relatively high per capita incomes, have elected individuals whose commitment to democracy is shaky. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s party in Turkey, the AKP, recently lost elections in the country’s four largest cities, including Istanbul, where the initial election was negated by the election commission on flimsy grounds (the AKP candidate then lost even more decisively in the rerun held in late June 2019). Whether Erdoğan will go quietly if he loses reelection in 2023 remains to be seen.

In some cases, especially where significant external motivations are present, these challenges can be overcome, as with Croatia and Serbia.³³ However, norms and institutions usually take decades or even centuries to take shape and become entrenched. Great Britain, as Fukuyama reminds us, struggled through centuries of bloody civil wars and domestic turmoil before a commitment to nationhood and rule of law took hold.³⁴ Foreign

interveners, eager to declare an early victory, often have unrealistic expectations about the pace of political and social change that can be imposed from the outside. Even when norms do appear to shift, it is not always clear how external actors can help sustain the momentum and avoid reversals. A misalignment of interests internally or externally, as well as clashing norms, can mean the quick failure of any well-intentioned efforts aimed at successful state-building or governance-building.³⁵

Conflicts Involving Actors Who Do Not Seek Traditional State Sovereignty

Conflicts associated with jihadi rebels are particularly challenging. Fazal categorizes those who use religious justification for their cause and reject the current Westphalian notion of the state as “religionist rebels.” For these rebels, including members of ISIS and other groups across the MENA region, sovereignty derives not from the state but from the divine. As such, these groups are unlikely to engage in formal state relations or negotiations and do not accept territorial limits on their sovereignty claims.³⁶

Hendrik Spruyt reinforces the notion that civil wars involving groups that reject the Westphalian system pose a unique challenge and argues that “the degree to which the combatants challenge Westphalian principles should guide policy responses.”³⁷ While groups with local grievances should be differentiated from those with international agendas, Fazal concludes that history shows religionist rebels, while brutal in their methods, face natural limits and “do not, ultimately, present a long-term threat to the state system.”³⁸ From this stems policy options for addressing international terrorism, the main threat to emanate from these conflicts.³⁹

Seyoum Mesfin and Abdeta Beyene provide a concrete example of how varying degrees of sovereignty—actual and aspirational—can influence policy responses.⁴⁰ In the Horn of Africa, the “buffer zone” has emerged as a key security strategy for ensuring security and relative stability for a state and its population. Through buffer-zone areas such as the “Republic of Somaliland” and the “Puntland State of Somalia,” Ethiopia both insulates itself from the violence and instability present in Somalia and ensures relatively stability and security for people living in these zones.⁴¹ This is particularly significant given the presence of Al-Shabaab, a Somalia-based terrorist group that threatens the region’s security and stability.

(Mis)alignment of Information and Interests

Following nearly two decades of military commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, the American public holds a deep skepticism of large-scale military or foreign assistance interventions, especially those not linked to a clear and present danger (and despite the fact that such interventions can be more effective for mitigating and preventing violence over the long term).⁴² Obama's and Trump's approaches to national security and foreign involvement reflect this. Stephen Biddle posits that "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."⁴³ However, he argues that small footprints usually mean small payoffs, and SFA is not a substitute for large unilateral troop deployments. This is largely due to interest misalignments between the provider (or principal—e.g., the United States in the case of Iraq) and the recipient (or agent—e.g., the Iraqi Shia political elite). While U.S. security assistance conspicuously rewards the efforts of those states that profess themselves to be at war with the most prominent international terrorist groups, these same states—consumed by a daunting array of other security threats—may elect to use this assistance in unforeseen ways. Diverging interests, information asymmetry, and moral hazard all lead to outcomes that are other than those initially desired.⁴⁴ Fearon suggests that "for many civil war-torn or 'postconflict' societies, 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."⁴⁵

Clare Lockhart advocates for an approach that falls between those that have been implemented most heavily over the last two decades, namely, military forces and large-scale civilian assistance (Afghanistan and Iraq), minimal involvement (Syria), or removing a dictator and hoping a short-term peace deal will lead to long-term success (Libya). Lockhart offers a "sovereignty strategy" that involves carefully sequencing and establishing key state functions over an extended period to gain public trust and meet international obligations.⁴⁶ Risse and Stollenwerk alternatively argue that engaging in governance-building in weak states is essential for effectively and efficiently preventing conflict, whereas strategies today frequently overstate the importance of state-building.⁴⁷ Fearon and Biddle point out that, whatever the degree of statehood, the challenges to making sure external and internal interests are aligned, which is essential for successful conflict prevention over both the short and long term, are significant.⁴⁸

Policy Options

Standard Treatment

The “standard treatment”—the combination of mediation and UN or regional peacekeeping forces, together with limited foreign aid—is a viable, often successful method for responding to civil wars and internal violence under the right conditions. Where combatants adhere to the existing international system and the major powers are largely in agreement, the use of UN peacekeepers and mediation has quelled violence and brought stability to post-Cold War cases of civil violence. This is especially true in instances in which a great or regional power was able to commit resources, as George Downs and Gowan and Stedman have found.⁴⁹ Cases where the UN treatment worked well include El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mozambique, Namibia, and Cambodia.⁵⁰ However, UN experts and practitioners have noted that there are significant strains on resources and capabilities, as well as an underlying concern about peacekeepers’ ability to leave after intervening without causing internal collapse or a return to chaos. Further, the Academy’s Civil Wars project outreach to the UN in New York, as well as to policy-makers and scholars in Washington, Geneva, and elsewhere, revealed that recent shifts in global power are impacting the effectiveness of these international responses. Zero-sum competitions for regional influence complicate efforts to achieve major power unity of action. In certain conflicts that fit the template, the “standard treatment” regime should be applied, though opportunities for the application of this approach may be more limited going forward.

Occupation (Iraq)

The United States invaded Iraq in March 2003, with President George W. Bush publicly stating that the Iraqi regime must be “disarmed.” Bush cited not only the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, but the potential for future terrorist attacks as a reason for the invasion.⁵¹ The United States promised to bring democracy and stability. The price tag has topped \$3 trillion, but returns on the investment—such as peace and stability in the region and planting the seeds of democracy—have been disappointing.⁵² Having seen how the challenges of an overly ambitious approach were magnified in the Iraqi conflict, we must caution against this option in most circumstances.

Limited Security and Development Assistance (post-surge Afghanistan)

The United States entered Afghanistan in 2001 with similarly ambitious goals. After nineteen years of war in the country, the United States faces difficult choices about how to disengage. Osama bin Laden was killed, but the Taliban have achieved a stalemate on the battlefield. Opium production is strong, illustrating how transnational criminality can find a foothold in weak states wrought with conflict, and most Afghans still live in poverty.⁵³ In spite of massive investments in security assistance, the Afghan National Army and Police cannot secure and stabilize their country, an example of Biddle's argument that small-footprint security-force assistance is rarely effective and can still be costly.⁵⁴ In countries where building a stronger security force is essential, the United States must sequence actions carefully and accept that, to be effective, the American footprint will be large.⁵⁵ It must also recognize that effective and accountable security forces can rarely be built on a foundation of political disunity and corruption. Entrenched elites might permit foreign powers to establish and exercise control over a small number of mission-focused counterterrorist forces; they will rarely, however, embrace the formation of larger professional army and police units that can potentially threaten their political influence.

Proxy Wars

With the shift in the distribution of world power, as well as in foreign policy preferences, outsourcing conflict to client states and armed groups is becoming more prevalent but is fraught with risk. Instead of choosing to intervene directly, for example, the United States may provide military assistance to countries willing to intervene in areas of unrest. In the MENA region, this often means supporting countries that oppose U.S. adversaries. We have seen this in Syria, with the complex web of fighting and power-sharing between the United States, Russia, Iran, and Turkey; and in Yemen, with Saudi Arabia (backed by the United States) and Iran.

Yemen is one of several hotspots in the Middle East. The Yemeni civil war, begun in 2014, has developed into a complex proxy war among Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United States. Criticism has focused on Saudi airstrikes, which have left thousands of civilians dead. Saudi Arabia views the Houthi militia as a proxy for its regional rival, Iran. Nearly one million Yemenis have been displaced as a result of the conflict.⁵⁶ Some view the Saudi-led campaign as a cost-effective way for the United States to deal with the threats posed by international terrorist groups active in Yemen and growing Iranian influence in the Middle East. Yet such an approach carries considerable risks, including entanglement in a wider war because

of unanticipated actions of the belligerents, unforeseen instability in the partner state or coalition, and culpability for violation of the laws of armed conflict by one's proxy forces.

Ignore

Alternatively, the United States can choose to ignore conflicts in hopes that one side will reach a clear military victory or that a third party will step in to broker the peace process. For years the United States followed this option in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a country two-thirds the size of Western Europe with a population of over 80 million. Moral considerations aside, such neglect has not come at any great cost to U.S. national interests. This could change, however, should a lethal pandemic spread across the region, international terrorists establish safe haven there, or the United States determine the DRC to be important in future geopolitical competition.

Prevention (Most Cost-Effective on Paper, Most Difficult in Practice)

The costs of prevention, when successful, are modest compared to robust interventions after the outbreak of violence. However, as Charles Call and Susanna Campbell argue, preventative measures—diplomacy, targeted and limited development, and possibly security assistance—are difficult to sell to constituents when no core security interest, such as preventing nuclear war, is at stake.⁵⁷ An “uptick in violence in a faraway, non-strategic country” does not provide a case for action that is likely to be compelling at home in the United States, even if the conflict is at a stage when prevention could be effective.⁵⁸ Further, preventive decisions are hard to make, and, if effective, the outcome draws little to no attention. Successful prevention does not create an obvious case for support for more prevention going forward.

The challenge is demonstrating that any efforts and resources committed will have a positive outcome. The urgent invariably trumps the important. While many political and bureaucratic hurdles make conflict prevention a difficult path to go down, Call and Campbell argue that “calls for more action and better organization aimed at preventing violent conflict may embolden a few policy-makers and bureaucrats to take on the risk of prevention. The more policy-makers who act preventively, the more credible the commitment that they will act in the future.”⁵⁹ While policy-makers (and the general public) will see the “failures” of prevention when conflicts manifest, this does not mean the few successful attempts to prevent conflict are not worthwhile.⁶⁰

U.S. Policy Precedents

Americans' conceptions of the U.S. role in the world help and hinder U.S. capacity to respond to the threats posed by civil wars, fragile states, and weak governance. Certain long-standing tensions in American policy remain in place even today. In the 1950s, Louis Hartz argued in *The Liberal Tradition in America* that the United States has always vacillated between two impulses: first, to remake the world in the image of the United States; second, to retreat into isolationism and to act as a city on the hill, providing a model that others just might emulate.⁶¹ The first vision is deeply utopian. It assumes that consolidated democracy is an ambition of all humankind. The second impulse is dystopian. It assumes that the rest of the world is fundamentally sinful and that even if the United States acts as a beacon of freedom, most countries will not follow its path.

For most of America's history, this dualistic vision has served the country moderately well. During the nineteenth century, the United States did not have the material resources to engage in activist foreign policy. Moreover, two oceans insulated the country. The Monroe Doctrine had little meaning beyond rhetoric until the end of the nineteenth century, when the U.S. Navy could challenge its European rivals. Before the twentieth century, the United States acted mainly as a city on the hill. Given the limitations of its material power, it had few other options.

During the first part of the twentieth century, America's vacillation between utopian and dystopian visions did not serve the country well. President Woodrow Wilson hoped to make the world safe for democracy when he brought the United States into World War I, even if many countries were not democratic, but he failed to get Senate approval for American participation in the League of Nations. In the 1920s and 1930s, isolationism prevailed in the United States. President Franklin Roosevelt recognized the dangers posed by Nazi Germany, an autocratic country that could dominate Europe, but he could not bring the United States into the war until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, by which time Germany had conquered most of Europe and the United Kingdom stood alone.

During the second part of the twentieth century, after defeating the Axis powers together with its allies, the United States embraced its role as a global leader. The utopian vision prevailed. The UN was established in New York City, with the United States as one of the five permanent members of the Security Council. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were set up in Washington, D.C., just a few blocks from the White House, and the United States has selected every World Bank president since the organization was founded. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and later the World Trade Organization were established with American support. Competitive economic policies, which were seen

as one of the causes of World War II, were avoided. Hypernationalism was eschewed, at least by U.S. and European political elites. Instead, the United States encouraged and facilitated European unity. Not all was smooth sailing in the post-World War II period, however. Notable failures included a costly stalemate in Korea and defeat in Vietnam, but, on the whole, the United States did well—arguably, magnificently well—in pursuing its utopian vision. All of the states in Western Europe became consolidated democracies, even Germany. Japan also became a consolidated democracy. South Korea went from being poor and autocratic to being rich and democratic. Even the Soviet Union ultimately collapsed and, along with it, the authority of communist ideology.

When Francis Fukuyama wrote in 1989 about the end of history and the absence of any serious rivals to democracy and the free market, he recognized an important development in human history. The realization of America's utopian vision—that any country could become a consolidated democracy—appeared imminent, reaching its apotheosis in the first term of George W. Bush's presidency, before gradually losing favor during Bush's second term.

September 11, 2001, was a shock. Thousands of people died. An administration that had expected to focus on domestic issues suddenly found itself responding to international threats to the security of the United States. Absent serious threats from potential state rivals in the aftermath of the Cold War, many Americans came to believe that international terrorism posed the gravest risks to their nation's long-term security. The Bush administration concluded that the root cause of this danger—which it identified as harsh autocratic rule in parts of the Islamic world—had to be addressed. Terrorism could be extirpated by bringing democracy to the greater Middle East. Afghanistan, and later Iraq, would become a democratic country, administration officials believed, as a result of invasions led by the United States; foreign-imposed regime change could work. The spread of democracy was assumed to be unstoppable, bringing peace and prosperity for all. The necessary ways, means, time, and patience to achieve these goals were also assumed to be available. Bush could adopt a Wilsonian perspective because this was a foreign policy vision familiar to the American public.

The administration's 2002 National Security Strategy reflected President Bush's thinking that the United States could not be safe unless the world, especially the broader Middle East, moved toward democracy.⁶² Only the fundamental transformation of despotic political systems that spawned transnational terrorism could eliminate the threat to the United States. However, the administration's intellectually coherent grand strategy ultimately proved to rest on an empirically unsound foundation. The

United States became bogged down in lengthy, hugely expensive wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and democracy did not take hold. The administration's utopian goals proved more challenging to achieve than anticipated.

Bush's successors, Presidents Obama and Trump, retreated to familiar territory. Obama did not want a precipitous withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq, but he desperately wanted to limit American exposure. Even as Obama announced a surge in Afghanistan, he declared a time limit after which American troops would begin to withdraw. Skeptical of the efficacy of expensive and protracted state-building enterprises, his efforts to dramatically reduce the U.S. military footprint in these two countries and the region beyond were ultimately frustrated by the rise of ISIS and its spread to surrounding areas.

The 2017 National Security Strategy, released under then National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, states that the world has returned to an era in which the dominant threat to American security derives from nation-state competitors, not transnational terrorism. China and Russia are characterized as states that have taken advantage of institutions that the United States created and pose serious global and regional risks to U.S. interests. North Korea is characterized as a threat due to its nuclear weapons and Iran because of its potential to acquire them. Various nonstate actors, such as lethal international terrorist organizations and transnational criminal gangs, are also identified as significant threats but afforded a lower priority than in the administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

The security strategy released under Trump's presidency returns, in some ways, to the language of the historic "city on a hill" strand of foreign policy thinking, stating, "America's commitment to liberty, democracy, and the rule of law serves as an inspiration for those living under tyranny."⁶³ The Trump administration made clear its rejection of strategies that advocated military intervention and robust development efforts to deal with weaker, nondemocratic states, and it entertains no ambitions to invest American resources in efforts to get Iraq, Afghanistan, or other states on the path to democracy and prosperity. However, in a shift away from the "city on the hill" approach, the strategy states that the first priority for developing countries is to promote American investment in the private sector. In fragile states, the United States should "commit selectively" and try to strengthen the rule of law and support reformers. Trump may be fairly criticized for inconsistent foreign policy, but his instincts about limited possibilities in other countries are not wrong.

The national security strategies of 2002 and 2017 represent the two poles of American foreign policy. The 2002 National Security Strategy aimed at fundamental political transformation, advocating for the United States to bring democracy and, consequently, stability and prosperity to the

Middle East and beyond. The 2017 National Security Strategy is closer to the dystopian, “city on a hill” vision of American foreign policy. President Trump’s own views appear to be right in line with much of this dystopian view: the United States is unique; other countries will not necessarily follow in its footsteps; and other countries are likely to take advantage of the United States, so the most important goal for foreign policy should be to maintain American strength. A more balanced view, and one that would better serve American security, would recognize that the United States can make the world safer, even if it cannot recreate the world in its own image.

Conclusion: Policy and Academic Research Recommendations— What Can Realistically Be Done?

Main Policy Implications

The major constraints affecting any attempt at external intervention present major pitfalls and a risk of counterproductive results. Accordingly, we identify the following core policy considerations:

1. The need for modesty, humility, and specificity when establishing goals. The international community needs to recognize the limits to what can realistically be achieved through external intervention. In some cases, particularly where parties to the conflict cannot be reconciled with the international system, achieving complete, “positive peace” may not be feasible in the short term. Goals from the outset must be realistic and attainable.⁶⁴
2. With the acknowledgment that positive peace may not be attainable in the short term, stricter periodization of goals is essential for any external intervention in order to avoid overreaching.
3. External interveners must be pragmatic and support the goal of “good enough” governance, emphasizing stability and security, improving the functioning of some institutions, and facilitating economic growth. Intervenors must acknowledge that this can require painful tradeoffs against other policy priorities, such as establishing inclusive social justice processes, that are less likely to succeed through external intervention.
4. Diplomacy, development assistance, and military doctrines should be revised to reflect this more modest and realistic approach; education and training programs that support these new approaches should follow.

5. When proper conditions do obtain, the United States should support UN-led and UN-sanctioned application of the “standard treatment” regime and persuade its allies, partners, and others to do so as well.
6. Given the growing realization, especially in the wake of the emergence of COVID-19, that a pandemic as deadly as MERS and as contagious as measles could one day pose an existential threat to human civilization, the United States should promote the establishment of healthcare and medical infrastructure in violent, fragile states and help develop international and regional contingency plans.

Key Policy Recommendation: Aim for “Good Enough” Governance

When caught between, on the one hand, threats emanating from civil wars and fragile states and, on the other hand, the difficulties and potential pitfalls of producing good governance from the outside, policy options are limited. We suggest that the United States aim for “good enough” governance. Pursuit of this more realistic goal has a better chance of improving not only the security of the United States but the living conditions of individuals in states susceptible to high levels of internal violence.

Good enough governance should aim to achieve three primary objectives.⁶⁵ The first is to improve security in the target country. This includes specialized, focused, security-force assistance designed to build the capacity of military forces in accordance with the goals of the United States, as well as the ruling elites of the target country. Carefully facilitated, elite-led negotiations (with limited measures of public inclusivity) that satisfy each faction may have more success, as suggested by the Colombian case.⁶⁶ Security-force assistance and development have been successful in South Korea (1949–1953), the Philippines (2001), and other countries.⁶⁷

The second objective is to improve some public services; healthcare is the clearest example. “New approaches that better integrate the technical and political challenges inherent in preventing pandemics in areas of civil wars are urgently required.”⁶⁸ This will require the restructuring of a framework that integrates state-level health systems with international efforts to strengthen pandemic prevention, mitigation, and containment. This framework must take into account the political realities of states experiencing civil war and internal violence. The speed with which pandemics can spread—and the potential for widespread paranoia and disregard for global health system recommendations—means this framework must be developed with input from a variety of countries to ensure it is realistic

and understood by all parties.⁶⁹ Further, the framework should ensure that “the minimal governance and security conditions required by the technical aspects of pandemic control are met” as a baseline criteria for identifying good enough governance.⁷⁰ Even then, because it may be impossible to create an effective public health system in some countries, developed countries must have a surge capacity of their own.

The third objective is to stimulate economic growth, provided that such growth does not threaten the rent-seeking opportunities of national elites. Improving growth includes developing a revenue stream for the state to pay for security and basic services for its people. Certain human rights, especially those associated with physical integrity, might also be improved, provided that such improvements do not jeopardize the ability of national elites to stay in power.

A carefully sequenced approach that focuses on capacity building in ways that support state institutions capable of responding to and containing terrorism and potential pandemic outbreaks will ideally build a stronger state without full-scale military intervention.⁷¹ We advocate for smarter uses of coercion and a deep inquiry into what this would mean for future security and military strategies.

Confronting Painful Trade-Offs

Painful trade-offs are often associated with good enough governance. For example, elections, under certain circumstances, might be viewed more as devices that legitimate agreements already made among elites rather than as expressions of the popular will. Improving the ability of national elites to secure control over the territory of their state might mean strengthening a security apparatus that abuses human rights if this furthers the ability of national elites to stay in power. Ambitious and costly efforts to create politically neutral armed forces will likely be subverted by ruling cliques; more limited projects aimed at building host-nation counterterrorist forces that can deal with potential threats to U.S. security might be the most realistic and cost-effective course of action.

Good enough governance implies that corruption will not be eliminated in the short term. National elites in rent-seeking regimes depend on the proceeds of corruption to stay in power. The best that can be hoped for in many countries is a system based on clientelism or patronage rather than gross theft that simply moves money out of the country. In 2010, investigators discovered that nearly \$900 million was missing from the Kabul Bank. Much of this money had disappeared. In addition, hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of loans were found to have no adequate documentation. The bank was closely associated with then President of Afghanistan Hamid

Karzai and Vice President Mohammed Qasim Fahim. Neither of these individuals or members of their immediate families were ever prosecuted. Much of the money simply disappeared, although at least some of it is suspected to have ended up in Gulf state villas. This sort of gross theft might be avoidable, but the idea that corruption can be totally eliminated is a fool's errand.

In poorly governed states some kinds of development might be possible. The provision of basic healthcare and education services, at least in areas and to groups not viewed as hostile to the regime, will often be viewed positively. National elites might support infrastructure projects that directly benefit their allies *and* contribute to broader economic growth and job creation. Elites will not, however, tolerate economic changes that might threaten their ability to remain in office. New technologies and economic enterprises will be repressed if they threaten the position of those in power. In the first half of the fifteenth century, the emperor of China ordered that the Chinese treasure fleet, comprising ships that were much bigger than any of those possessed by the Europeans, be destroyed. The emperor feared that growing commerce would threaten his rule. Economic development is possible even in repressive states—but only so long as that development does not endanger the position of national elites.

Advanced industrialized democratic societies are confronted with a world of uncertainty in which black swans live and unexpectedly appear. Highly destructive events could take place, but it is impossible to know with any confidence what their underlying probability distribution might be. States or nonstate groups with relatively limited resources but possessing nuclear or biological weapons could kill countless numbers of individuals residing within the boundaries of much more powerful states. Terrorist groups, national or transnational, could also inflict levels of death and destruction that have in the past only been associated with large-scale warfare.

The position outlined in the 2017 National Security Strategy hews more closely to the approach to international intervention that we advocate than does the more utopian vision of the George W. Bush administration. Global pandemics and transnational terrorism are two sources of mass death and destruction that could arise in poorly or malevolently governed areas. If Americans are concerned with their own security, they cannot ignore despotic regimes, but neither can they place such countries on the road to consolidated democracy. And, if we are concerned with the basic humanity of our neighbors in countries experiencing civil war, we have a moral obligation to help countries achieve good enough governance. We must learn how to get to good enough governance when good governance is not feasible.

To protect its own national security, the United States must depart from its own history. The utopian perspective—that every country can be a consolidated democracy if only American resources are effectively deployed—and the dystopian view—that the rest of the world is basically sinful and seeks to take advantage of the United States—are not the only alternatives. Good enough governance is possible, but it is a policy that will require America to break with its past and accept imperfect outcomes.

Endnotes

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3. Paul H. Wise and Michele Barry, "Civil War and the Global Threat of Pandemics," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017): 71.
4. Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (New York: Viking, 2011); Kenneth Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better*, Adelphi Papers, no. 171 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981); and Thomas S. Szayna, Stephen Watts, Angela O'Mahony, Bryan Frederick, and Jennifer Kavanagh, *What Are the Trends in Armed Conflicts, and What Do They Mean for U.S. Defense Policy?* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2017), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1904.html.
5. James D. Fearon, "Civil War and the Current International System," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017): 19.
6. William Reno, "Fictional States and Atomized Public Spheres: A Non-Western Approach to Fragility," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017): 139.
7. Fearon, "Civil War and the Current International System," 22.
8. *Ibid.*, 25.
9. As Fearon points out, Asia has also not had many PKOs since 1990. He attributes this, in part, to the "much larger share of autonomy-seeking conflicts in this region (autonomy-seeking wars are in general less likely to get PKOs)." *Ibid.*, 32. 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.
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11. Wise and Barry, "Civil War and the Global Threat of Pandemics," 72.
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16. Sarah Kenyon Lischer, "The Global Refugee Crisis: Regional Destabilization and Humanitarian Protection," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017): 85–97.
17. Vanda Felbab-Brown, "Organized Crime, Illicit Economies, Civil Violence, and International Order: More Complex Than You Think," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017): 98.
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19. Barry R. Posen, "Civil Wars and the Structure of World Power," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017): 167.
20. "The use of the veto by Russia and China rose considerably since 2011, with the conflict in Syria accounting for the bulk of these. Since 2011, Russia cast 18 vetoes, 13 of which were on Syria. Seven of the eight Chinese vetoes during this period were over Syria and one was on Venezuela. The remaining Russian vetoes since 2011 were against two resolutions related to the conflict in Ukraine, one on the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, one on sanctions against Yemen, and one on Venezuela. (The US cast three vetoes since 2011, all of them on Israel/Palestine issues.)" "The Veto," *Security Council Report*, September 3, 2020, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-security-council-working-methods/the-veto.php>.
21. Stedman defines spoilers as "leaders and parties who believe the emerging peace threatens their power, world view, and interests and who use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it." International actors who implement peace agreements are "the crucial difference between success and failure of spoilers." Stephen John Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in the Peace Process," *International Security* 22 (2) (Fall 1997): 5–53.
22. "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." Fearon, "Civil War and the Current International System," 27.
23. Tanisha M. Fazal, memorandum, May 2018, from workshop and side meetings in Geneva for the Academy's Civil Wars project.
24. Reno, "Fictional States and Atomized Public Spheres," 139, 147.
25. Steven Heydemann, "Civil War, Economic Governance, and State Reconstruction in the Arab Middle East," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018): 48.
26. Fearon, "Civil War and the Current International System," 24.
27. *Ibid.*, 27.
28. Aila M. Matanock and Miguel García-Sánchez, "The Colombian Paradox: Peace Processes, Elite Divisions, and Popular Plebiscites," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017): 152–153.
29. *Ibid.*, 161.
30. Reno, "Fictional States and Atomized Public Spheres," 147.

31. Felbab-Brown, "Organized Crime, Illicit Economies," 106–107.
32. Reno, "Fictional States and Atomized Public Spheres," 148–149.
33. Tanja Börzel and Sonja Grimm illustrate that the European Union's (EU) attempts at governance-building in the Western Balkans fit the limited-opportunity model outlined in this project. While domestic elites in the seven postconflict societies examined (Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Kosovo) were not exclusively rent-seeking, they had standing reasons for seeking EU membership. Tanja M. Börzel and Sonja Grimm, "Building Good (Enough) Governance in Postconflict Societies and Areas of Limited Statehood: The European Union and the Western Balkans," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018): 147.
34. Francis Fukuyama, "The Last English Civil War," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018): 16.
35. "[S]talemate conflicts will lead parties to accept second- or third-best outcomes, but English history, as well as more recent experiences, suggests that stability requires normative change as well." *Ibid.*, 15.
36. Fazal, "Religionist Rebels," 29.
37. Hendrik Spruyt, "Civil Wars as Challenges to the Modern International System," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017): 112.
38. Fazal, "Religionist Rebels," 25.
39. Stathis Kalyvas highlights the important distinctions among terms such as *terrorism*, *civil war*, *insurgency*, *violent Islamism*, and *religion*. Many violent Islamist groups, such as ISIS, engage in terrorism and are influenced by religion, but "too much emphasis on terrorism and religion might conceal two critical aspects of contemporary violent jihadism: its emergence in the context of civil wars and its revolutionary dimension." This is a part of what makes conflicts involving these rebels both unique and particularly challenging. Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Jihadi Rebels in Civil War," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018): 37.
40. Seyoum Mesfin and Abdeta Dribssa Beyene, "The Practicalities of Living with Failed States," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018): 129.
41. These buffer zones, not diplomatically recognized in the international community, test the traditional notions of state sovereignty. Mesfin and Beyene write that "these efforts face challenges from Mogadishu: the strategy is *perceived* to be weakening rather than unifying Somalia because it undermines the monopoly of coercion that the political center should theoretically exercise although it currently lacks the capacity to do so. This situation creates a dilemma whereby Ethiopia is forced to infringe on the sovereign prerogatives of the *de jure* recognized sovereign authority of Somalia. In fact, the government of Somalia is unable to credibly guarantee to Ethiopia that these territories will not be used to threaten Ethiopia, so Ethiopia often is blamed for interference. This criticism highlights the paradox in which Ethiopia has to infringe on Somalia's sovereignty in territories that Mogadishu is unable to control in order to ensure the fulfillment of basic obligations required of a sovereign state." *Ibid.* Uganda employs a similar strategy with neighboring South Sudan.

42. According to a Pew Research Center poll conducted in May 2019, 62 percent of adults, asked to weigh the costs and benefits to the United States of the war in Iraq, said it was not worth fighting; 59 percent of adults said the same about Afghanistan. Ruth Ingelniek and Kim Parker, "Majorities of U.S. Veterans, Public Say the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan Were Not Worth Fighting," *FactTank* blog, Pew Research Center, July 10, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/10/majorities-of-u-s-veterans-public-say-the-wars-in-iraq-and-afghanistan-were-not-worth-fighting/>.
43. Stephen D. Biddle, "Building Security Forces and Stabilizing Nations: The Problem of Agency," *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017): 126.
44. *Ibid.*, 127.
45. Fearon, "Civil War and the Current International System," 18.
46. Karl W. Eikenberry and Stephen D. Krasner, "Introduction," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018): 10. See also Clare Lockhart, "Sovereignty Strategies: Enhancing Core Governance Functions as a Postconflict and Conflict-Prevention Measure," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018): 90–103.
47. Thomas Risse and Eric Stollenwerk, "Limited Statehood Does Not Equal Civil War," *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018): 104.
48. Fearon, "Civil War and the Current International System," 28–30; and Biddle, "Building Security Forces and Stabilizing Nations," 127–128.
49. George Downs and Stephen John Stedman, "Evaluation Issues in Peace Implementation," in *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, ed. Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothschild, and Elizabeth Cousens (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2002), 43–69.
50. Gowan and Stedman, "The International Regime for Treating Civil War," 178.
51. "The danger is clear: using chemical, biological or, one day, nuclear weapons, obtained with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of innocent people in our country, or any other." "Text: Bush's Speech on Iraq," *The New York Times*, March 18, 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/18/politics/text-bushs-speech-on-iraq.html>.
52. Joseph E. Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes, "The True Cost of the Iraq War: \$3 Trillion and Beyond," *The Washington Post*, September 5, 2010, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/03/AR2010090302200.html>; and Daniel Trotta, "Iraq War Costs U.S. More Than \$2 Trillion: Study," Reuters, March 14, 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-war-anniversary/iraq-war-costs-u-s-more-than-2-trillion-study-idUSBRE92D0PG20130314>.
53. Sarah Almkhatar and Rod Nordland, "What Did the U.S. Get for \$2 Trillion in Afghanistan?" *The New York Times*, December 9, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/12/09/world/middleeast/afghanistan-war-cost.html>.
54. Biddle, "Building Security Forces and Stabilizing Nations," 126.
55. Biddle "finds that effective SFA is much harder to implement in practice than often assumed, and less viable as a substitute for large unilateral troop deployments.

He makes a strong case that for the United States, in particular, the achievable upper bound is usually modest, and even this is possible only if policy is intrusive and conditional, which it rarely is.” Karl W. Eikenberry and Stephen D. Krasner, “Introduction,” *Dædalus* 146 (4) (Fall 2017): 14.

56. Declan Walsh, “The Tragedy of Saudi Arabia’s War,” *The New York Times*, October 26, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/10/26/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-war-yemen.html>.

57. Charles Call and Susanna Campbell, “Is Prevention the Answer?” *Dædalus* 147 (1) (Winter 2018): 64.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*, 74–75.

60. In response to a request from the U.S. Congress in 2017, the United States Institute of Peace developed a Task Force for Preventing Extremism in Fragile States. Its “Final Report” bears three main recommendations. First, it recommends developing a shared framework for strategic prevention that also ensures a shared understanding about why extremism spreads; second, it highlights the importance of better coordinating American efforts overseas with a longer-term focus; third, it emphasizes the importance of pooling international resources and building partnerships with leaders, civil society, and private-sector actors to successfully implement a strategy of *prevention*. United States Institute of Peace, *Final Report on the Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2019), <https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/02/preventing-extremism-fragile-states-new-approach>.

61. Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1955).

62. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2002), <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf>.

63. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, December 2017), 4, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

64. “The April 2016 resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly introduced the concept of ‘Sustaining Peace.’ This represents a fundamental shift in the way the United Nations approaches peace and conflict. Underpinning the shift is a new focus on preventing conflicts via the identification of the factors that foster peace. . . . Positive Peace is associated with many of the indicators in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda. It therefore provides a useful analytical framework for orienting international action that can serve to sustain peace.” *Positive Peace: The Lens to Achieve the Sustaining Peace Agenda* (Sydney: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2016), <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/05/IPI-Positive-Peace-Report.pdf>.

65. In accordance with Risse and Stollenwerk’s argument, the authors focus on governance-building rather than state-building. “[A] too-narrow focus on state-building may be counterproductive, as it may foster ineffective or even predatory state institutions.

Such a focus also ignores the plurality of governance actors beyond the state that are relevant for effective governance—such as service provision and rule-making—in areas of limited statehood. Therefore, external actors like international organizations and foreign powers should contribute to governance-building rather than state-building, with a focus on service provision and rule-making institutions with a broader scope than the state.” Risse and Stollenwerk, “Limited Statehood Does Not Equal Civil War,” 104.

66. Matanock and García-Sánchez, “The Colombian Paradox,” 152.

67. “SFA is conducted in a wide variety of settings. Sometimes it takes the form of a handful of trainers working with indigenous allies in a country at peace, as in the US missions in Mongolia, Bangladesh or Peru. Sometimes it can involve larger missions in countries actively fighting insurgents or terrorists, such as Yemen, Colombia or the Philippines. Sometimes it can involve remote training for fighters who will return to their countries afterwards, as in Syria.” Steve Biddle, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker, “Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41 (1–2) (2018): 126, doi:10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745.

68. Wise and Barry, “Civil War and the Global Threat of Pandemics,” 71.

69. Wise and Barry conclude, “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.” *Ibid.*, 82.

70. *Ibid.*, 77.

71. “Terrorism against outside powers can provoke military intervention, which not only intensifies and internationalizes civil war but also sparks more terrorism against the occupiers and their local allies.” Crenshaw, “Transnational Jihadism and Civil War,” 69.

Contributors

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Prior to his arrival at Stanford, he served as the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan from 2009 until 2011. Before appointment as Chief of Mission in Kabul, Ambassador Eikenberry had a thirty-five-year career in the United States Army, retiring in April 2009 with the rank of lieutenant general. His military operational posts included commander and staff officer with mechanized, light, airborne, and ranger infantry units in the continental United States, Hawaii, Korea, Italy, and in Afghanistan as the Commander of the American-led Coalition forces. He held various policy and political-military positions, including Deputy Chairman of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Military Committee in Brussels, Belgium; Director for Strategic Planning and Policy for U.S. Pacific Command at Camp Smith, Hawaii; U.S. Security Coordinator and Chief of the Office of Military Cooperation in Kabul, Afghanistan; and Assistant Army and later Defense Attaché at the United States Embassy in Beijing, China.

He is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, has earned master's degrees from Harvard University in East Asian Studies and Stanford University in Political Science, and was a National Security Fellow at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. Ambassador Eikenberry earned an Interpreter's Certificate in Mandarin Chinese from the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office while studying at the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence Chinese Language School in Hong Kong and has an Advanced Degree in Chinese History from Nanjing University in the People's Republic of China. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2012.

Stephen D. Krasner is the Graham H. Stuart Professor of International Relations at Stanford University. He was the Senior Associate Dean for the Social Sciences, School of Humanities & Sciences, from 2010 to 2013 and the Deputy Director of the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies (FSI) from 2007 to 2014. He was also Chair of the Political Science Department at Stanford from 1984 to 1991. Krasner is an FSI Senior Fellow and a Fellow of the Hoover Institution. From February 2005 to April 2007, he served as the Director of Policy Planning at the U.S. State Department. While at the State Department, Krasner was a driving force behind foreign assistance reform designed to target more effectively American foreign aid. He was also involved in activities related to the promotion of good governance and democratic institutions around the world. In 2002, he served as Director for Governance and Development at the National Security Council. Before coming to Stanford in 1981 he taught at Harvard University and at the University of California, Los Angeles. He served as the editor of *International Organization* from 1986 to 1992. He has been a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences (1987 to 1988) and at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (2000 to 2001). His major publications include *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investment and American Foreign Policy* (1978), *Structural Conflict: The Third World Against Global Liberalism* (1985), *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (1999), and *How to Make Love to a Despot* (2020). The publications he has edited include *International Regimes* (1983), *Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics* (coeditor, 1999), *Problematic Sovereignty: Contested Rules and Political Possibilities* (2001), and *Power, the State, and Sovereignty: Essays on International Relations* (2009). He received a BA in History from Cornell University, an MA in International Affairs from Columbia University, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from Harvard University. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1991.

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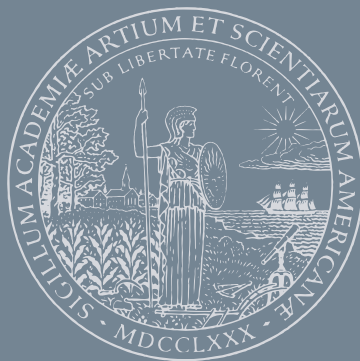
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