



GETTING FROM HERE *to* THERE

Successful
Implementation
of the Global
Fragility Act

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Peacebuilding

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SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL FRAGILITY ACT

Authors' Note

This is the final version of this report and supersedes earlier working paper versions.

We are sincerely grateful for the expertise of AfP members and partners, including members of the Global Fragility Act Coalition and former US government officials, who graciously reviewed this report and provided valuable contributions. We underscore appreciation for Richmond Blake, Mercy Corps Director for Advocacy and Policy, who co-leads the GFA Coalition with AfP. The report has been greatly enriched by the aforementioned contributions, but final content is solely the authors' responsibility.



Sustained advocacy to support the passage of the Global Fragility Act in December 2019, and the necessary follow-on work to ensure successful implementation, is made possible by the generous support from Humanity United Action.

Authorship Team

AfP:

Elizabeth Hume, Vice President
Jessica Baumgardner-Zuzik, Senior Director,
Learning and Evaluation

OEF:

Conor Seyle, Director, OEF Research
Eric Keels, Research Associate, Political Conflict
Dianna E. Almanza, Research Assistant

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June 2020

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18289/OEF.2020.045>

Design and layout by Liz Allen, One Earth Future.

Cover Images; clockwise: US Capitol building in Washington D.C. Photo: KT, Flickr; Guatemalan artists stand in front of a memorial they painted to those who died and disappeared during the Guatemalan civil war. Photo: Ryan Brown, UN Women.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The inclusion of the Global Fragility Act (GFA) in the 2020 Consolidated Appropriations Act is a significant step forward in US government planning and operations for addressing state fragility. Building on a number of lessons learned from previous US government operations, empirical research, and the experience of civil society organizations, the GFA represents a move away from business as usual and toward longer-term, more coordinated activities. However, this is only true if it is implemented in accordance with this intent. Effective coordination is difficult, and implementation of the GFA will face the same challenges that other attempts to deliver coordinated work have in the past.

This report focuses on questions of operationalizing implementation of the Global Fragility Act by providing challenges and opportunities and recommendations and specific examples that must be addressed in the strategy, operations, and ten-year country plans.

This report focuses specifically on questions of operationalizing implementation of the GFA by providing challenges and opportunities and recommendations and specific examples that must be addressed in the strategy, operations, and ten-year country plans. This report was developed from a review of existing empirical research, direct consultations with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, several workshops, and novel data analysis, and includes recommendations from how to engage with civil society to which countries are recommended for priority designation as stabilization and prevention countries, and what legislative engagement is still needed to support the goals of the GFA. A draft report was released in April and disseminated widely for peer review. We received significant feedback which resulted in additional recommendations, and, most importantly, also prompted us **to apply the data-driven methodology and list the selection of priority countries and regions.**

Most importantly, **since the first release of the draft report in March, it has become clear that the COVID-19 pandemic is not just a health crisis, but essentially “stabilization in reverse,” upending governance, economies, and human and food security globally.** The challenges facing the development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding sectors globally are significant, complex, and interconnected. It is critical now more than ever to understand and begin applying the principles required in the GFA that call for a multisectoral integrated approach that ensures that peacebuilding and conflict prevention are at the center of the strategy to address the destabilizing impact of a global pandemic.

Specifically, the report makes the following key recommendations.

- **RECOMMENDATION 1: CONSULTATIONS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY MUST BE INCLUSIVE, TRANSPARENT, CREDIBLE, EARLY, INNOVATIVE, AND FREQUENT.** The GFA text calls for coordination with civil society, building on lessons learned that show the importance of ensuring engagement with non-state actors with the interest and potential to help the goals of stabilization. To be effective, this coordination must begin before plans are developed and allow pathways for civil society organizations, including those from conflict-affected and fragile states, to influence the strategy.
- **RECOMMENDATION 2: SENIOR-LEVEL OWNERSHIP AND INTERAGENCY COOPERATION ARE NEEDED. AGENCIES MUST KNOW WHO OWNS IT.** Ensuring effective coordination will require senior-level engagement. While the GFA calls for the designation of a point of contact from the partner agencies at the Assistant Secretary level or above, we recommend that the State Department aim higher and designate the Deputy Secretary of State or an Under Secretary to lead the development of the strategy. We identify specific recommendations to ensure coordination with the Department of Defense and language to be incorporated into the FY21 NDAA to better align DoD activities with the GFA.
- **RECOMMENDATION 3: THE US GOVERNMENT MUST APPROACH IMPLEMENTATION HOLISTICALLY, INTENTIONALLY, AND PROFESSIONALLY TO ENSURE TIMELINES ARE MET AND AUTHORIZATION MATCHES TIMELINES AND APPROPRIATIONS.** Implementing the GFA will require multiple agencies to accept the timeline established in the Act and work together to ensure that planning, funding, and operational activities meet these timelines in a coordinated fashion. We identify specific funding allocations from the US government that may be helpful in supporting the goals of the GFA and attracting additional donations from donor governments and non-state donors.
- **RECOMMENDATION 4: USE DATA-DRIVEN METHODS FOR THE SELECTION OF PRIORITY COUNTRIES AND REGIONS.** The GFA calls for the selection of priority countries on the basis of explicit and empirical assessments of the risk of conflict, an assessment of US national interests, and an assessment of the likely impacts of the programs. This multidimensional test balances political and empirical inputs, so an operational approach that incorporates both is needed. We propose a model that blends empirical prediction methods and

assessments of national interests in a sequenced fashion. We present the results of one execution of this analysis, which recommends considering prioritizing the Lake Chad Basin region, Afghanistan, Somalia, the Sudan/South Sudan region, and Yemen for stabilization and Myanmar, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Uganda, and the Sahel region for prevention.

- **RECOMMENDATION 5: USE EVIDENCE-BASED AND ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES FOR DESIGN, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS.**

The GFA calls for the selection of priority countries on the basis of explicit and empirical assessments of the risk of conflict and calls for data-driven monitoring and evaluation plans for the priority countries. Executing this will require employing existing best practices of evidence-based design, monitoring, and evaluation in peacebuilding.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6: REALIZE THAT LOCAL OWNERSHIP AND YOUTH AND WOMEN ARE CRITICAL IN DEVELOPING, IMPLEMENTING, MONITORING, AND EVALUATING THE GLOBAL FRAGILITY STRATEGY (GFS) AND COUNTRY AND REGIONAL TEN-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLANS.**

Past experience with stabilization strongly supports the idea that addressing fragility requires active and engaged local ownership of the process, including women and youth. In turn, ensuring local ownership requires engaging locally legitimate authorities and local peacebuilders in strategy development, ownership, and more flexible procurement mechanisms.

- **RECOMMENDATION 7: TO ACHIEVE A MULTISECTORAL APPROACH, DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS MUST ALSO PREVENT CONFLICT AND BE CONFLICT-SENSITIVE AND INTEGRATED HOLISTICALLY INTO THE STRATEGY.**

A core element of the GFA is the recognition that there are fundamental connections between the political, development, and security aspects of stabilization and peacebuilding activities. Programs in a selected GFA country across all the pillars of good governance and development need to be adapted so the approach and strategy revolve around the integration and interoperability of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in development assistance programs and security sector reforms in conflict-affected and fragile states. We must ensure conflict prevention and conflict sensitivity principles are meaningfully integrated into all development sectors relevant for the GFS and the country plans.

- **RECOMMENDATION 8: DIPLOMATIC AND PROGRAMMATIC EFFORTS MUST BE LINKED.**

The GFA explicitly calls for closer coordination between diplomatic and programmatic efforts than has historically been the case. Treating diplomatic activities as disconnected from development or security attempts to address fragility is likely to undermine both efforts. US diplomacy is also essential to protecting civil society space so that local stakeholders can provide locally driven solutions and programs without fear of reprisal. Resolute diplomacy requires consistent messages to host governments from Washington, DC, policymakers, and ambassadors in the field, without allowing individual agency equities to undercut firm messages to underperforming host governments.

- **RECOMMENDATION 9: USE THE WHOLE ICEBERG: PARTNER AND COORDINATE WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE SPECIFIC COUNTRY OR REGION.**

Effective and sustainable support for stabilization requires more than only US government actors. Ensuring that policy and practice allow for effective coordination with other actors, including other governments, the private sector, and intergovernmental organizations, will be important for sustainably addressing fragility.

- **RECOMMENDATION 10: DEVELOP THE HUMAN ELEMENT: STAFFING WILL DETERMINE SUCCESS.**

Past research on coordination in stability and peacebuilding emphasizes that both failures and successes of coordination often come down to issues of the specific training, skills, and relationships of the personnel involved in the activities. Improving these elements will be important for determining success.

- **RECOMMENDATION 11: PROCUREMENT REFORM NEEDS TO BE MORE STREAMLINED AND LESS PRESCRIPTIVE, AND RESULT IN PROCUREMENT MECHANISMS THAT ARE FASTER, MORE DIVERSIFIED, AND MORE ADAPTIVE, AND WHICH ALLOW FOR LONGER DURATION OF PROGRAMS.**

Even though there has been significant procurement reform in the last three years at USAID, the speed of procurement from design of award to longer duration of programs must be addressed in the GFA strategy. A hybrid between ongoing development procurement and the USAID/OTI model must be designed to fit the GFA strategy.

- **RECOMMENDATION 12: ENSURE THAT PROGRAMS COUNTERING AND PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM ARE EVIDENCE-BASED AND THAT THERE IS A LEGISLATIVE FIX FOR THE MATERIAL SUPPORT LAWS.** The GFA requires the administration to reduce the risk that policies, programs, and resources are not exploited by extremists, but US laws already impose severe restrictions on material support for violent extremism. Without a change to these restrictive laws, vital nonviolent efforts by the US government, nonprofit organizations, and other implementing partners working to prevent violent extremism and support peace processes will continue to be hampered. Congress must provide badly needed legal protection for the US government and implementing partners that operate programs designed to prevent violent extremism.
- **RECOMMENDATION 13: USE USAID'S EXISTING CONFLICT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY TO TARGET AND DEVELOP PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMING BASED ON CONTEXT-SPECIFIC ANALYSIS.** Developing effective programming requires engagement based on the dynamics of the context and the specific conflict. US government actors have already developed sophisticated approaches to assessing conflict, such as the USAID conflict assessment methodology. These tools should be incorporated into country planning but also be improved to ensure the learning is adaptive and ongoing.
- **RECOMMENDATION 14: BALANCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMING WITH REFERENCE TO EXISTING RESEARCH ON BEST PRACTICES, CONTEXT-SPECIFIC ANALYSIS, AND PROMISING NEW APPROACHES.** In addition to conflict-specific analyses, existing research and data can provide important additional information about best practices and what programming works in support of peacebuilding and stabilization. Tools for modeling and measuring the impacts of different program points of entry are becoming fairly sophisticated, and it is feasible, within the limitations of the existing data, to identify which potential interventions may be most effective in a given context. In this report we identify the governance/rule of law sector as an example of an entry point and identify best practices. Additionally, prevention strategies and programming must also embrace well-founded new approaches, such as the developing understanding of how to integrate mental health and neuroscience into recovery.

In July 2019, UN Secretary-General António Guterres soberly assessed, “No substantial advances have been made towards ending violence, promoting the rule of law, strengthening institutions . . . or increasing access to justice over the last four years.”¹

The status quo is not working, and new ideas and approaches to prevent and reduce violent conflict and build peace are needed. Wars and violence have triggered the worst displacement and refugee crisis ever recorded, displacing more than 70 million people.² Conflicts now drive 80 percent of all humanitarian needs.³ Conflict remains the primary driver of terrorism, with over 95 percent of deaths from terrorism occurring in countries already in conflict. When combined with countries with high levels of political terror, the number jumps to over 99 percent.⁴ Furthermore, violence is expensive. In 2018, the global economic impact of violence was estimated at \$14.1 trillion, equivalent to 11.2 percent of global GDP.⁵ Today’s violent conflicts are much more complex and protracted, and traditional development assistance and diplomacy have not kept pace. Additionally, the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic is a serious crisis that operates as “stabilization in reverse,”⁶ increasing conflict dynamics in conflict-affected and fragile states that are already highly vulnerable to destabilizing trends. The pandemic is not just a health issue; it is disrupting governance, the economy, and human and food security. The pandemic is also hitting bilateral donor countries at the same time they are also developing foreign assistance strategies and providing funding. The challenges facing peacebuilding at this moment are significant, complex, and interconnected.

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The bipartisan Global Fragility Act (GFA) is a historic and long-sought-after victory for the peacebuilding field and **will create the first-ever comprehensive US government strategy to tackle and prevent alarming levels of global conflict.** While there are considerable challenges to implementing the GFA, it offers a tremendous opportunity to reform the US government’s strategy in at least five conflict-affected and fragile countries/regions through a coordinated multidimensional approach. The Global Fragility Act⁷ was developed from the failures and lessons learned from previous US government operations and empirical research. The GFA acknowledges what the US experience in Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrated: sustainable peace requires more than a military victory and uncoordinated billions of dollars spent on development assistance.

The Global Fragility Coalition, led by AfP and Mercy Corps, lays out the benefits of the GFA as being that it:⁸

- focuses US foreign assistance on preventing violence and conflict in fragile countries;
- saves US taxpayers money by addressing the causes of violent conflict and its prevention rather than the costlier approach of containing it, and by sharing costs with international partners;
- increases transparency and accountability by mandating reporting requirements to Congress and the American people;
- strengthens research and requires an evidence-based approach to identifying the foreign assistance programs and diplomatic approaches that are most effective at preventing violence and conflict; and
- requires internal interagency coordination and external partnerships with stakeholders, including civil society.

However, these goals will only be met if the implementation of the GFA follows the intent of the drafters. Such implementation is a significant challenge: while the US has attempted to improve coordination between different agencies working on stabilization at several points in the past, the success rate of past attempts has not been high. Increasingly, observers are identifying the implementation of the GFA as a key challenge in execution: a 2020 Mercy Corps report identified six lessons from past experience with foreign assistance that implementers should learn.⁹ A CSIS report reviewed the many ways in which the US approach to stabilization has fallen short of its ideals,¹⁰ with lessons learned for the implementation of the GFA. Currently, within the US government, the interagency is developing plans to implement the requirements in the GFA. Advocacy co-led by the Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP) and Mercy Corps and a coalition of 67 organizations supported the enactment of the Global Fragility Act, and they are continuing to work on its implementation.

To support the ongoing work, AfP and One Earth Future Foundation conducted a research project focused on the challenges and opportunities of implementing the GFA. Specifically, this report addresses discrete sections identified in Section 504(a) which mandate the creation of a unified Global Fragility Strategy, and Section 505, which requires implementing agencies to identify specific priority countries or regions. These must be submitted to Congress 270 days after passage (September 15, 2020). The report also discusses operationalization issues specified in Section 504(c), which include staffing needs and the development of country-specific plans specified in Section 506 that are due by December 20, 2020. Many of the issues and solutions needed to address these specific requirements overlap, and the recommendations identified in this report are therefore

organized thematically rather than in the order listed in the GFA. Each recommendation in this report identifies the section(s) of the GFA that it addresses. However, there is more research and thought leadership that needs to be done to ensure successful implementation of the GFA. This project is intended to contribute to the ongoing discussion by identifying both general recommendations and specific illustrations of recommended language and activities for the implementation of the GFA.

Based on research, roundtables, and a series of discussions with expert practitioners, *we believe the following recommendations are critical to ensuring successful implementation of the GFA.*

RECOMMENDATION 1

CONSULTATIONS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY MUST BE INCLUSIVE, TRANSPARENT, CREDIBLE, EARLY, INNOVATIVE, AND FREQUENT.

Section 504(b) of the GFA mandates a stakeholder consultation process with representatives of civil society, including “international development organizations with experience implementing programs in fragile states” and civic entities in countries and regions where the Global Fragility Strategy (GFS) is likely to be implemented. The GFA must also be developed in consultation with “national and local governance entities . . . as well as relevant international development organizations, multilateral organizations and donors, relevant private, academic and philanthropic entities, and the appropriate congressional committees.”¹¹

In order for these mandated consultations to be effective, they must be comprehensive and transparent. We strongly recommend that meetings and consultations must reach individuals who are living and working in conflict-affected and fragile states and front-line peacebuilders and other stakeholders. While experts in Washington, DC, have significant expertise, it is imperative that there is also meaningful participation from local stakeholders in conflict-affected and fragile states. The consultation process must be inclusive of US government country teams, with substantial input from long-serving local national staff, local civil society, and local government to ensure the process is not only transparent but grounded in local solutions. While these consultations will require more resources and time, and the COVID-19 pandemic is creating additional challenges, they are critical to developing a credible and effective strategy. Failure to include local voices outside of Washington, DC, and other stakeholders as outlined in the GFA will result in a flawed strategy and implementation plan. It is also important that the consultations not be one-off engagements. Instead, an ongoing process of check-ins and consultations will allow stakeholders to comment on evolving policies and issues and be more connected to the strategies as they see their perspectives being integrated.

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The US Institute of Peace (USIP) and AfP and Mercy Corps, as the co-leads for the GFA Coalition, and in coordination with the US government, developed one pathway to consultation. Unfortunately, this event, which was originally scheduled for March 31, was postponed due to COVID-19 and will be held as a virtual-limited event. Additionally, an interagency survey for stakeholders on the GFA strategy was released in March, and we

welcome the outreach to and inclusion of civil society. However, these processes are not sufficient, and more engagement is needed. Some ways to develop this include the following.

Explore low-cost technologies and existing platforms to extend engagement

While in-person interviews are the best approach for focused engagement, given the COVID-19 pandemic it is impossible to have in-person sessions. However, there are other approaches to ensuring local voices are incorporated into the strategy. The United Nations recently conducted an innovative approach to soliciting feedback for Community Engagement Guidelines¹² in the run-up to the ongoing 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review. AfP member Peace Direct coordinated an online consultation for these guidelines through www.platform4dialogue.org, which Peace Direct built specifically to encourage and facilitate open discussions with large numbers of participants from local civil society organizations across multiple time zones. This is a simple and intuitive platform that is cost-efficient and works extremely well to engage a wide variety of local actors and extend engagement. This type of platform could be used for country-specific consultations online and could be utilized in an ongoing or periodic manner to solicit input and provide feedback over time. This approach would allow for ongoing feedback loops with civil society and other stakeholders throughout the ten-year timeline because a one-off consultation in the beginning of the process will not suffice. Therefore, given the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to have ongoing consultations, the US government should immediately develop a virtual online platform.

The United Nations and the World Bank are also tackling the same development and coordination issues the US government is addressing in the GFA, and they have developed consultation processes that strive to be transparent and inclusive. In 2019, the United Nations started a formal and informal consultation process for the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, and the World Bank, in April 2019, launched global consultations to inform its first Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence. Both of these processes released a comprehensive and transparent consultation plan with timelines. Between April and July 2019, feedback on the World Bank’s Concept Note was received from 1,721 individual stakeholders in 88 countries through in-person meetings, an online questionnaire, email submissions, and social media. In-person meetings were conducted with governments, international organizations, the private sector, and global and local civil society. Between December 2019 and January 2020, a second phase of consultations was also held. While the World Bank’s consultation process has a longer time period and was not conducted during a significant health crisis, we recommend using a similar (albeit shortened) model when developing the Global Fragility Strategy. A comprehensive multifaceted and virtual approach would ensure the US government benefits from broad public input, as well as increase transparency and promote an exchange of innovative ideas from stakeholders in conflict-affected and fragile states.

The US government can not only build on existing tools from its partners, but already has tools it can use to ensure a transparent and credible consultation process, such as the State Department’s consultation process established for the development of the Program to End Modern Slavery (PEMS) in fiscal year 2016. Under the PEMS consultation approach, the State Department placed a notice in the Federal Register announcing an in-person public consultation led by an Assistant Secretary and welcoming written recommendations on the program’s policy and programmatic components. The written input was subsequently published on the State Department’s website.

Provide safeguards so key recommendations and advice are seriously considered

It is not enough to request and get extensive feedback through a consultation process. Recommendations and advice must also be seriously considered. Unfortunately, there are examples where local expert recommendations have been ignored. During the consultation process for USAID Forward in 2009, local civil society and international non-government organizations were consulted in the field. Significant risks and problems with this strategy were identified, specifically concerning the provisions of quickly providing 30 percent of direct funding to local civil society. However, these comments and recommendations were not addressed

in the strategy. Consequently, the issues and problems identified in these consultations, specifically concerning the ability of local civil society organizations to apply and account for US government funding, were not addressed in USAID Forward.¹³ Therefore, a consultation process must provide safeguards so key recommendations and advice are seriously taken into account. It is not enough to simply hold consultations; the recommendations and advice also must be transparently published and addressed. If key comments and recommendations are not included in the GFS, we recommend the US government identify publicly why not and how these issues are mitigated and/or resolved in the overall strategy and country and regional ten-year plans.



Community members and stakeholders at a community meeting hosted by a local NGO in Jakarta, Indonesia. Photo: Ryan Brown, UN Women.

RECOMMENDATION 2 SENIOR-LEVEL OWNERSHIP AND INTERAGENCY COOPERATION ARE NEEDED. AGENCIES MUST KNOW WHO OWNS IT.

Global Fragility Act Section 504(a)(6) requires that roles for Federal departments and agencies are assigned to avoid duplication of efforts. The GFA already describes roles for the Department of State, which is responsible for leading the drafting and execution of the strategy, policy, and overseeing the planning of implementation of security assistance. USAID is responsible for overseeing prevention programs and is the lead implementing agency for development, humanitarian, and related non-security programs. While the Department of Defense is mentioned as undertaking activities in support of the GFA, it doesn't outline what the activities are, but makes it clear that there needs to be joint formulation. Additionally, the strategy should assign roles to other relevant Federal departments as appropriate. Section 504(a)(7) also requires that the strategy describe the programs that relevant Federal departments will conduct and that already exist. Development and implementation of the GFA will require "whole of government" coordination within and across agencies that have fallen short in past iterations. Meaningful GFA implementation—by definition, no more "business as usual"—will require new models for interagency coordination, senior-level ownership, and effective integration of ambassadors and embassy country teams in the field.

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Engage the Deputy Secretary of State or an Under Secretary of State to lead GFS development

Commenting on challenges to GFA implementation, former CENTCOM Commander and State Department Special Envoy General Zinni observed that there is no office door that says "interagency" on it in the US government.¹⁴ Indeed, while the National Security Council offers a natural platform for initial GFA coordination, particularly in establishing governance, its attenuation under the current administration will make ongoing coordination difficult without strong buy-in from

agency heads. Additionally, there have been significant challenges within agencies and offices when implementing these types of strategies under prior administrations, especially when funding was available. Such was the case in the Section 1207 program, which, from its outset in 2006, was beset by confusion over ownership, organizational culture clashes between the Department of State and the Department of Defense, and competition over control of resources and strategy between USAID/DCHA/CMM and the then-State Department Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization.¹⁵ The GFA seeks to preempt ambiguities with a delineation that establishes the State Department as the lead in developing the GFS, USAID as the lead in implementing related assistance, and the DoD in a supporting role that requires State Department concurrence for involvement. This division of labor builds on the frame established in the 2018 Stabilization Assistance Review, which offers a model for State-USAID-DoD collaboration under the current administration to build upon in the GFA.

The State Department and USAID must coordinate and collaborate but not compete for funding to implement programs. The GFA is not just about more resources and funding. The political strategy and diplomacy needed to ensure the success of the GFA are critical (please see Recommendation 8). However, turf battles are not unique in these situations and it is critical that USAID and the State Department respect each other's competencies and strengths. The GFA also under Section 504(a)(6)(D) states that other relevant Federal departments can support the US Department of State and USAID's activities as appropriate. Each Federal department that may be included in GFA countries/regions, including Health and Human Services, Agriculture, and Labor, should focus on its mandate and respect the others' roles. It must be clear who is leading in order to ensure there is no confusion, duplication of efforts, or turf battle .

Learning from the lessons of the past and ensuring coherent and functional GFA coordination will require top-level, senior official leadership designation. Section 504(c)(6) specifies that a senior official at each relevant US agency, at the level of Assistant Secretary or above, is to be designated as responsible for leading and overseeing development and implementation of the GFS. **In order for the GFA to succeed, we recommend that the State Department aim higher and designate the Deputy Secretary of State or an Under Secretary to lead the development of the GFS;** that official in turn could designate a Senior Advisor to play a day-to-day coordination and monitoring role. Seventh-floor leadership is critical for developing a strategy that includes diplomatic, programmatic, and operational components of multiple bureaus. This senior designation will also serve as an important signal of the administration's commitment to conflict prevention and peacebuilding and that the GFA is about more than simply

assistance. Higher-level designation is needed to also ensure that regional bureaus are brought into the GFA alongside the functional bureaus expected to play a major role, particularly the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations. The USIP Task Force on Extremism identified this as an important element of effective programming. With the position of Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights vacant, we see the Under Secretary for Political Affairs as the only current State Under Secretary capable of taking on the lead role.

In comparison to the State Department, USAID is much further along in implementing a reform agenda that makes it less critical to anchor GFA implementation at the Assistant Administrator level. The GFA and the GFS are being developed as USAID is undergoing a major reorganization in 2020 that includes the formation of a new bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization. USAID proposes to elevate their conflict prevention and violence reduction efforts by creating a stand-alone CPS bureau to better coordinate these efforts with prevention, stabilization, and response work across the US government. The creation of the CPS bureau provides the agency and USG a clear point of contact that will be field-focused and deeply integrated to reduce duplication, increase efficiencies, and capitalize on the agency's three decades of working in conflict-affected countries, and which would be well-suited to coordinate the implementation of the GFA directly with USAID missions.

Integrate embassies and country staff into the GFA strategy

It would be a missed opportunity not to integrate US embassies in the field into GFA strategy development and implementation early on. Embassy country teams offer perhaps the best working model of interagency cooperation in action, in marked contrast to the turf and physical barriers that separate agencies in Washington, DC. Chief-of-mission authority and buy-in will be critical to the sound development and execution of GFA country strategies, as well as to the evaluation element being integrated into biennial reporting to Congress. By involving embassies in the process for identifying focus countries/regions and formulating the overall GFA strategy, the State Department can avoid a scenario in which overstretched embassies feel the GFA is "happening to them" or misinterpret it as another onerous reporting requirement from Washington, DC. Embassy buy-in and input are critical to meaningful GFA implementation. Annual Chiefs of Mission conferences, as well as regional Ambassadorial gatherings with regional COCOMs, are opportunities for Washington leadership to spread the word and make the whole-of-government approach and local leadership of GFA implementation a reality.

DoD interventions must be integrated in the GFA strategy and country/region plans

The success of the Global Fragility Act hinges on agencies' participation and collaboration in the development and implementation of the Global Fragility Strategy and country- or region-specific strategies. The Global Fragility Act mandates the creation of interagency plans to integrate existing and planned security assistance and cooperation programs in each priority country or region with the Global Fragility Strategy, as well as to mitigate risks associated with such programs, including risks related to corruption, governance, and human rights. The Department of State and USAID are the most appropriate leads for stabilization and conflict prevention in fragile and conflict-affected states. However, the GFA recognizes *the critical role of the Department of Defense's implementation of security assistance programs in achieving stability in conflict-affected areas and preventing violence, but the DoD can't work in isolation*. While the US government has worked to improve coordination between DoD and civilian agencies, there are still gaps that have been identified repeatedly by official assessments, and a policy-level coordinating body should be designated to focus efforts and delegate responsibilities to increase synergy.¹⁶

The US government must integrate existing and planned security assistance and cooperation programs in each GFA priority country/region with the strategy. Human rights abuses by security forces are a key driver of violent extremism, and in fragile and conflict-affected countries, security sector reform must be an integrated part of a conflict prevention or stabilization strategy.¹⁷ The DoD should prioritize security sector reform and building the security capacity of host-nation providers. This requires increasing US military capacity to provide training and security force assistance, with educational content developed by the civilian interagency.¹⁸

An important part of increasing synergy between DoD and civilian agencies is mitigating risk and ensuring DoD interventions do not cause harm to stabilization and conflict-prevention efforts. *The DoD's existing kinetic operations against violent extremists cannot work in isolation and must ensure these efforts do not risk civilian programs and the development and stability gains made.*

To better align Department of Defense activities with the Global Fragility Strategy and ensure the Department of Defense is fully integrated, in the FY21 NDAA, we encourage Congress to broaden the scope of the DSS to allow it to be used in countries or regions designated as priorities pursuant to the Global Fragility Act. Without this change, the DSS can only be used in certain countries (Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Somalia), or in countries designated as being in the national security interest of the United States. Ensuring that this critical tool is available

will help to achieve the Global Fragility Act's objective of building a stronger, more coordinated approach to preventing and responding to conflict. The GFA coalition encourages the inclusion of the following bill and report language:

ALIGNMENT OF DEFENSE ACTIVITIES WITH THE GLOBAL FRAGILITY STRATEGY

(a) In countries and regions designated as priorities pursuant to Section 505 of the Global Fragility Act of 2019 (133 Stat. 3060), the Secretary of Defense may, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State and in consultation with the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, provide support for activities of other agencies as provided for in section 1210A of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 (Public Law 116-32).

(b) The submission of a ten-year priority country or regional plan as required by Section 506 of the Global Fragility Act of 2019 may serve to meet the requirement for a stabilization strategy under section 1210A of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020.

We also believe that it is important that Congress include report language outlining the alignment of security assistance with the Global Fragility Strategy and signaling an expectation of robust Department of Defense engagement in this process:

The Committee supports the Global Fragility Act of 2019's objective of developing a whole-of-government approach, the Global Fragility Strategy, to prevent violence and conflict and stabilize conflict-affected areas. The Committee notes the critical role of the Department of Defense in such efforts and directs the Department, in accordance with Sections 504, 505, and 506 of the Global Fragility Act, to participate fully in the design and implementation related to the Global Fragility Strategy, selection of priority countries and regions, and plans specific to priority countries and regions, including by ensuring that a broad range of security assistance activities are brought into alignment with diplomatic and development efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 3 THE US GOVERNMENT MUST APPROACH IMPLEMENTATION HOLISTICALLY, INTENTIONALLY, AND PROFESSIONALLY TO ENSURE TIMELINES ARE MET AND AUTHORIZATION MATCHES TIMELINES AND APPROPRIATIONS.

“Holistically” in the context of GFA implementation means that the USG is drawing from the comparative advantages of all of the relevant departments and agencies. “Intentionally” means the effort is policy-driven rather than post-ad-hoc consequentialism that retrofits programs and results. Finally, “professionally” means using a balanced approach that draws from each agency’s competencies and experts and external consultations.

The key deadlines in the GFA for strategy development, country selection, and reporting include the following:

1. Section 504(c) requires that not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment (September 15, 2020), the President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report setting forth the Global Fragility Strategy. The GFS is a comprehensive, integrated, ten-year strategy with a focus on understanding and addressing long-term causes of fragility and violence. Additional specific objectives of Section 504 include addressing long-term causes of fragility and violence, with a number of specific requirements laid out in Section 504(a). These include: (1) consider the causes of fragility and violence at the local and national levels and successful prevention strategies, (2) include specific objectives and multisectoral approaches, (3) empower local and national actors to address concerns of their citizens and build community resilience, (4) address long-term causes of fragility and violence through participatory, locally led programs empowering marginalized groups such as youth and women, inclusive dialogue, justice sector reform, good governance, and security sector reform, (5) describe approaches that ensure national leadership and participatory engagement of civil society are included in all aspects of the design, implementation, and monitoring of programs, (6) assign roles for relevant Federal departments and agencies to avoid duplication, (7) describe programs that will be undertaken, including descriptions of existing programs and funding by fiscal year

and account, (8) identify mechanisms to improve coordination between the US, foreign governments, multilateral organizations, and the private sector, (9) address efforts to expand public-private partnerships and leverage their resources, (10) describe the criteria, metrics, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of programs, (11) describe how the strategy will ensure that programs are country-led and context-specific, and (12) identify mechanisms to reduce the risk that programs do not facilitate corruption or are exploited by extremists.¹⁹

2. Additionally, the report with the GFS requires a list of priority countries and regions selected and the rationale for their selection.
3. Section 506 requires that not later than one year after the date of enactment (December 20, 2020), the President, in coordination with lead departments and agencies, including DoD, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees ten-year plans to align and integrate under the Global Fragility Strategy all relevant diplomatic, development, and security assistance and activities of the United States Government with respect to each of the countries and regions selected.²⁰
4. Section 508 requires biennial reports: Not later than two years after the submission of the plans, and every two years thereafter for ten years, the President and relevant departments and agencies shall jointly submit an unclassified report, which may include a classified annex, on progress made and lessons learned with respect to implementation.²¹

As outlined above, there are key dates and reporting structures established by the GFA, and it is encouraging to see the seriousness and the commitment by the US government to address the timelines and strategy requirements outlined in the law. However, there are numerous examples of excellent and well-intentioned laws not being fully and successfully implemented. In particular, the history of compliance with legislatively imposed timelines is inconsistent. An example of this inconsistency is the Women, Peace, and Security Act, which required, as the GFA does, the administration to present a formal strategy within a fixed time period. The WPS Act called for a one-year timeline, but the final strategy was presented more than 18 months later.²² Such inconsistency between law and practice poses the risk that the intended activities may not be implemented in a coordinated fashion. **The GFA strategy will need to fit the timeline in terms of specificity and objectives.** However, given the COVID-19 pandemic, there may be a need for timelines established in the law to be revised.

Similarly, there are often disconnects between various US government strategies and initiatives, and we recommend that the GFS specifically outline how it will support the related objectives of the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act; the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy; and the Stabilization Assistance Review.

The GFA strategy will need to fit the timeline in terms of specificity and objectives. However, given the COVID-19 pandemic, there may be a need for timelines established in the law to be revised.

The selection of countries/regions must be thoughtfully matched to resources and timing. The process and scope of recommended engagement with countries also raises issues around timing and capacity. As discussed in Recommendation 4, the selection of the countries of engagement must balance issues of empirical risk with considerations of the relative likelihood of success and the relative interests of the US government and other criteria listed in the GFA. Separately, the selection of countries must engage with questions of US capacity and the relative breadth and depth of engagement. There are many countries at risk or with need for stabilization assistance and conflict prevention programming. However, a core element of the GFA is acknowledging the need for deeper engagement focusing on conflict prevention and stabilization programming over a longer period of time than the United States has historically done. Committing to engage in too many countries risks committing the United States to more countries/regions than it can engage in with the depth, length, and rigor of planning required by the GFA. Findings from the USAID Peace through Development II program and other evaluations stated that programs for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) “should consider concentrating programming more intensively in fewer zones in order to maximize the effect of the resources,” and notes that high-intensity programming has been shown to have a larger impact.²³ Therefore, GFA implementing agencies should limit the number of planned engagements.

Learnings and findings from pilot GFA countries/regions can be applied to non-GFA countries throughout the ten-year strategy. Best practices learned from GFA countries/regions should not have to wait and should be applied adaptively. However, this will require a knowledge management platform and an ability to disseminate the learnings so they can be replicated in other GFA countries/regions but also to non-GFA countries/regions.

The selection of priority countries and regions under the GFA should reflect the key conflict dynamics and actors **based on the actual boundaries of the conflict, and not solely focus on single countries or the countries or localities in which violence is most acute.** A conflict can originate outside the area where its physical effects are observed, and some conflicts have far-reaching spillover effects. GFA implementation should take a systems approach to defining the geography of a conflict, tackling specific root causes and driving factors that may be geographically removed from where violence occurs. This includes engagement with neighboring states, as well as proxy powers that could be farther away.

The selection of priority countries and regions under the GFA should reflect the key conflict dynamics and actors based on the actual boundaries of the conflict, and not solely focus on single countries or the countries or localities in which violence is most acute. This can be done by focusing on an “epicenter” with spillover or taking a regional approach.

To do this effectively, the GFA implementation could follow two options and/or use both options in different areas. **The first is a focus on a single country as an “epicenter,” but with strategies acknowledging proxy factors and spillover effects.** From Myanmar to Yemen, the world’s most devastating conflicts are affected by and contribute to dynamics beyond their borders, even if a country-focused approach may be warranted. **A second option is to take a regional approach to conflicts where the nature of the system is transnational.** Examples include the Sahel, the Northern Triangle, and the Lake Chad Basin. In these regions, country-focused approaches would be ineffective, as conflict actors and drivers are not consolidated in any one country alone. However, a regional approach is more difficult for the US government because US embassies and the USAID missions operate in a single country context, while regional US government platforms lack similar authority and resources and are marginalized in this system. If a region is selected, then the relevant embassies must all buy into this process and coordinate effectively.

Regardless of which approach(es) the GFA implementation takes, implementing agencies should ensure sufficient strategic guidance and resources are dedicated to assessing impact, not just within the places where violence and fragility are most acute, but also to measure any changes in neighboring countries and proxy powers. These lessons can be critical to the US government and implementers as they seek to identify effective and efficient methods for reducing fragility in a globalized world.

Achieving the ambitious timeline, as outlined in the GFA, will require appropriated funds that coincide with timelines

One of the most important aspects of implementation of the Global Fragility Act is ensuring the initiative is appropriately resourced and that appropriated funds are connected to the timelines as outlined in the law. This law authorizes the Complex Crises Fund, the Prevention and Stabilization Fund, and the Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund.²⁴ Since the authorizing language makes the Complex Crises and Prevention and Stabilization Funds available to support multiple purposes, report language is required to specify congressional intent that a substantial portion of each fund—a floor of at least 50 percent of the Complex Crises Fund and 75 percent of the Prevention and Stabilization Fund—be made available for implementation of the Global Fragility Act. In addition, providing a \$25 million appropriation to the newly authorized Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund will allow the administration to leverage this US investment to attract contributions from and enhance coordination among other donor governments, philanthropic organizations, and the private sector.²⁵

Therefore, we recommend the following funding, currently:

- \$50 million for the Complex Crises Fund, an account that allows USAID to respond quickly and flexibly to violence and crises.
- \$200 million for the Prevention and Stabilization Fund, an account that allows the State Department and USAID “to support stabilization of conflict-affected areas and prevent global fragility, including through the Global Fragility Strategy,”²⁶ as well as to “provide assistance to areas liberated or at risk from, or under the control of, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, other terrorist organizations, or violent extremist organizations.”²⁷
- \$25 million “seed” appropriation for the Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund, an account that allows the State Department to “leverage, receive, coordinate, and program funds provided by other donors and private sector partners to carry out the purposes of” the Global Fragility Strategy,²⁸ to increase partners’ contributions as well as to enhance donor coordination as per the recommendations of the USIP Task Force on Extremism. This initial funding could contribute to drawing more funding from partners.
- Legislative report text that ensures a substantial portion of the Complex Crises Fund and the

Prevention and Stabilization Fund is made available for implementation of the Global Fragility Strategy. Proposed text: “Resources to implement the Global Fragility Act of 2019— the Committee’s expectation is that this law will improve interagency coordination; enhance research, monitoring, and evaluation of the effectiveness of US foreign assistance; and strengthen multilateral partnerships in order to better align our stabilization and prevention efforts with other donor governments, organizations, and the private sector. The Committee directs that no later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this act, the Administrator of USAID shall submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations that details expected obligations and expenditures of the Complex Crises Fund made in fiscal years 2020 and 2021, including to which countries and for what activities the funds were obligated and expended, as well as the portion of the fund that was made available for implementation of the Global Fragility Strategy that shall be no less than 50 percent of the total. The Committee directs that no later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the USAID Administrator, shall submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations detailing expected obligations and expenditures of the Prevention and Stabilization Fund in fiscal years 2020 and 2021, including the portion of the fund that was made available for implementation of the Global Fragility Strategy that shall be no less than 75 percent of the total.”

- The \$2 trillion third supplement to the H.R. 748: Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed by Congress on Friday, March 27. AfP sent Congress recommendations for future supplemental packages of the CARES Act, and in the next round of supplemental funding the GFA should be included to ensure funding is actually provided and available to the Department of State and USAID to prepare for the implementation of the GFA.

Congressional engagement and reporting biennially

The implementation of the Global Fragility Strategy and the specific country and regional plans must be reported to Congress biennially. Under the Global Fragility Strategy, agencies will use a range of diplomatic and programmatic efforts, including civil society empowerment, conflict resolution, justice sector reform, good governance, inclusive and accountable service delivery, civilian security, and security sector reform, to address the drivers of violence. The Global

Fragility Act will also support research and learning about which diplomatic and programmatic efforts are most effective at preventing and reducing violence. As outlined in the law, the reports must include progress on specific targets, metrics, and indicators at the programmatic and country and regional levels. The reports should also focus on challenges and failures and how programs and the strategy adapt. We also recommend that biennial congressional reports are developed in consultation with local and international non-government organizations and other key stakeholders.

It is also imperative that the appropriate committees hold public hearings, and that the reports are unclassified, so lessons learned and best practices are available for replicability in other conflict-affected and fragile states. This reporting requirement is an opportunity for the executive branch to actively and transparently engage with Congress as an ally. Forty-six Republican and Democrat senators and representatives in Congress co-sponsored the GFA, and they are committed to successful implementation. We also highly recommend that congressional delegations visit GFA countries and regions to build strong congressional relationships with country teams, implementing partners, and critical local stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION 4 USE DATA-DRIVEN METHODS FOR THE SELECTION OF PRIORITY COUNTRIES AND REGIONS.

Section 505 of the GFA lays out explicit instructions for how countries and regions of interest will be identified: it requires that they be selected on the basis of “(A) The national security interests of the United States; (B) clearly defined indicators of the levels of violence or fragility in such country or region ... (C) an assessment of the commitment and capacity [of local governments and local actors to good governance and the likelihood that the strategy would meaningfully address fragility or the risk of violence],” and “in a manner that ensures that not fewer than five countries or regions are selected, including not fewer than two in which the priority will be preventing violent conflict and fragility, rather than stabilizing ongoing conflicts.”²⁹

In laying out these criteria, the authors of the bill are providing a pathway to balancing three distinct issues that arise in stabilization planning or operations. In the first case, the focus on the national security interests of the US explicitly seats the goal of the law in supporting US interests and provides a justification of the expense for actors whose focus is solely or primarily on US interests. In the second case, the emphasis on “clearly defined indicators” prevents an overly political focus in which countries are identified solely through political priorities, without reference to the actual risk of conflict or fragility. Finally, the third clause builds on the frequent call in the bill for data-based evaluation and planning to require an assessment of the potential effectiveness of the strategy. Collectively, these three clauses place into tension the different interests and priorities of US actors in identifying states and regions to prioritize.

Our proposed approach attempts to use a data-led process to identify specific countries at highest risk, followed by an assessment of the national interests and likelihood of effectiveness in order to refine the list.

Implementing the GFA will require some way of operationalizing this tension. Our proposed approach attempts to use a data-led process to identify specific countries at highest risk, followed by an assessment of the national interests and likelihood of effectiveness in order to refine the list. We specifically propose a process with the following steps:

1. Use empirical prediction methods to identify countries or regions currently experiencing the highest risk of extreme violence or instability. These methods may vary according to the capacity or priorities of the implementing agencies, but traditional statistical methods such as machine learning or linear regression techniques can be used to identify countries at particular risk of increases in the severity of conflict or the risk of conflict initiation. The data can be drawn from the rankings of recognized global fragility lists cited in the law, with the addition of other data, such as levels of violence, including gender-based violence and violence against children and youth.
2. Vet the resulting list of high-risk countries to identify countries that should be added. One challenge with empirical methods is that they are constrained by the data that are available. Gaps in the data or other biases around data availability can affect the analysis, so a vetting step is useful. In addition, this step can be used to ensure that countries that are of particular interest to the United States or which are perceived to have significant capacity are added to the list of potential countries, even if they are not at high risk empirically.
3. Prioritize countries based on US interests and strategies. The final ranking of the identified countries can be based on which countries intersect most strongly with US national interests and the perceived effectiveness of engagement. Additional criteria include vulnerability to climate change and population displacement. In executing this final step, elements identified in this report are particularly valuable. As discussed in other recommendations, assessments of the networks and communities already on the ground (including other international organizations as well as engaged private sector actors and local peacebuilding organizations) can influence the likelihood of work being effective. In particular, commitments to the women, peace and security agenda—operationalized through the establishment of a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security—may also be a good element to look for as this reflects both a substantive action taken to advance peace and alignment with international institutions.

There are multiple ways the implementers of the GFA can approach using objective criteria to identify priority countries. Below, we present the results of one such analysis. Please see the Technical Appendix attached to this report for full details of the analysis. An overview:

1. We conducted two analyses to identify priority countries and regions for stabilization or prevention. Using publicly available reports of violent events,³⁰ we aggregated deaths from state-based and non-state violence from 2014–2019, both in aggregate and per capita. Where patterns of conflict occurred across neighboring states, these states were aggregated into regions. The result of this analysis finds a top-ten list of stabilization countries and regions, based on current and ongoing violence, to be: Afghanistan; the Syria/Iraq/Turkey/Lebanon region (The Levant); Somalia; the Cameroon/Nigeria/Chad/Niger region (The Lake Chad Basin); the South Sudan/Sudan region; Libya; and Yemen. Prevention countries and regions were identified using logistic regression on a number of predictors associated with conflict, assessing the risk of an outbreak of violence leading to 1,000 deaths or more. This led to an assessment of country and region risk that prioritized Myanmar, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Uganda, and the Sahel region (Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso).
2. The lists were reviewed to see if any gaps in the data or analyses led to obvious omissions or flaws, but at this point none were identified.
3. Stabilization countries and regions were assessed from the perspective of the potential influence of US government activities, based on an assessment including the transnational nature of the conflict, the current capacity of the host government, the relationship between the host government and the US, and other political factors including the presence or absence of a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security.

Based on the results of this analysis, we conclude that countries targeted as priorities for stabilization should be the Lake Chad Basin region, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan/South Sudan, and Yemen. Libya and the Levant region are also potential targets, but less feasible. We conclude that based on risk, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Uganda, and the Sahel region should be targeted for prevention programming.

Based on the results of this analysis, we conclude that countries targeted as priorities for stabilization should be the Lake Chad Basin region, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan/South Sudan, and Yemen.

Our intent is not to claim that this is the sole approach that should be used for identifying where parts of the GFA should be implemented. Rather, this is merely an illustration of how empirical tools may be used to clarify the countries that may be of the most concern for implementing agencies.

It is also worth noting that such tools must be balanced with expert assessment. The analysis above identifies Ethiopia as a country to target for prevention, based on structural risk assessments. This analysis was conducted separately from the recent AfP analysis of Ethiopia but arrives at similar conclusions based on different data. The AfP analysis, published in a report titled *Ethiopia: Conflict Dynamics Amid Sweeping Reforms Require a Peacebuilding Approach*,³¹ outlined the current political risk in Ethiopia. Ethiopia’s historic political transition has opened civic space considerably and propelled major democratic reforms. However, despite the extraordinary political transformation, there are increasing and existing conflict dynamics that threaten not only reforms but also Ethiopia’s fragile stability. This report highlights what the empirical analyses imply: US foreign assistance to Ethiopia cannot be “business as usual,” and the US diplomatic and development approach in Ethiopia needs to adapt to the new conflict dynamics and changing political landscape. Reorienting assistance toward prevention in fragile states is the essence of the GFA, and Ethiopia would be a good candidate to be a prevention country under the Global Fragility Act. A GFA approach is what is needed for the US government to reorient development assistance to ensure a peaceful transition to sustainable democracy in Ethiopia.

Regardless of how a prevention country or region is identified, it is important that countries at risk of conflict but not yet down the path to conflict are selected alongside countries targeted specifically for stabilization. Once the feedback loop of violence has begun, it is significantly more difficult to stop the violence than it would have been to prevent it through earlier interventions. As such, it’s important to select countries that have not yet begun the slide to violence.



Awaiting displaced Nigerian refugees, in the Lake Chad region. Lake Chad was one of the area we identify as a priority for stabilization. Photo: Ocha M. Munan, United Nations Chad.

RECOMMENDATION 5 USE EVIDENCE-BASED AND ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES FOR DESIGN AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS.

Section 504(a)(10) states that the Global Fragility Strategy must “describe the criteria, metrics, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of programs and objectives in the strategy to ensure planning, implementation, and coordination are appropriately executed and updated.”

In establishing this requirement, the GFA formally mandates a richly data-driven approach to country-level planning. This approach is built on developing understanding of evidence-based approaches to program planning and commits the US government to operating according to these best practices. This implies having an evidence-based approach to design, monitoring, and evaluation, as well as a data-driven strategy with a strong feedback loop. The language of the GFA specifically calls for countries to be selected in part based on an assessment of how likely it is that the program work will meaningfully address country-level patterns of fragility. The recommendations below emphasize several specific approaches to advancing this need for evidence. Across all of these recommendations, there is a consistent theme that this data-driven approach should operate at both the specific program strategy level, emphasizing the narrow and specific impact of agency activities, and at the national level.

The richly data-driven approach mandated by the GFA should operate at both the specific program strategy level, emphasizing the narrow and specific impact of agency activities, and at the national level.

Improve evidence-based DM&E

Most implementing partners do not or cannot prove that their programs prevent conflict, reduce violence and extremism, and/or build sustainable peace. The lack of capacity to measure impact and assess the effectiveness of peacebuilding to determine “what works,” why, and how—and to ensure this learning is applied to programs—is a critical barrier for entry for local organizations, and is further magnified by a dearth of consistent donor requirements for design, monitoring, and evaluation (DM&E). The USAID Acquisition and Assistance Strategy states that “data and evidence must drive USAID’s programmatic and procurement decisions”

and that “understanding of, and use of, data are critical for effective learning and adaptation.”³² However, USAID and other implementing partners need access to data, tools, and resources to ensure that funded programs are designed based on the best available evidence.

These issues are further exacerbated by a chronic underfunding dynamic when it comes to DM&E activities as an element of already insufficient development assistance for peacebuilding. Often, DM&E activities experience extreme thrift funding or are seen simply as an added facet to programming at the end, rather than having early integration and robust design. The 2019 AfP report *Perspectives in Peacebuilding*³³ found that while demand for high-quality data is on an upward trajectory, with organizations and donors requesting progressively more research and evaluation efforts, too little funding allocated toward DM&E, disadvantaging implementers and predisposing sub-par-quality research from the proposal and design phase.³⁴

There is not only insufficient funding, but also a disconnect between funding and evidence expectations. This disconnect must be carefully managed, since the GFA calls for annual reporting to Congress on the progress of GFA implementation. It will be critical to temper expectations on what is feasible and possible given short reporting timeframes while also designing a DM&E system that is flexible and responsive to quickly adapting programs. There should also be balanced distinctions on what needs to be reported to Congress within each timeframe weighed against benefit and cost considerations for generating that evidence—including capacity, human, and resource costs, and pushing the brunt of data collection onto already overburdened implementers. Investing time and money in the beginning phases of implementation to design monitoring systems that are user-friendly, locally driven, provide incentives for consistent use, leverage past efforts and systems, and provide capacity-building to users will not only enhance buy-in but will also increase the quality of data collected for more effective analysis.

Further intensifying this situation is a massive publication bias. Most implementing partners do not or cannot prove that their programs prevent conflict, reduce violence and extremism, and/or build sustainable peace. When organizational partners do conduct evaluations and generate data and evidence, they often do not publish it due to competition or fear of publishing sensitive data from a fragile and conflict-affected state. Therefore, one important consideration is how to publish data that is sanitized enough so that implementers and donors can learn from what works without fear of putting programs and staff at risk. Donors and policymakers must play a critical role in supporting an ethos of transparency through assuring the open dissemination of findings, both successes and failures; supporting mechanisms for institutional learning;



Notes on challenges and needs for program design, monitoring, and evaluation from the European seminar Evaluating and Monitoring Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes. Photo: DG EMPL.

mainstreaming evidence-based design while supporting risk and exploration of new programmatic approaches; publishing programmatic tools and indicators; and providing open data platforms that adhere to strict data-protection and privacy policies. Additionally, there are data that the US government has access to that also must be released. The Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) has stockpiles of excellent data on conflict prevention programs. These data could be released after a certain time limit has passed to reduce sensitivity.

Enacting stronger procedures to support the development of DM&E capacity, better fund research on peacebuilding impact, and engender an ethos of transparency through the open dissemination of findings are critical components of support for data-driven strategy and evaluation. However, even when research and data are available, as a field we do not do a great job of learning from them and making them applicable to programs. Therefore, if we believe this work is important and effective and can be replicated, then we need to prove it, learn from it, and publish it. Implementers must adhere to a standard of publication of data, and donors must require it.

This is a strong call for much-needed evaluation, but the specifics of measurement and selection criteria are strategically left broad, other than the requirement that they be empirical. Implementing the GFA will require careful thought, particularly in relation to the indicators and DM&E

strategies chosen by implementing partners. There have been recent developments in terms of better mapping of peacebuilding indicators, including the recent launch of AfP's Eirene Peacebuilding Database™. This database is a comprehensive collection of 3,381 indicators from 2,008 publicly available peacebuilding resources that will assist in enhancing assessments and measuring impact across seven program areas. The Eirene Peacebuilding Database™ further lays the foundation for developing a shared set of core key measures describing peacebuilding success/effectiveness. It demonstrates that rigorous evaluation is possible and offers a resource for the design of M&E strategies for the GFA implementation.

Develop a consciously designed and sufficiently resourced system for DM&E

One potential pitfall in developing evidence-based DM&E is the placement of emphasis on the design, monitoring, and evaluation of program activities at the expense of attention on the design and administration of the DM&E system itself. Without sufficient attention paid to this element, it is possible for DM&E systems to commit to data that can't reasonably be collected, or is collected through methods that may turn out to be disruptive to program activities. A conscious design not only of projects but of the DM&E system itself can mitigate this issue. There are many key considerations that should

be included in the development of this system prior to its implementation: the consistency and scope of reporting, timeframes for monitoring, consistency across measures, and general human resource questions (such as who collects what data, how measures are standardized or disaggregated across different contexts, how knowledge is managed and shared, etc.). Investing time early in the implementation plan to effectively design the DM&E model, with key consideration to lessons learned from past efforts, will significantly improve the system and help safeguard its success and sustainability. Conscious attention paid to the structure of the DM&E system itself also allows for review of the quality and support for the theories of change that the intervention is based on, allowing for a careful test of these approaches against evidence, as discussed in Recommendation 13.

Improve adaptive management in strategy development

One additional key area that must be addressed in designing and monitoring programming is adaptive management. The USAID Acquisition and Assistance Strategy addresses the importance of this concept, as do other strategies, but there are key challenges and needed reforms for implementing adaptive management in peacebuilding programs.

Peacebuilding and conflict prevention programs take place in complex, volatile, conflict-affected, and fragile contexts. AfP's research on adaptive management, *Snapshot of Adaptive Management in Peacebuilding Programs*, found that "these programs must be highly responsive to these shifting contexts and become standard practice, yet current monitoring and evaluation frameworks are often too rigid and linear to allow for adaptive learning and programming."³⁵ Overall, findings from this report recommended that in order to successfully integrate adaptive management into programming, it had to be properly resourced and built into the design of the program. Beyond these key issues, adaptive management must include securing buy-in for an enabling culture and clearly defining technical requirements. It also requires effective and well-resourced systems for information management and a learning agenda. It is essential to generate shared knowledge on what works and what does not work, and ensure that these learnings are transferred to other GFA countries/regions and non-GFA countries/regions.

RECOMMENDATION 6 REALIZE THAT LOCAL OWNERSHIP AND YOUTH AND WOMEN ARE CRITICAL IN DEVELOPING, IMPLEMENTING, MONITORING, AND EVALUATING THE GFS AND COUNTRY AND REGIONAL TEN-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLANS.

Local and locally led participation of marginalized groups is a strong theme in the GFA, and the GFS must outline how to engage and partner with legitimate local authorities and local civil society during the consultation period and throughout implementation of the ten-year plan. Section 504(a)(4) of the GFA states that the goals of the GFA must be addressed through participatory, locally led programs, empowering marginalized groups such as youth and women. Additionally, Section 504(a)(5) requires the GFS to describe approaches that ensure national leadership where appropriate and participatory engagement by civil society and local partners in the design, implementation, and monitoring of programs.

Implementing recommendations and findings from research such as Stopping As Success will help usher in a new era of more effective, sustainable, locally led peacebuilding by ensuring the voices and needs of local actors are at the forefront of decision-making.

There are significant challenges to ensuring local ownership and partnership with bilateral and multilateral donors and international non-government organizations (INGOs). A recent report by Peace Direct and AfP, *Local Peacebuilding: What Works and Why*, addresses these significant challenges. The lack of design, monitoring, and evaluation capacity was identified as a critical barrier for entry for local peacebuilders and organizations. This capacity deficit exacerbates other obstacles imposed by the international aid community, including risk aversion, prejudice, operational constraints, and a general skepticism that local actors have the requisite depth, scope, and scale of impact.³⁶ US personnel should also integrate the lessons and tools outlined in cutting-edge findings from *Stopping As Success*.³⁷ There are eight key findings from this research that include the need to develop partnerships based on solidarity and trust from the beginning between local partners and INGOs; INGOs that promote local leadership should be able to transition in a more sustainable way, and INGOs need to address existing power imbalances and engage in mutual transformation. These recommendations and

findings, if implemented, will help usher in a new era of more effective, sustainable, locally led peacebuilding by ensuring the voices and needs of local actors are at the forefront of decision-making.

Local organizations on the front lines of conflict are often the actors best equipped for building peace, yet they are systematically neglected and marginalized by current funding approaches. The USAID Acquisition and Assistance Strategy released in December 2018 found “the Agency has lacked sustained commitment to mobilizing new and local partners. The Local Solutions initiative in recent years yielded mixed results in terms of balancing localization objectives with development outcomes and quickly reached diminishing returns in terms of building actual capacity and strengthening local ownership.”³⁸ The report continues to state “assistance must put local partner capacity and performance improvement back at the core of our technical approach and how we measure success.” USAID’S Office of Local Sustainability was established to support locally led development by setting aside a portion of its annual budget to provide funding support for unsolicited proposals and applications that advance this development. The Local Solutions initiative target indicator was 30 percent of program funds obligated to local organizations. USAID procurement on average only met half of this target. USAID is shifting Local Partner Engagement to Capacity Strengthening and the 30 percent funding indicator was replaced by Capacity Building for Local Development, or CBLD-9, which creates a common standard for all missions to use in measuring local partners’ organizational performance. USAID is now measuring strengthened local capacity instead of the percentage of funds received. While this reform is a significant change, USAID should continue to expand its New Partnerships initiative.

Increasing local ownership is critical for the GFA to succeed, and procurement reform is critical to provide local organizations with more flexible financial opportunities and other tools that enable them to better generate, implement, and scale local solutions. Procurement reform should include the ability to provide flexible funding for core support of local organizations, rapid emergency response funding, seed funding for community-based groups to generate their own funds, and small grant programs administered by local civil society organizations in regional hubs. The United Nations Community Guidelines are also a great resource for ensuring local ownership. These guidelines call for smaller-scale, predictable, flexible, and risk-tolerant local funding modalities, simple and user-friendly grant application templates, and selection/reporting criteria. Finally, there should be more opportunities for local civil society to use open innovation programs to elevate their voices and build partnerships across communities and with the private sector and government. While open innovation programs are already being used, there

are significant missed opportunities for them to be targeted toward and used by local stakeholders in conflict-affected and fragile contexts.

Monitor the closing civic space

Another important element to ensure local ownership is to address restricted and closing civil society space, which is often “an early warning sign for fragility, conflict and violence.”³⁹ A politically and/or legally restricted environment will impede the ability of local civil society actors to work on stabilization and conflict prevention. The closing of local civil space is a growing concern in many conflict-affected and fragile states, especially in authoritarian regimes. Marginalized communities are particularly vulnerable in such environments, and this is a critical area in which greater US diplomatic engagement is needed. In many countries where civil society space is closing, the US government could do more to ensure this issue is on the top of their agenda, as an active and unfettered civil society is a key element of anchoring stable and resilient societies, to the long-term benefit of US national security. However, civil society in these contexts is often not supported or protected, and this is a critical diplomatic mistake.

Engage local civil society early and deeply, including youth and women

Engaging civil society actors is both a formal requirement of the GFA and a best practice. The United Nations and other donors are also struggling with how to meaningfully partner with local civil society. The recently developed United Nations Community Guidelines call for community ownership through homegrown peacebuilding solutions that are prioritized and fostered through mutually beneficial, respectful, and transparent partnerships. The guidelines are thorough and recommend performing conflict-sensitive and risk-informed joint community contextual analysis, mapping community and local civil society actors, and outlining specific recommendations. More importantly, these guidelines were also developed after significant consultations with local civil society.

In engaging civil society, existing best practices call for the inclusion of all major identity groups involved in a conflict, including women, and engaging groups that represent the different ethnic or religious identities that might be involved in the conflict. However, another important constituency is youth. The world’s rising youth population is currently at 1.8 billion, with the majority of youth residing in conflict-affected or fragile countries.⁴⁰ For example, in Ethiopia, 41 percent of the population is under 15, and more than 28 percent is aged 15 to 29, while in South Sudan, nearly 74 percent of the population is under 30.⁴¹ Youth face structural challenges in receiving US foreign assistance and are often on the tail end of funding distribution,⁴² even though youth-led programs



A woman near part of her cocoa crop in Peru, part of a illicit crop substitution program between USAID, the Peruvian government, and civil society groups. Photo: Bobby Neptune, USAID

and initiatives function on very modest budgets, the majority being as low as \$10,000 year, according to a recent study.⁴³ To ensure the successful implementation of the GFA, youth-led initiatives and the meaningful engagement of youth in addressing global fragility must be prioritized. The prioritization of youth-led programs and the meaningful inclusion of young men and women in strategy-setting and decision-making is cost-effective and can contribute to intergenerational success of conflict-prevention efforts.

Youth populations in conflicts and fragile states have mostly known violence and poverty, and many are yearning for a positive outlet to contribute to the stability and peace of their societies. To truly empower youth to become catalysts for change, their past grievances and trauma must be addressed and integrated throughout GFA programming, and not just in a separate or add-on program. Whether it is supporting youth in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts or facilitation training, or engaging victims of sexual violence in decision-making, their mental health and well-being requires attention. Neglecting the social support needs of youth would cause the implementation of the GFA to run the risk of driving young men and women toward negative coping mechanisms and contributing to higher rates of instability and extremism.

Finally, while the Women, Peace, and Security Act (WPS) is legislation that recognizes women as critical to peacemaking and security maintenance and echoes many of themes within UN Security Council resolutions, the implementation of the act has been slow. The law was developed based on over two decades of best practices from research and programs. The goal of the law is to promote the participation of women in conflict prevention, management, and resolution, and post-conflict relief and recovery efforts.⁴⁴ It is important that the WPS is integrated in GFA strategy and country/regional plans because women and girls are disproportionately impacted by fragility and conflict—and are often an overlooked part of stability solutions⁴⁵—and so gender experts, academics, and civil society must become familiar with the new GFA and push for meaningful gender-informed implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 7 TO ACHIEVE A MULTISECTORAL APPROACH, DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS MUST ALSO PREVENT CONFLICT AND BE CONFLICT-SENSITIVE AND INTEGRATED HOLISTICALLY INTO THE STRATEGY.

Section 504(a)(2) requires the GFS to include specific objectives and multisectoral approaches to reduce fragility and the causes of violence, including those that strengthen state-society relations, curb extremist ideology, and make society less vulnerable to the spread of extremism and violence.

Section 504(a)(4) states that the GFS must address the long-term underlying causes of fragility and violence and outlines the broad range of activities to be implemented, including inclusive dialogue and conflict resolution processes, justice sector reform, good governance, inclusive and accountable service delivery, community policing and civilian security, and security sector reform.

Inequality, economic strains, abuse by security forces, and ineffective and illegitimate governance are grievances that are drivers of conflict, and development and humanitarian assistance are instrumental in addressing these and other grievances and reducing conflict dynamics. The developing consensus in the empirical literature is that the links between economic development, good governance, and sustainable peace are so strong that weaknesses in any one of those pillars undermines the others. In the words of James Fearon, “All good things tend to go together.”⁴⁶ In particular, there is evidence that good governance—governance systems that are seen as inclusive in their distribution of goods, participatory in their decision-making, and transparent and accountable in their procedures—is an important aspect of sustainable peace.^{47, 48}

Programs in a selected GFA country across all the pillars of good governance and development need to be adapted so that indicators and outcomes that measure their impact also address conflict dynamics.⁴⁹ This approach means that a strategy must revolve around the integration and interoperability of conflict prevention and peacebuilding in development assistance programs and security sector reforms in conflict-affected and fragile states. How do we ensure that conflict prevention and conflict sensitivity principles are meaningfully integrated into all development sectors relevant for the GFS and the country plans?

The GFS must break down silos between sectors and support cross-sectoral collaboration. However, the peacebuilding field’s reach is inhibited by its insular, dispersed, and projectized nature. This was a shared concern expressed by respondents in the *Perspectives in Peacebuilding* report, who described a “segregation” of the peacebuilding field, within itself and from other sectors.⁵⁰ The need to break down silos and better integrate peacebuilding efforts across sectors, including health and humanitarian aid, was a theme that respondents consistently cited as being both critical opportunities for the field and the greatest reform needed to build sustainable peace.

Inequality, economic strains, abuse by security forces, and ineffective and illegitimate governance are grievances that are drivers of conflict, and development and humanitarian assistance are instrumental in addressing these and other grievances and reducing conflict dynamics.

At the same time, other development sectors and humanitarian assistance programs struggle to include conflict prevention and conflict sensitivity. There are numerous challenges that must be overcome to create a multisectoral GFS. For example, there is a lack of understanding of how to implement health programs that would also measure conflict prevention. Additionally, there has been low demand from donors, a lack of resources, and a belief among some development and humanitarian implementers that their programs are not operating in a conflict-affected country or region (or reluctance to admit it). Additionally, many development and humanitarian actors believe they must be completely impartial, and that working on “conflict prevention or stabilization” will take away from their neutrality. These challenges can be overcome by requiring donors to mandate meaningful implementation of conflict prevention indicators and conflict sensitivity principles. The peacebuilding field must develop conflict prevention impact indicators tailored to other development sectors. It is essential to track the project’s impact on conflict and peace dynamics in its target context and more broadly. Developing and tracking interaction indicators (that measure changes in conflict and peace dynamics closely linked to the project’s sphere of influence) will alert staff to risks of doing harm and also reveal positive peace impacts.⁵¹

The peacebuilding field must also be less purist and adjust the terminology to make conflict prevention and sensitivity terminology more palatable to other sectors and simplify the conflict sensitivity principles by providing practical guidelines of what works.

Conflict sensitivity is a principle that is accepted as fundamental in peacebuilding programs and by donors. However, even though “do no harm” has been around for more than two decades (and a key component of a conflict assessment), many organizations and practitioners struggle to integrate conflict sensitivity into programming. Conflict sensitivity, or “do no harm,” refers to a set of principles for operating in conflict and in fragile environments. In the simplest form, conflict sensitivity principles call on organizations to 1) understand the conflict dynamics in the areas in which they work, 2) understand how their interventions interact with those dynamics, and 3) take steps to ensure that their actions reduce negative outcomes and increase positive outcomes in conflict settings.⁵²

It is critical that all programs in selected countries, including security sector reform programs, prevent conflict and maximize opportunities for peace across all development sectors and are included in the country and regional ten-year plans when appropriate.

It is critical that all programs in selected countries, including security sector reform programs, prevent conflict and maximize opportunities for peace across all development sectors and are included in the country and regional ten-year plans when appropriate. For example, in the DRC during the most recent Ebola virus outbreak, violent conflict broke out, and health clinics were attacked in part because the health programs did not incorporate a conflict-prevention lens. This example shows that even development programs that are perceived as “neutral” can be targets of violent conflict and need to be conflict-sensitive. The advantages of ensuring that all development sectors and humanitarian assistance initiatives are conflict-sensitive will ensure the programs do not cause violence and conflict and, just as importantly, do contribute to peace and security.

If programs are not fully integrated into the GFS then it will be business as usual, with the bulk of foreign assistance funding devoted to development programs, including agriculture, food assistance, and health, with separate, siloed conflict prevention and stabilization programs. For example, in Bangladesh, a significant portion of assistance has gone to development sectors, including health and education, leading to a significant positive increase in health and education indicators. In contrast, funding for governance and conflict is limited, even though ineffective and illegitimate governance is cited as a major grievance resulting in increased levels of violent conflict and violent extremism, with potential to upend the preceding health and development gains.⁵³ Ensuring inclusion of conflict prevention and a sensitive approach by other development

programs in the country and regional ten-year plans will allow the USG to actually holistically address conflict dynamics. For example, in Somalia, the Mercy Corps study *If Youth Are Given the Chance* showed how two components of their USAID-funded Somali Youth Learners Initiative (SYLI)—secondary education and civic engagement opportunities—affected young people’s support for armed opposition groups.⁵⁴ This example shows the importance of integrating development sectors with conflict prevention programming as part of the GFS and ten-year country and regional plans.

RECOMMENDATION 8

DIPLOMATIC AND PROGRAMMATIC EFFORTS MUST BE LINKED.

The GFA requires the US government to develop a Global Fragility Strategy to “contribute to the stabilization of conflict-affected areas, address global fragility, and strengthen the capacity of the United States to be an effective leader of international efforts to prevent extremism and violent conflict.” A successful strategy will give equal importance to diplomacy and assistance as implementation tools. The GFA **cannot just be about more programs and more resources; it requires an integrated approach that combines resolute and agile diplomacy alongside sustained and flexible assistance that is rooted in evidence and local leadership.**

Unfortunately, high-level diplomatic efforts are often disconnected from the operational work conducted by many agencies and embassies operating in conflict-affected and fragile countries. Similarly, while the GFA seeks to establish a long-term strategic approach to responding to political violence, diplomatic efforts are often geared to responding to immediate global crises. These disconnects may produce a gap between high-level messaging offered by senior officials within the US State Department and the day-to-day operations being pursued by staff in local embassies.

Foreign assistance is instrumental to the GFS because it helps address grievances that fuel violent conflict. Assistance that supports civil societies’ capacity to address societal grievances, uphold universal rights, support societal cohesion, and hold government accountable is a key element of the GFA. At the same time, greater US foreign-assistance support for good governance is essential to help empower and build the capacity of governments and local actors to deliver basic services, be responsive to their citizens, and ensure institutions are effective and legitimate. Governance assistance, which has declined, must be a core pillar of the strategy, because violent conflict is political at its core, and development assistance alone is not enough.

Diplomacy is critical to the success of the GFS, as well. The United States must use diplomacy to build coalitions and implore host governments to address causes of violence by enhancing service delivery, curbing corruption, reining in abusive security forces, and/or dissuading the same actors from orchestrating violence in the first place. US diplomacy is essential to deterring external actors like China, Russia, Iran, or Gulf Arab nations from funneling arms and other destabilizing resources or exacerbating social tensions that fuel violence. US-led diplomatic engagement is also critical to galvanizing support from regional actors, donor governments, and multilateral organizations that can help share the burden

of costs associated with addressing the causes of fragility and violent conflict and also address how to change and align a GFA government’s policies.

The GFA cannot just be about more programs and more resources; it requires an integrated approach that combines resolute and agile diplomacy alongside sustained and flexible assistance that is rooted in evidence and local leadership.

US diplomacy is also essential to protecting civil society space so that local stakeholders can provide locally driven solutions and programs without fear of reprisal. Resolute diplomacy requires consistent messages to host governments from Washington, DC, policymakers, and ambassadors in the field, without allowing individual agency equities to undercut firm messages to underperforming host governments. Policymakers and donors must be willing to withdraw funding for governance programming in countries with little legitimacy at the national level if certain conditions on transparency and promised reforms are not met.⁵⁵ Conditionality on development programs—for the US government and for partners—may not always be the appropriate tool to deploy to ensure accountability; however, it should at least be an available tool.⁵⁶

RECOMMENDATION 9

USE THE WHOLE ICEBERG: PARTNER AND COORDINATE WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE SPECIFIC COUNTRY OR REGION.

The theme of coordinating with key stakeholders in the country/region selected is a fundamental one that is found in a number of sections in the GFA. Section 504(a)(8) states that the strategy must identify mechanisms to improve coordination between the US, foreign governments, international organizations, and the private sector. Additionally, Section 504(a)(9) requires the strategy to address efforts to expand public-private partnerships and leverage the private sector, and Section 504(a)(5) requires that the strategy describe approaches that ensure national leadership.

The GFA is intended to lay out among US government departments and agencies a coordination mechanism for the stabilization and prevention of state fragility. This is necessary but insufficient for effective stabilization; because the goal of stabilization and prevention is the establishment of sustainable, locally legitimate governance and development, it's impossible for US entities in and of themselves to deliver long-term stability. Instead, the goal of the US governmental elements working on the GFA should be to support, in a coordinated way, locally led initiatives. The authors of the GFA recognized this, and the GFA explicitly calls for the strategy and activities developed under the GFA to “identify mechanisms to improve coordination between the United States, foreign governments, and international organizations, including the World Bank, the United Nations, regional organizations, and private sector organizations [and] address efforts to expand public-private partnerships and leverage private sector resources.”⁵⁷

Such coordination acknowledges the capacity limitations of the US government in the face of the scope of the challenge of fragility and conflict. It also acknowledges the reality that, when considering the actors on the ground in fragile and conflict-affected states, the US government is often an important actor but a small piece—the tip of the iceberg—of all of the relevant actors operating in the region. Effectively addressing fragility will require that the stabilization and prevention plans developed by USG actors include components that reach out to other entities involved in the conflict. This, in particular, includes local governments and civil society groups, locally operating international businesses (especially those based in the US or with ties to USG actors), regional governments, and multilateral organizations operating in the region. Groups

of all types organized around specific identity groups can be valuable as well. Faith leaders, women's groups, groups focused on bringing women into peace promotion, and groups representing different ethnic or religious communities in areas of fragility can be important to include.

The US government is often just the tip of the iceberg of all of the actors operating in fragile and conflict-affected states. Effectively addressing fragility will require that the stabilization and prevention plans developed by USG actors include components that reach out to entities including local governments and civil society groups, locally operating international businesses, regional governments, and multilateral organizations, and identity groups.

The recommendations below provide a perspective on how to map and execute such outreach. These are largely suggested as generic approaches, which is not meant to discount the fact that there are already extant success stories, as well as examples of less successful work, in USG actors working with multi-stakeholder processes. Specific recommendations include the following.

Confront and accept risk

Effective collaboration requires a fundamental rethinking and acceptance of the risk posture of US diplomats and partners implementing development programs. When embassy staff face strict restrictions on their travel, it limits the US government from understanding the context and developing local partnerships in pursuit of our foreign policy goals. Additionally, partners implementing contracts instead of grants have tougher restrictions on travel and security. This issue has become deeply politicized. As a result, security decision-makers often assume a risk-avoidance versus a risk-management stance, leading to missed opportunities and contributing to the loss of American influence overseas. One approach that should be considered is directly addressing the incentives for civilians working overseas through offering more formal incentives and risk-mitigation approaches, similar to those offered to military personnel, like the GI Bill. Additionally, the work civilians do in these regions must also be honored in a similar fashion, as military personnel and families are honored throughout American culture.

More attention should also be given to exploring creative ways to leverage US relationships with bilateral and multilateral partners. Deploying alongside our bilateral and multilateral

partners will greatly enhance our ability to identify, design, and execute opportunities for increased burden-sharing and more efficient use of international development resources. Relatedly, there is space for the US to engage more unarmed civilian protection organizations to assist with enabling better risk management for civilian personnel, as has been done in South Sudan.

Any shift toward a more forward-leaning approach to US civilian presence overseas will require greater attention to duty-of-care issues for diplomats and development experts serving in high-threat environments. To address this, Congress should commission a formal study of how bureaucratic disincentives lead to lowest-common-denominator approaches to the movement of US government civilians overseas and how to incentivize accepting risk. While there has been improvement of the care and services available to civilians deployed, including partners traveling to and returning from high-threat environments (e.g., pre-deployment psychosocial education and preparation, in-country support, and post-deployment evaluation and care), much more needs to be done. These services will require better resources for and data on personnel serving in these challenging environments and tailored training for managers of deployed staff who do not work in these environments.

Engage locally legitimate authorities and local peacebuilders

As acknowledged in the Stabilization Assistance Review (SAR),

Stabilization is an inherently political endeavor that requires aligning U.S. Government efforts—diplomatic engagement, foreign assistance, and defense—toward supporting locally legitimate authorities and systems to peaceably manage conflict and prevent violence.⁵⁸

This, in turn, cannot effectively be done by a stand-alone process that imposes political leaders or systems without local direction; the literature is very clear that, in that case, even candidates with local support will often struggle for legitimacy.⁵⁹ Instead, effective stabilization and prevention planning comes from identifying locally legitimate authorities and working with them to codevelop plans for long-term stabilization. This also means working with local peacebuilding organizations as partners for direct contributions to peace and the promotion of local legitimacy. The centrality of these issues was reinforced by a 2019 brief from CSIS on the implementation of the SAR which underlined the critical value of local partnerships.⁶⁰ Achieving this may require the



A consultative workshop held by the The South Sudan Women's Peace Network (SSWPN) in 2015, an example of local civil society groups involved in stabilization efforts. Photo: UNMISS.

following specific adaptations or changes as discussed in Recommendation 6:

- Develop processes for incorporating local partners into the project design phase before calls for implementation are released.
- Avoid large and complexly funded projects in favor of coordinated smaller projects that are more accessible to local institutions.
- Ensure that coordination is transparent in all directions; internally, it is important to be transparent about the goals and limitations of the coordination with local partners.

Map and reach out to US businesses operating in the region and local private sector actors as potential partners

Private sector actors represent a potential resource for engagement in peacebuilding and particularly in prevention: they have a vested interest in maintaining stability in areas where they operate due to the costs of conflict. Private sector partners have contributed to peace processes and stabilization activities in many conflict situations⁶¹ but remain relatively under-engaged in conflict prevention and stabilization work. They also, of course, can contribute knowingly or unknowingly to drivers of conflict.

The potentially positive influence that private sector actors can have is limited by their interest, role, and engagement and by their role in the local country, but in general, where companies have demonstrated effective approaches to peacebuilding and stabilization, their contributions have included message amplification and the promotion of peacebuilding, direct diplomacy with potential actors in the conflict, and other forms of technical and direct support for stabilization activities. Where private sector actors are seen as uninterested in politics but instead interested only in profit, this can have an unexpected side benefit of positioning them to be seen as neutral mediators in conflict settings, although it can also make it more challenging to convince them to take an interest in the conflict.

One example of this role comes from Kenya, where the Kenyan private sector played a significant role in responding to and preventing post-election violence in the aftermath of the 2007 elections and the leadup to the 2013 election. The Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), as well as individual companies such as Safaricom, played an active and multifaceted role in peacebuilding in Kenya. This included direct diplomacy as well as messaging campaigns and peace-promoting actions.⁶²

Elements that hinder the positive engagement of private sector actors who may otherwise want to promote peace can

include concerns about engaging in political issues and a lack of capacity to work outside of their specific businesses. These issues can be mitigated by working through professional associations or business associations, which, by their nature, have the capacity and interest to work on issues with political dimensions. In Colombia, for example, the National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia has been at the forefront of work with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation and international development non-government organizations to build multidimensional development programs focused on peace.⁶³

Coordinate or collaborate with other multilaterals and bilateral donors or implementors

In the past several years, the United Nations and the World Bank have both redeveloped their plans for stabilization and peacebuilding to focus on the connections between sustainable stability and issues of security, economic development, and political effectiveness. This means that the major multilateral institutions operating in the kinds of fragile and conflict-affected states that the GFA targets have adopted an orientation to stabilization that is consonant with the GFA, suggesting that there are points of connection in strategy and operations between USG and other organizations operating in the target countries. Separate from this strategic alignment, multilateral organizations operating in countries of interest are likely to be executing relatively well-resourced engagement. If USG actors do not coordinate with these partners, the risk is high that the work being done by the USG will duplicate efforts, if not even undermine or be undermined by the work being done by other organizations. Experiences such as the 2013 Stabilization Leaders Forum demonstrate the potential for collaborative learning between partner states interested in stabilization.

Deconfliction and (better) active cooperation with other multilaterals and donor states operating in areas of interest will be an important component of an effective strategy. USG actors should identify primary barriers to this cooperation, whether that involves issues of a lack of engagement or barriers coming from US policy or guidelines that limit the ability of USG actors to partner with multilaterals, and work to address these barriers. USG implementors should also consider questions of national leadership and commitment to stabilization operations when considering partnerships: depending on the specific changing politics of other countries, opportunities for effective partnerships may evolve.

RECOMMENDATION 10 DEVELOP THE HUMAN ELEMENT: STAFFING WILL DETERMINE SUCCESS.

The text of the Global Fragility Act requires that the designers and implementers of the GFA consider questions of resources and responsibilities as part of the report submitted with the strategy to Congress on September 15, 2020. Section 504(c)(4) specifically requires the government to report “an identification of the authorities, staffing, and other requirements, as necessary and appropriate, needed to effectively implement the Global Fragility Strategy.”⁶⁴

In doing so, the GFA acknowledges that the execution of effective strategies is highly dependent on the specific staffing. This is built on a developing body of research exploring the lessons learned from coordinated peacebuilding that has demonstrated that issues of staffing and personnel—particularly misalignment of institutional incentives or goals at the individual and strategic levels—have hampered the effectiveness of coordination across multiple institutions.⁶⁵ Alongside these issues, the same research has highlighted the way that management of interpersonal relations, or the human element, has contributed to the success (or lack thereof) of these missions. On the more negative side, a failure to manage the tension that comes from asking someone trained in one approach (such as diplomacy, development, or security) to work in another domain is a key point of friction that leads to a lack of commitment and/or consistent execution, something that arose in some of NATO’s approaches to coordinated peacebuilding in Afghanistan.⁶⁶ On the more positive side, a consistent element of case studies of effective coordinated missions is the presence of a community of engaged professionals who had strong enough interpersonal relationships to develop coordination tools and approaches directly.⁶⁷

The success of the GFA’s implementation is likely to be as much, or more, influenced by questions of interpersonal connections and the human elements of the process as it is by issues of formal administrative structures.

Collectively, this research shows that the success of the GFA’s implementation is likely to be as much, or more, influenced by questions of interpersonal connections and the human elements of the process as it is by issues of formal administrative structures. Systems to identify and support the human element of implementation will be important to achieving success. Specific recommendations include the following.

Reinforce country team efforts and ensure buy-in from the Ambassador and USAID Mission Director

Execution of the strategies developed through the GFA will inevitably hinge on the embassy/USAID country staff in the targeted country. In particular, it will depend on working with local civil society, government, and private sector actors (as discussed below). Equally important, if not more so, is that it will depend on the engagement and support of the embassy staff. This means that early engagement with the Ambassador and USAID Mission Director, and a confidence that they support both the goals and the strategy of the proposed engagement, is likely a necessary step for success. Simple acceptance of the work is not sufficient: when the inevitable issues or confusions come up, it is likely that embassy and mission staff will need to be actively engaged in addressing them. Vocal and sustained support from the Ambassador and USAID Mission Director will be needed to set the conditions to allow for that engagement.

Match the skills and training of staff to the needs of the work

The GFA explicitly requires new skills and strategies outside of the work typically undertaken by the primary agencies tasked with implementing it. Specifically, it calls for a formal process to identify countries of interest through the lens of specific indicators and issues, plans for working on longer-term timelines than staff usually are asked to work on, and formal consideration and coordination of the intersection between issues of economic development, security, and good governance, in addition to tools for effective coordination. Each of these represents a relatively new way of working. Developing strategic selection frameworks requires conscious consideration of a number of issues relating to risk, as well as the need for clear theories of change and monitoring frameworks, as discussed below. Planning for ten years rather than the typical shorter cycles calls for systemic thinking about longer-term changes, as well as longer-term monitoring and evaluation efforts. Considering the intersections between political issues, development, and security requires agency staff to familiarize themselves with new research and practice outside their historic focus. Developing better methods of coordination requires engaging with new approaches to interagency work.

Collectively, this means that the GFA is explicitly a recognition that stabilization and the prevention of fragility require specific expertise. Whether this expertise comes from the development of organic capacity through training and support or is imported expertise, the GFA acknowledges that planning and execution without specific expertise in conflict dynamics and stabilization will likely not be effective.

A specific recommendation is that Congress should pass companion legislation to the GFA or provide for an early release of GFA funds that appropriates resources for training and/or education for these relevant skills, and should request a plan from State and USAID DG/HR leadership for how to recruit, incentivize, and maintain these critical skills in the civilian workforce. Such requirements are commonplace at the Department of Defense, and the work of the State Department and USAID is just as critical to protecting US national interests.

This issue intersects with the need to work closely with local staff and local organizations. Often, the demands of the local embassy and local staff will not necessarily line up with the expertise needed to develop stabilization or prevention plans. In this case, it is not likely that local staff will be hired with an eye to the specific issue expertise. As a result, there may be a tension between expertise and local engagement. The development or identification of training programs and investment in developing local expertise is one way to address this challenge. While such support is necessarily longer in timeline than hiring external expertise (or, worse, accepting a lack of expert engagement), it may be the only way to ensure informed engagement with the issues and the local plan. Investing in local staff in this way is also likely to generate more commitment.

Related to both of the above are questions of how performance management of staff is handled. Formal systems for monthly or quarterly assessment of staff activities through the lens of the country strategy can be an important tool for learning and establishing feedback loops. These kinds of formal assessments, even if relatively brief, can also support other issues identified in the GFA, including the need for more evidence-based monitoring and evaluation and clarifying the professional incentives of staff.

Build up local staff

Local staff will be critical to the success of the program. Local embassy and USAID staff are a critical source of information about local conditions and the trajectory of the country, as well as being those with the strongest direct interest and engagement in the stability of their country. This is particularly true for countries classified as hardship posts, where US personnel often transition to a new position (and country) frequently. Local staff therefore provide a critical source of policy stability for programs that potentially may last decades. Ensuring that they are involved in a meaningful and significant way in the development of the strategy can improve both the specific plans and strategies, as well as generate commitment to the vision that will help address the inevitable issues that arise.

Address staffing shortfalls

Many of the US embassies residing in countries likely to be selected for a fragility strategy, especially a prevention strategy, face significant staffing shortages and high turnover rates. The requirements for increased analysis, monitoring, and evaluation will translate into an unfunded mandate unless they are paired with additional staffing resources for direct-hire US personnel. To address this, Congress should appropriate funding for dedicated positions to assist in the assessment, planning, and implementation of fragility strategies in selected countries and/or lift the overhead cap on funding accounts such as the Complex Crises Fund. Currently, the funding cap on the Complex Crises Fund is 5 percent so that USAID can use these funds to hire qualified staff. Alternatively, an increase in staffing could be made up of temporary duty assignments, pulling staff from Washington and placing them in a field setting. This may be particularly useful in a start-up phase. However, an emphasis on temporary duty assignments may exacerbate the related issue of having staff rotate too quickly out of the field. Sequencing both temporary and longer-term tours of duty in the field is important to ensure that there is not simultaneous mass turnover leading to a significant loss of field expertise at the same time.

RECOMMENDATION 11 PROCUREMENT REFORM NEEDS TO BE MORE STREAMLINED AND LESS PRESCRIPTIVE, AND RESULT IN PROCUREMENT MECHANISMS THAT ARE FASTER, MORE DIVERSIFIED, AND MORE ADAPTIVE, AND WHICH ALLOW FOR LONGER DURATION OF PROGRAMS.

Section 504(c)(4) requests in the report submitted to Congress on September 15, 2020, that the USG identify authorities, staffing, and other requirements as necessary to effectively implement the GFA.

Under the GFA, USAID is responsible for overseeing prevention programs, and is the lead implementing agency for development, humanitarian, and related non-security-program policy.⁶⁸ USAID's procurement process was not built for speed and adaption. The USAID Acquisition and Assistance Strategy, issued in December 2018, developed better procurement mechanisms for the design, management, and measurement of the program cycle and addressed many procurement issues plaguing USAID's ability to program in a timely and effective manner. The strategy review was a highly collaborative process with civil society. Many of the changes are aimed at doing away with prescriptive up-front program designs that contribute to the long procurement process, which can take as long as two years from program design to award and to the start of the program. Additionally, the reforms are aimed at addressing the programming mechanisms **to make them more flexible and adaptive**, which is essential for programming in conflict-affected and fragile states where conflict dynamics are not static. While the reforms in the strategy are welcomed, many still need to be implemented.

While USAID's procurement reforms are significant, many of the changes still need more robust implementation and policies, and this report addresses many of those issues.

While USAID's procurement reforms are significant, many of the changes still need more robust implementation and policies, and this report addresses many of those issues. Recommendations throughout this report focus on the need for procurement that addresses multisectoral and highly adaptive programming, radical flexibility, and innovation to build local ownership. Additionally, this report also addresses the need for stronger requirements to enhance monitoring and evaluation of programs to ensure the development of better evidence. However, a critical identified procurement issue that must be addressed for the GFA to be effectively implemented is the need to increase the speed of the program design, award, and start-up timeline.

Even under the current reforms, the speed of procurement and the lack of flexibility of funding accounts are extremely problematic and will hinder the effective implementation of the GFA. In a conflict-affected and fragile state, quick and adaptive programming is critical for success. Some US government officials question whether they can meet the needs of the GFA without relief from strict and lengthy procurement processes and funding account earmarks. USAID/OTI has notwithstanding authority⁶⁹ that allows for broad executive discretion from administrative requirements that is intended to enhance the program's rapid response capability. This authority allows USAID/OTI to provide quick, short-term, and adaptive programming in post-conflict countries over a few years.⁷⁰ A hybrid procurement model must be designed that fits the GFA strategy.

As discussed previously in this report, procurement mechanisms in the GFA strategy must be designed for a ten-year strategy that allows for longer program cycles that support greater local ownership and are highly adaptive and flexible. Therefore, while a new rapid procurement mechanism that is similar to OTI's mechanism is needed, not every procurement needs to be rapid under the GFA. In these contexts, traditional slower five-year awards are just as essential as quick, responsive projects—the former will allow for longer-term contributions toward more structural change. However, the RFP or grant process can't take years to develop, and it is critical to ensure funding is "healthy" for implementers—adaptable, not overly restrictive, and longer-term.

Finally, earmarked funding accounts are a significant detriment to the flexibility of funding that is needed for the successful implementation of the GFA. Earmark relief in GFA countries/regions should be seriously reviewed by Congress. This relief would not mean that all earmarked programs would end, but that some funds could be moved to other, more tailored conflict prevention programs that address conflict drivers.

RECOMMENDATION 12

ENSURE THAT PROGRAMS COUNTERING AND PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM ARE EVIDENCE-BASED AND THAT THERE IS A LEGISLATIVE FIX FOR THE MATERIAL SUPPORT LAWS.

Section 504(a)(2) requires the GFA to include specific objectives and multisectoral approaches to reduce fragility and the causes of violence, including those that strengthen state-society relations, curb extremist ideology, and make society less vulnerable to the spread of extremism and violence.⁷¹

Section 504(a)(12) specifically addresses the need to reduce the risk that programs, policies, or resources will facilitate corruption, empower or abet repressive local actors, or be exploited by extremists.⁷²

Over the last decade, the peacebuilding field has considerably deepened its understanding of the drivers of violent extremism (VE). Research has shown that grievances linked to state and security force abuses, perceptions of marginalization and injustice, relative economic and social deprivation, and desire for justice and purpose most consistently underpin mobilization to extremist violence.^{73, 74, 75} Additionally, conflict is the primary driver of terrorism, with over 95 percent of deaths from terrorism occurring in countries already in conflict. When combined with countries with high levels of political terror, the number jumps to over 99 percent.⁷⁶ While there is significant evidence about what drives violent extremism, there is less evidence on what works to prevent or mitigate it.

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While the field's understanding of the causes of extremism has deepened significantly over the past decade, for the reasons discussed in Recommendation 5, aggregated evidence of what works to address drivers of VE has yet to emerge. This hinders our ability to articulate cohesive programmatic and policy responses to VE. However, there is a developing body of knowledge compiling what is known in ways that can contribute to the incorporation of good evidence in country plans developed under the Global Fragility Strategy. In 2018, AfP released a report titled *Peacebuilding Approaches to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Assessing the Evidence for Key Theories of Change*.⁷⁷ Due to the changing evidence base, this report is currently being updated and will be released shortly. The 2018 report reviewed the primary theories of change in preventing and countering violent extremism peacebuilding approaches, which theories are supported by research and evidence of impact, which are

not, and the gaps. The report assessed that the theories of change (ToCs) used by programs preventing and countering violent extremism fall into two distinct approaches, with 5 accompanying ToCs.

Approach #1: Increasing Community Capacity to Resist and Mitigate Violence

ToCs:

- If communities feel that governments and security institutions are trustworthy, accountable, and responsive to their needs, levels of VE will go down.
- If trusted leaders in the community are empowered to understand and mitigate the risks of VE, they will exert their influence to resist VE movements and levels of VE will go down.

Approach #2: Altering the Behavior of Individuals Deemed at Risk of Engaging in Violence

ToCs:

- If at-risk youth feel empowered and capable of making a difference in their communities through peaceful mechanisms, then they will be less inclined to support and/or engage in VE.
- If at-risk youth are provided with tangible skills for social and economic advancement, then they will be less inclined to support and/or engage in VE.

The report's original findings, which are confirmed by recent evaluations, show that overall, programs that build resiliency to VE by increasing the strength and capacity of community networks are promising and more successful than a targeted "at-risk" approach. Preliminary findings highlight that programs that target at-risk individuals as stand-alone programming are ineffectual when they do not incorporate community-level development.⁷⁸ Additional theories of change on counter-narratives show they are effective when the counter-narratives are created and disseminated by credible local sources. Counter-narrative messages crafted by local religious and traditional leaders were effective at helping show the hypocrisy of Boko Haram as a corrupt, greedy organization focused on enriching its leaders, which helped youth resist joining Boko Haram.⁷⁹ There is also evidence of multisectoral programs that have been successful at reducing violent extremism. As already discussed in this report, the Mercy Corps study *If Youth Are Given the Chance* showed how two components of their USAID-funded Somali Youth Learners Initiative (SYLI)—secondary education and civic engagement opportunities—affected young people's support for armed opposition groups.⁸⁰ This example shows the importance of integrating development sectors with VE-prevention programming.

Shortly, a report by MSI and USAID will be released that reviews multiple programs to counter VE, and a report by USAID and IBTCI that reviews VE resilience programming in West Africa will also be released soon. This research will add significant data to this sector to help understand what works, and just as importantly, what does not work. However, this sector needs a comprehensive framework for assessing violent extremist programs to be able to aggregate data to determine if the assistance is reducing and preventing violent extremism.

Similarly, The US Institute of Peace released a report in 2019 titled *Preventing Extremism in Fragile States: A New Approach*,⁸¹ which drew on extensive expert knowledge in the development of an approach to preventing violent extremism. Major recommendations of this report included establishing a new Partnership Development Fund to rally the international community behind country-led efforts to prevent the underlying conditions of extremism. This fund was included in the GFA, and it is important that the fund is established so that the international community is united and leveraging its funding to address this important security threat and driver of violence in fragile states.

Address the material support issues

Separate from the need to develop good evidence-informed strategy is the question of how to deliver these strategies. Currently, US laws already impose severe restrictions to prevent support for violent extremism, and the criminal prohibition on material support of terrorism is so broadly defined that it limits effective programmatic approaches to addressing violent conflict.⁸² These laws limit the effectiveness of US government programs to prevent violent extremism and deliver humanitarian assistance in conflict-afflicted areas. Therefore, if the US laws are not amended, programs will be seriously hindered from countering and preventing violent extremism.

US counterterrorism laws have not kept pace with evolving challenges and new programmatic approaches to ending conflict, reducing violence, and building sustainable peace. The last time Congress addressed the substance of the material support definition was in 2004. Since then the material support prohibition has barred all forms of communication or engagement with Foreign Terrorist Organizations named by the Secretary of State, even when those communications are part of peace processes or demobilization, demilitarization, and reintegration programs. In addition, most terrorism-related Executive Orders issued under sanctions authority include a “material support” prohibition.⁸³ Because the Executive Orders do not define the term, the criminal law definition is generally used, and the problems associated with it are then imported into the sanctions context. This expands the impact the prohibition can have on work to end conflict, reduce violence, and build sustainable peace.

As a result, peacebuilders are unable to fully implement programs that address root causes of political violence because of the material support prohibition and economic sanctions laws, as these bar many forms of communications with these groups as well as support to peace processes that must involve such groups if sustainable peace is to be achieved. The community-focused approach to preventing violent extremism which shows so much promise, for example, must by definition involve working within communities that violent extremist groups can draw recruits from. It’s easy for activities identified as best practices by the research to fall afoul of the laws preventing material support. While these laws were not designed to limit programs designed to end conflict, reduce violence, and build sustainable peace, they are having that effect. Although current law gives the Secretary of State, with concurrence of the Attorney General, authority to create exceptions for providing “personnel,” “training,” or “expert advice or assistance” if that support may not be used to carry out terrorist activity,⁸⁴ the State Department has not exercised this power in relation to programs to end conflict, reduce violence, and build sustainable peace, resulting in lost opportunities to reduce violence.

US Senator Patrick Leahy seriously criticized the laws during the humanitarian relief efforts in Somalia in 2011.⁸⁵ He stated, “I have long urged reform of our laws governing so-called material support for terrorism. The current law is so broad as to be unworkable.”⁸⁶ He noted that “it also limits the actions of individuals and non-governmental organizations engaged in unofficial diplomacy and peace building. These actors often engage in informal negotiations that serve United States interests, and have no intent to support terrorist movements.”⁸⁷ Leahy urged the DOJ to “facilitate a dialogue between relevant executive branch agencies and affected organizations and individuals. The result of this dialogue should be the release of a set of guidelines that remove the uncertainty with the scope of the material support law, and the establishment a process by which actors may seek exemptions.”⁸⁸ He concluded by saying, “We must not impede the efforts of individuals and organizations that have no intent to provide material support for terrorism, and whose activities serve the goals of the United States.”⁸⁹

Unfortunately, no such guidance has been forthcoming, despite ongoing requests from nonprofit organizations. Instead there continues to be little to no guidance on how far the prohibition reaches. While a declassified memo from the Department of Justice notes that “The Government’s position on this issue should be clear: the material support statutes do not prohibit legitimate, independent efforts to counter violent extremism,” it does not provide the specificity needed by organizations working on the ground.⁹⁰ This lack of specificity has been used by private parties with political agendas to file lawsuits against organizations like the Carter Center, alleging

that peacebuilding activities constituted “material support.” (The case against the Carter Center was dismissed at the request of the Department of Justice.)⁹¹

Problems with the administration of current law show the need to clarify and update it.

1. National security threats have evolved but the law has not.

As noted, the criminal definition of material support has not been changed since 2004, when Congress enacted definitions of the terms “training,” “expert advice,” and “assistance and personnel.”⁹² In 2010 the Supreme Court’s decision in the case *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project* upheld application of material support restrictions to peaceful conflict resolution programs. This forced peacebuilding organizations to scale back their activities at a time when ISIS was re-emerging⁹³ and groups like Boko Haram and al-Shabaab became an increasing threat.

Over the past decade a strategic policy shift focused on prevention, beginning with programs countering violent extremism, has led to a new generation of programmatic approaches that take a holistic approach to working with communities when supporting demobilization, demilitarization, and reintegration programs. The potential of these programs, along with Inclusive peace processes, is hampered and limited by the material support restrictions.

2. The OFAC licensing process is unworkable.

The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the US Department of the Treasury administers and enforces economic and trade sanctions against targeted foreign countries, terrorists, international narcotics traffickers, and proliferators of weapons of mass destruction. It maintains a list of sanctioned individuals and organizations. There are numerous examples from experiences in places like Colombia and Iraq that show it is extremely difficult to get licenses from OFAC for such activities.⁹⁴

3. The vetting process is increasingly draconian and expensive.

Federal law and regulations require the US government to guard against the risk that taxpayer funds might inadvertently benefit terrorists. The Department of State and USAID each began vetting programs to check names and other personally identifiable information of individuals in organizations applying for grants against information about suspected terrorists and their supporters.

Currently, the Department of State’s counterterrorism vetting function, called Risk Analysis and Management (RAM), is a small team located within the Bureau of Administration’s Office of Logistics Management Critical Environment Contracting Analytics Staff. RAM conducts vetting for Department of State bureaus, offices, and missions. Reports state that the cost of vetting is \$400 per person, which comes out of program funds. The slow and costly process has caused about 90 percent of programs to be effectively shut down as RAM conducts vetting in pilot countries. Additionally, the cost is exorbitant for already underfunded peacebuilding programs.

A legislative fix is consistent with Congressional intent.

Without a change in this outdated legal environment, efforts by the US government, nonprofit organizations, and other implementing partners to prevent violent extremism and support peace processes will continue to be hampered. The mutually beneficial objectives of protecting national security and supporting peacebuilding and providing humanitarian assistance are seriously weakened under current law. The 116th Congress has taken a critical step toward reducing violence with passage of the Global Fragility Act. It is possible to craft legislative solutions that provide mechanisms that limit the risk of these programs but do not prevent the work. Congress can provide badly needed legal protection for nonprofit organizations that operate programs designed to prevent violent extremism and conflict and ensure there is adequate tailoring of means to fit the compelling ends.

RECOMMENDATION 13

USE USAID'S EXISTING CONFLICT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY TO TARGET AND DEVELOP PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMING BASED ON CONTEXT-SPECIFIC ANALYSIS.

Section 504(a)(1) requires the GFS to consider the causes of fragility and violence at both the local and national levels, the external actors that reinforce and exploit such conditions, and successful prevention strategies and their key features; additionally, Section 504(a)(11) requires that the strategy will ensure that the programs are country-led and context-specific. Doing this naturally requires a way of establishing what constitutes context-specific work in any given country. Implementing agencies may be tempted to develop this approach from scratch as a part of developing the GFS, but doing so will put to the side the extensive and well-developed work that has already been done.

While there is significant evidence about what drives violent extremism, there is less evidence on what works to prevent or mitigate it.

Conflict Assessment Frameworks

USAID almost two decades ago developed cutting-edge conflict assessment tools that have been adapted, revised, and field-tested repeatedly across all geographic regions. USAID's Conflict Assessment Framework⁹⁵ is an excellent methodology to use to assess prevalent conflict dynamics and trends, mitigating factors, and potential triggers for worsening or new conflict and ensure that a strategy and programs are context-specific. This assessment tool analyzes whether and how armed conflict breaks out, the system of interactions and relationships between identity groups and institutions that promote grievances, and ways in which key actors mobilize those interactions to mitigate conflict or instigate violence. Importantly, the USAID conflict assessment methodology looks at the capacity and resilience of those institutions, identity groups, and other factors in society that provide the means to suppress or resolve conflict through non-violent efforts. Therefore, an easy part of the GFS is mandating that conflict assessments be required and completed. However, the findings must be applied, and they can't be done just once at the beginning of developing a strategy; conflict prevention strategies and programming are just as important as the analysis.

Unfortunately, even when these conflict assessments are done well, their findings are not always integrated into the US government's own country strategy. For example, in Bangladesh, according to a USAID evaluation, "the best salve for Bangladesh's violent democracy is transparent and accountable governance." Yet democracy and governance programming is only 5 to 10 percent of the US government's funding to Bangladesh.⁹⁶ Under the ten-year country and regional plans, the findings and recommendations of the US government's own analysis must reshape the budget request to more accurately reflect drivers of instability and violent conflict.

A consistent challenge with conflict assessments is that excellent analysis is done to inform the design of a program or strategy, but it is highly unlikely that a follow-on assessment "refresh" will be done again until a new strategy is being developed years later. Conflict dynamics are not static; they change and evolve rapidly, and for a conflict assessment to be useful it must be updated regularly and analyzed, and the findings must be incorporated into the strategy and programming. Additionally, it is critical to invest in conducting conflict analysis at multiple levels, particularly at the community level and at the regional and national levels.

In the absence of a full conflict assessment, the GFS could call for rapid conflict analyses (RCAs) to be done as an institutional practice. RCAs can be conducted on an ad hoc basis in response to any significant changes in the conflict context. They are particularly useful for assessing changes in a specific and localized conflict context, illuminating the sources of localized tensions that are fomenting grievances. The primary purpose of the RCA is to identify effective, timely, and conflict-sensitive opportunities to break cycles of violence.

Another significant problem with conflict assessments is that they do not result in tailored prevention strategies or programming. The problems are clearly identified but the prevention strategy is not developed because of lack of funding or earmarked funding and/or will, both on the USG side and the host country side. Using the Bangladesh example cited above, the analysis must be used to develop a conflict prevention strategy that targets the drivers of conflict, otherwise health and education indicators will go up but that programming will not impact conflict and instability. Additionally, in countries like Ethiopia in 2008, the donors could not fund programs that directly addressed the conflict dynamics present. The government adopted a draconian law that banned foreign assistance from working on sectors including democracy, rights, and conflict prevention. Therefore, the development assistance funded education, health, livelihoods, and humanitarian aid sectors that did not include a conflict-prevention lens.

RECOMMENDATION 14

BALANCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMING WITH REFERENCE TO EXISTING RESEARCH ON BEST PRACTICES, CONTEXT-SPECIFIC ANALYSIS, AND PROMISING NEW APPROACHES.

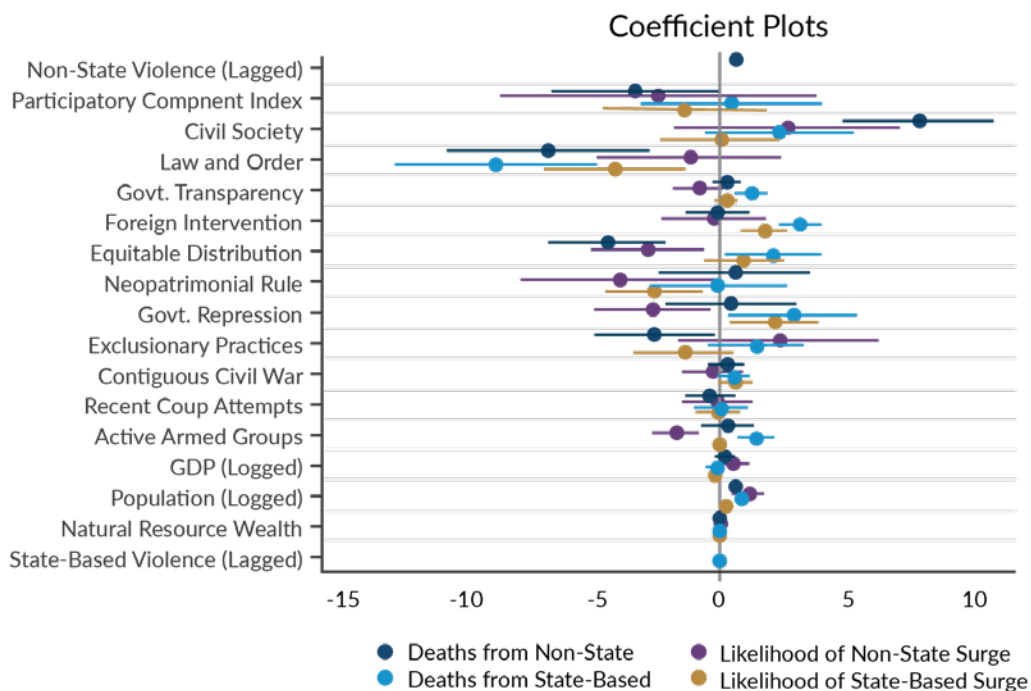
Section 504(a)(2) includes specific objectives and multisectoral approaches to reduce fragility and the causes of violence, including those that strengthen state-society relations, curb extremist ideology, and make society less vulnerable to the spread of extremism and violence. Section 504(a)(4) addresses the long-term underlying causes of fragility and violence through participatory, locally led programs, empowerment of marginalized groups such as youth and women, inclusive dialogues and conflict resolution processes, justice sector reform, good governance, inclusive and accountable service delivery, and security sector reform. These elements reflect an awareness of a large and developing body of research which highlights the need for multidimensional engagement to support peacebuilding. This is a theme of the GFA, and the development of strong country-level strategies should carry this theme forward by making sure to develop country-specific programming which is informed by strong evidence.

Generically, this recommendation calls for three separate but related activities. The first is a call to use the available sophisticated tools for analyzing the relative influence of different points of entry in specific conflicts or conflict contexts. The second is to work to ensure that the specific program plans developed under an overall country strategy draw from what is already known about best practices in the research literature. The third is to include, where possible, the most promising new developments where these developments are consistent with prior research and analysis, even if there is not extensive data supporting them.

Use analytic tools to develop country strategies

Social science tools for modeling and measuring the impacts of different program points of entry are becoming fairly sophisticated, although they are also limited by a paucity of data on programs and program impact. These tools for assessment allow for one point of entry to the development of a country strategy: it is feasible, within the limitations of the existing data, to identify which potential interventions may be most effective in a given context. Such analyses are limited by the data that are available and the scope of what empirical models can do, but they represent an important adjunct to—if not replacement for—expert knowledge.

Below we present the result of one such model. Please see the technical appendix for details of the methods and data which underlie this analysis.



1. We conducted a quantitative assessment of the potential impact of prevention activities on the risk of violence escalation, building on the risk assessment presented in Recommendation 4. Building on existing research on the predictors of violence escalation, we modeled the potential impact of influence on a number of different independent variables identified as the targets of previous US stabilization efforts (including issues such as government transparency, rule of law, inclusion, the strength of civil society, and other variables).

Based on this assessment, conducted on a global sample, the clear result is that programs which focus on emphasizing or improving rule of law appear to be of significant value in reducing the risk of escalations in violence.

This analysis is presented as an illustration of the kind of input which is possible with current analytical tools. It may or may not apply to specific countries and should not be a substitute for country-level expertise in the development of country strategies. However, it also provides a perspective less influenced by political or analytical biases and can provide an important input into specific decisions.

Develop evidence-informed interventions: Governance as an example

The recommendations above repeatedly highlight the fact that the different components of stabilization and prevention strategies rely on different expertise and specialization. Political development requires different tools and programming than economic development or security engagement. Historically, one failure of stabilization programming has come from the fact that these different elements require different expertise and can't easily be developed by people with expertise in other areas. It is important that the different interventions prioritized under a country strategy be developed with reference to specific issue expertise.

The rest of this section highlights this need with a focus on the existing evidence in one area: governance reform and supporting the rule of law. This specific example was selected because of the importance of effective rule of law in violence prevention, as identified above.

Work on effective governance support has identified these high-level governance policy recommendations and prevention strategies:

1. Political transitions are often driven by narrow, short-term perspectives that secure the peace—negotiating power-sharing arrangements and/or implementing elections—but rarely deliver on

the SAR's central goal of setting the conditions for inclusive governance. From the democracy and governance (D&G) perspective, this means the policy community must reframe its requirements using its diplomatic and financial leverage to create a broadly accessible political system by:

- a. driving electoral pluralism—opening up the electoral system to greater numbers of viable, capable candidates and parties and moving away from hypercompetitive elections that reinforce conflict lines;
 - b. pushing party leaders for greater inclusion of youth, women, and minorities in political parties in exchange for capacity-building support, recognition, etc.; and
 - c. in the long term, supporting civil society efforts to revise constitutional peace and governance frameworks that limited political participation to secure the peace, but need to be reformed to secure democracy and inclusive governance.
2. The policy community must also consistently seek peacebuilding and D&G assessments of informal political and community processes, alternative political actors, and the legitimacy of the US government response in-country. These communities have longstanding political and community networks, often outside of capitals, and access to alternative political perspectives that must feed into policy decisions.
 3. The policy community should also encourage greater collaboration between the conflict resolution and democracy and governance communities in fragile states to deliver inclusive governance goals. This includes:
 - a. Support for conflict resolution D&G community dialogues: Create opportunities for intercommunity dialogue to overcome critical barriers to cooperation, including reluctance of peacebuilders to engage in political processes for legitimacy issues, D&G practitioners' focus on governance outcomes that may undermine or weaken peace outcomes, and peacebuilders' discomfort with advancing democracy as an ideological or Western-imposed agenda.
 - b. Cross-community, integrated programming: If the end goal is inclusive governance, the D&G and conflict resolution communities often individually pursue lines

of effort that should be interlocking, for example by opening up barriers to inclusion in political parties by identifying competent, skilled peacebuilding activists who can deliver independent constituent networks and have the capacity to reform parties from within or by building the capacity of sub-national and legislative governance actors to deliver on the peace agenda, including being constituent-responsive, overseeing the national government's implementation responsibilities, and advocating for their constituents with ministry officials in terms of better service and security delivery.

Governance in Fragile States: Challenges and Solutions

Political Parties in Fragile, Conflict-Affected States: Unleashing the Potential

Political parties have the potential to play a powerful role in countering fragility, conflict, and violence, including negotiating violence-prevention pacts and an end to violence, and engaging in bargaining over how power is distributed in the political system in ways that prevent violence or its re-emergence, giving expression to citizen grievances and providing avenues for citizen participation in political and peace processes. Often, however, that potential is either not realized or parties themselves are powerful drivers of political, electoral, and structural violence. The marginalization or corruption of political parties is partly a result of the fragile or conflict-affected context within which they exist and partly a result of internal weaknesses.

In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, party members often experience violence and harassment, or are excluded from the peace negotiations or political pacts by armed actors. Fragile and conflict-affected states are often governed by hybrid or unconsolidated democratic regimes, where the state is captured by the ruling party, informal political networks (tribes, clans, ethnicities) dominate political life, parties have limited access to constituents, and the party system is fragmented along conflict lines. Particularly in conflict-affected states, a governance imbalance exists that greatly impacts political parties. To mount a successful response to insurgent, extremist, or ethnic violence, the executive branch accrues greater power vis-à-vis the legislature. It is within these weakened and marginalized legislatures that parties exercise their political life. Donor support for post-conflict recovery flows through or is coordinated with executive agencies, reinforcing this imbalance and further limiting the role that parties could play in establishing inclusive political processes—the central goal of the SAR. Finally, parties are often unable to mobilize or respond to citizen interests because society itself

is extremely fragmented—citizens have low levels of trust, agency, and association that prevent their coming together to engage politically, including through parties. These complex, interlocking contextual constraints that characterize political life in situations of fragility, conflict, and violence limit the ability of political parties to play a more constructive political and peacebuilding role.

Internal weaknesses also prevent political parties from playing a powerful facilitative role in areas of fragility, conflict, and violence. They are often most active at elections, not having the institutional or membership capacity for sustained political activity. Their policy agendas are thin, as most are highly personalized, led by dominant, popular leaders, thereby stifling internal democratic processes. Lacking access to financing, they often engage in illicit activities and are limited in their ability to engage with citizens and a wide range of party initiatives. In many cases, political parties are embedded in the informal political networks that organize power in fragile and conflict- and violence-affected states, operating as mechanisms for elites to capture and distribute rents in exchange for political support.

Getting it right

Despite the enormous potential for political parties to drive inclusion in politics in fragile states by providing citizens a bridge to influence politics, shaping and advancing citizen advocacy, mediating constituent grievances, and inserting diverse perspectives into critical peace and policy issues, political party development has often been overlooked, except specifically by D&G actors. Under the GFA this must change.

- At the policy level, the favoring of particular leaders, usually conflict actors, to stabilize the country, prevent violence, and deliver the peace marginalizes specific political parties and critically undercuts the establishment of a diverse, vibrant political network that healthy, growing political parties could deliver.
- The international community often holds up a false narrative of non-interference in domestic politics while deeply shaping political outcomes. This must change. If the SAR holds out inclusive governance as the goal, then *policymakers must focus on political parties systemically and individually by:*
 - Prioritizing a balanced system that is not dominated by a few political parties associated with conflict actors.
 - Insisting on genuine inclusion (not simply quotas) within political parties as the “ticket” for access to international donors and funding.

- Not undercutting D&G attempts at multi-party systems by advancing the interests of a particular leader and his/her associated political party.
- The peacebuilding community and the democracy and governance community must find ways to come together that do not undercut the legitimacy of peacebuilders through an association with political actors. Peacebuilders can support more inclusive and productive political parties by:
 - Building political party expertise on issues of peace and security to support the stabilization/peacebuilding agenda.
 - Helping national-level parties bridge to constituents, and helping constituents oversee and advocate for their interests, while also holding elected leaders accountable, moving citizens away from personality to issue parties.
 - Holding community dialogues that help move constituents to address their “fears” of the “other” winning the election by developing engagement and advocacy strategies.

Political parties: Advancing peace and stabilization

Democracy and governance organizations can help political parties overcome the fractured political space to advance peace and democratic reform.

Breaking the Cycle of Gender Exclusion in Political Party Development

A recent NDI multi-country study on formation of new parties during periods of stabilization and political transition identified the factors that influenced the level of gender inclusion in processes of party development, which included the origins and characteristics of these parties and how their transition contexts influenced the degree of gender inclusion these parties exhibited;⁹⁷ for example, the parties’ previous commitments to equality and justice and the strength of women’s autonomous mobilization in preparatory organizations, including their access to their own networks, legitimacy independent of the organization, etc. In terms of the transition context, long and inclusive transition processes aimed at fundamentally renegotiating the existing political orders and the existence of organized and broad-based women’s movements were critical for pushing political parties to make gender equality commitments. The report recommends a series of steps to advance women’s inclusion in the stabilization phase, including conducting gendered

political economy analyses, conducting gender and inclusion assessments of political parties, offering pretransition support to women’s groups, and providing targeted support for gender equality in early party development.

Transitions: Breaking Systems of Exclusion and Zero-Sum Politics

Several groundbreaking reports have focused on elite pacts and their role in stabilization and peacebuilding efforts. The UK Stabilisation Unit reminds international interveners that there are three components to a peace process—the formal peace agreement, how power is structured in a society emerging from violent conflict, and the agreement elites came to end the violence. It is critical that the implementation of the formal agreements and informal bargains reflect the reality of the existing power structures—if there is a disconnect, then violence will resume. To ensure that the three are in sync, the international community must accept sometimes distasteful outcomes in the initial stabilization phase, such as elite capture of state resources, permissive violence, and rent-sharing arrangements.

The so-called Cameron Report (*The Report of the Commission on State Fragility, Growth and Development*) doubled down on the idea that elite bargains are a critical “pathway” out of fragility and violence, recommending power-sharing agreements over “hypercompetitive” elections. The democracy and governance community would take issue with this recommendation given the consistent failure to transition power-sharing agreements to democratic inclusion. Instead, it is imperative that international interveners develop a long-term political strategy focused on dismantling the systems of exclusion, establishing political pluralism, and opening up avenues of inclusion to women, youth, and marginalized communities for both power-sharing and electoral transitions (see the section below on ensuring electoral pluralism).

Legislative Strengthening

Fragile and conflict-affected states, especially those in transition from or with rising levels of violence, often experience legislative degradation with respect to the executive branch, which takes the lead in managing peace and prevention processes. This governance imbalance is costly in terms of democratization in that it contributes to elite capture of state institutions, marginalizes the legislature at a time when oversight of the peace process and security response is critical, and shuts down an avenue for constituents to influence peace and governance outcomes. In addition, in states with fragile communications and transportation infrastructure, legislative representatives, especially at the national level, are often remote to constituents and unresponsive. **Working in cooperation, D&G and peacebuilding communities could do much to bridge between constituencies and**

legislatures, especially with the strong commitment of the D&G community to ensuring that marginalized voices are represented and heard. The international community often feeds into this imbalance by sidelining legislatures in their own funding and implementation initiatives by working primarily with ministries and departments.

Engaging with Non-State Governance Actors

Donors often place quite stringent restrictions on the ability of D&G organizations to engage with non-state governance actors, who can dominate the political landscape in fragile and conflict-affected states. Increasingly, both the peacebuilding and D&G communities are engaging with strategies, practices, and lessons learned on how to work with non-state actors in ways that ensure stability without undermining the legitimacy of the state in the long run. As part of that effort, NDI participated in the USIP Resolve Network's [study](#) on strategies for managing and transforming community-based armed groups, which often carry out critical governance tasks, such as security provision, service delivery, and local justice.

Major conclusions of the study⁹⁸ included the following.

- When thinking through strategies and programming for communities with community-based armed groups present, it is critical to conduct a local political-economy-security analysis. Community-based armed groups should be seen as extensions of local, informal political systems—understanding how they are legitimized by and embedded in that system is critical for engagement and transformation strategies.
- Community-based armed groups have very fluid identities depending on a number of factors: perception of external threat, community norms on the use of violence, and negotiated relationships with the state and/or community leaders. If those factors shift, D&G and peacebuilding actors must be prepared for a rapid change in community-based armed group identity and use of violence. For example, a community protection group could quickly become a vigilante group.
- Community-based armed groups with negotiated relationships with the state and local community that abide by community-accepted norms of violence and rely on the community for recruitment and resources are capable of becoming legitimate governance actors. Thus, context should be weighed in donor considerations of engagement with non-state actors.
- Finally, for policymakers, community-based armed groups are often sponsored by political actors—often the same political actors that are negotiating with

international actors for support for the state's security forces. **It is critical that US policymakers evaluate political will for security sector reform in all its dimensions; state actors sponsoring non-state armed groups undermine the commitment of international actors to stability and security. Diplomats must be prepared to leverage security sector programs to ensure that political actors refrain from sponsoring non-state groups and commit to the state retaining the monopoly on force.**

Embrace well-founded new approaches: Mental health as an example

While evidence-informed work is important for effective programming, the primary limitation is that it precludes incorporating new approaches that do not have extensive evidence. Country strategy development must therefore balance the need for evidence-informed work with the need to adapt and incorporate valuable new programs.

An illustration of this comes from the developing work centering trauma recovery and mental health as important aspects of peacebuilding. Mental health has rapidly emerged to the forefront of various discussions on fragility, from which it was previously absent. Violent extremism, violence prevention, refugee integration, conflict stabilization, and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs are now tackling questions around the role of mental health in individuals' and communities' trajectories toward violence on one hand and peace and prosperity on the other. Mental health plays a key role in shaping violence and peace, yet it remains difficult to operationalize meaningful programming at this intersection.

Unfortunately, the meaningful integration of mental health and peacebuilding is plagued by several challenges including the fact that few people working in peacebuilding fields have any experience in psychosocial and mental health programming, the number of clinical care providers and global mental health experts with experience in peacebuilding is dismally low, legal and operational challenges as well as cultural stigma often complicate a community's access to and use of mental health services, and a dearth of useful data linking mental health outcomes with relevant peacebuilding and fragility indicators. Therefore, those working in fragility and peacebuilding need to deliberately pursue better data linking mental health outcomes with peacebuilding outcomes. The developing discussion about the importance of mental health would suggest that while such data are developed, there is a need to integrate community and public mental health into stabilization and peacebuilding program design.

A number of approaches to integrating mental health issues into peacebuilding have been developed. The Psychological First Aid model, for example, is a model for immediate response to trauma that is specifically designed to be used by non-specialists in supporting survivors of trauma.⁹⁹ Integrating this training into peacebuilding is relatively straightforward. An example of the deliberate integration of mental health and peacebuilding is Beyond Conflict and Questscope's *Field Guide for Barefoot Psychology*, which explicitly integrates mental health and peacebuilding.¹⁰⁰ In 2019, the *Field Guide* was evaluated by a joint team of researchers from clinical psychology and political science. The team sought to assess effectiveness of the *Field Guide* as a public mental health intervention as well as a community resilience intervention, specifically focusing on the links between changes in mental health symptoms related to stress and trauma and issues of community trust, intergroup anxiety, and peace.

The team of psychology researchers specifically explored how neuroscientific and psychophysiological explanations of human responses to war and conflict may decrease mental health stigma, subjective isolation, and psychological distress, and how those changes could lead to the use of self-care practices and eventually, decreased trauma symptoms. At the same time, the team of political science researchers explored the ways in which mental health outcomes impact social and political factors in the conflict-affected community, as this link remains significantly understudied. They specifically examined the relationship between individual-level mental health outcomes and their effect on social and political behaviors.

Results indicated that the *Field Guide* is effective in reducing stigma as well as trauma symptoms across various types of distress profiles for women and men over 18 years old. The data, while exploratory, also indicated that positive changes in mental health symptoms trend with increased community trust, pro-sociality, and decreased intergroup anxiety. As trauma can be both cause and consequence of violence, this type of data is exactly what we need more of to better understand the relationship between mental health and peacebuilding and create effective programming. Tools like the *Field Guide* can help equip those working against violence and those engaged in building peace to deal with mental health head on, in a responsible way, and at scale.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX: EXAMPLE OF DATA-DRIVEN IDENTIFICATION

Identification of Stabilization Countries and Regions

While the Global Fragility Act seeks to help prevent the escalation of violence, much of the emphasis of this legislation is to also reduce instability from priority countries that are already experiencing significant conflict. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of states experiencing ongoing violence. The challenge for implementing organizations is not only in identifying where the violence is most acute, but also to what degree the United States has agency in mitigating the spread of violence and engaging with partner governments in shouldering the burden.

This may, in turn, create a challenge where the countries and/or regions that have the most widespread violence are not necessarily the states where the US has the most efficacy in reducing the violence. If the implementing agencies merely prioritize states with the highest rates of violence, irrespective of the political realities that may hamper development efforts, then actors within the USG may be tasked with achieving a nearly impossible goal.

This section will lay out an approach to identifying both prospective countries and regions for possible stabilization, as well as an approach to prioritizing states for consideration by the implementing agencies. Drawing on annualized data that details intrastate violence from 2014–2019, the authors of this report categorized where instability was the most severe globally. Taking into consideration violent non-state actors, the international dimensions of the conflict, and the geographic location of violence, the researchers identify regions as well as countries where it appears there is greater instability. Finally, a qualitative assessment of the current regimes within these regions was conducted to weigh whether incumbent governments would be willing partners with the implementing agencies, thereby assessing the feasibility of effecting change.

While an initial list of recommended countries will be presented, this is not to say that the US should immediately prioritize these countries. Rather, the list primarily highlights an approach to identifying prospective countries that assesses the degree of violence, the actors involved, and the potential agency of the US to effect change. The final list and the specific metrics are of course up to the implementing agencies to develop. This section merely puts forward an impartial, objective approach to identifying these states.

Data and Assessment

As a starting point for this analysis, the authors analyzed the most recent data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (or ACLED). As compared to the event data produced

by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), ACLED includes the most recent events cross-nationally and is updated more frequently. Given that the most recent metrics end in 2019, and that (as of writing this report) we are only a few months into 2020, data is limited to violence perpetrated in 2019.

While ACLED includes many forms of violence, to ensure this section's comparability with the prevention analysis, the authors examined state-based violence (violence emerging between rebels vs. an incumbent government) as well as non-state violence (violence perpetrated by actors outside of the government). Non-state data specifically examines violence perpetrated by militias, external actors, and armed opposition groups not attacking the government.¹⁰¹ Again, to ensure comparability with the prevention analysis, we summarized deaths from either battles between groups or unilateral attacks perpetrated by groups under analysis. Using STATA statistical software, aggregates of total violence in the form of casualties, conflict events, and population-normalized casualties (deaths per 100,000) were generated. The authors aggregated deaths and violent events from 2014–2019.

Summary of Results

Tables 1 and 2 include the cumulative number of state-based and non-state deaths from 2014–2019. These include both the raw count of deaths and deaths per 100,000. Each table includes the ten countries that have experienced the most violence for each metric (total count and deaths per 100,000). These data also include the total counts of battles or unilateral attacks perpetrated between groups. Though no casualties may emerge, violent events may still promote significant instability and should be considered when assessing which countries to prioritize.

As illustrated by the results, there is significant overlap between the two lists. Countries such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Nigeria, and Somalia experience high levels of both state-based and non-state violence. When looking at deaths per 100,000 in the lists of state-based and non-state violence, Syria emerges as one of the most violent places on Earth (which is not particularly surprising). This may reflect not only the fact that armed opposition groups have contested state control, but that non-state actors have also brutally sought to take territory from one another throughout the course of the conflict. This differs significantly from Afghanistan, where violence has largely been concentrated in attacks and battles between the government (and their international partners) and the various Taliban factions.

Figures 1 and 2 provide a graphical illustration of the top ten countries experiencing state-based as well as non-state violence. Outside of the major conflicts in the Middle East and Central Asia, collapsed states such as South Sudan and Somalia continue to present high rates of fatalities. Though the international community has already invested decades in attempting to promote peace within Somalia, the country continues to experience high rates of state-based and non-state violence. This underscores that instability within the country is not isolated to just continued attacks perpetrated by al-Shabaab and ISIS.

Table 1: Deaths from State-Based Violence (2014–2019)

TOTAL DEATHS			TOTAL DEATHS (PER 100,000)		
COUNTRY	ATTACKS/ BATTLES	CASUALTIES	COUNTRY	ATTACKS/ BATTLES	CASUALTIES
Afghanistan	32,380	99,872	Afghanistan	32,380	172.43
Iraq	7,805	60,026	Syria	9,764	162.51
Syria	9,764	32,794	Iraq	7,805	157.53
Nigeria	1,311	13,038	South Sudan	1,649	79.79
Somalia	3,873	9,424	Somalia	3,873	54.79
Turkey	3,063	9,058	Libya	345	28.42
South Sudan	1,649	8,854	Sudan	612	16.90
Sudan	612	6,696	Cameroon	696	14.64
Pakistan	1,022	6,239	Yemen	937	10.40
Cameroon	696	4,078	Turkey	3,063	10.18

Table 2: Deaths from Non-State Violence (2014–2019)

TOTAL DEATHS			TOTAL DEATHS (PER 100,000)		
COUNTRY	ATTACKS/ BATTLES	CASUALTIES	COUNTRY	ATTACKS/ BATTLES	CASUALTIES
Syria	16,947	25,889	Syria	16,947	132.2
Iraq	8,228	19,733	Central African Republic	876	81.27
Somalia	4,144	11,404	Somalia	4,144	71.91
Yemen	16,196	10,665	Libya	1,603	65.50
Afghanistan	4,461	8,470	Iraq	8,228	50.61
Nigeria	837	4,472	Yemen	16,196	37.42
Libya	1,603	4,401	South Sudan	568	31.45
Saudi Arabia	1,009	4,215	Afghanistan	4,461	15.97
Central African Republic	876	3,938	Mali	674	8.32
South Sudan	568	3,801	Sudan	507	7.39

Figure 1: State-Based Violence from 2014–2019 (per 100,000)

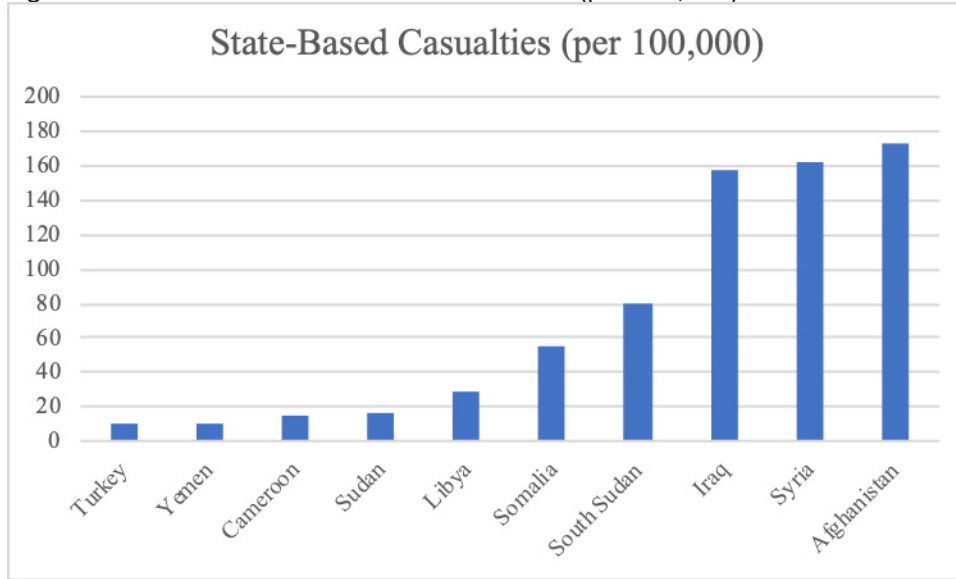
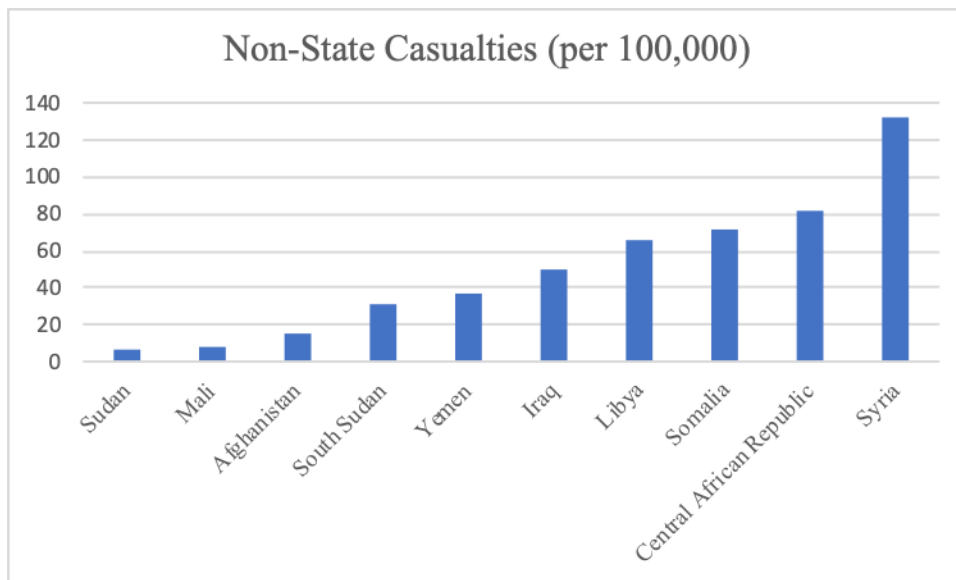


Figure 2: Non-State Violence from 2014–2019 (per 100,000)



As noted earlier, though, a simple count of total deaths may be less instructive of where US implementing agencies should focus their efforts. These metrics may inadvertently obfuscate where the international community may have the most impact. Though states may be experiencing major armed conflict, intransigent incumbent governments or foreign powers intent on counterbalancing US efforts may undermine the efficacy of US agencies attempting to maximize the effectiveness of their GFA funding. This is not to say that such countries should not receive significant international support in ameliorating the effects of the war or that the international community should not actively pursue a diplomatic end to these conflicts. Rather, given the requirements for significant cooperation across various implementing agencies within the US, valuable time and money may be lost if international efforts are stymied by active opposition from either the incumbent government or global adversaries.

Similarly, some areas may also require a *regional* response as opposed to a focus on individual countries. As illustrated by Tables 1 and 2, there are clearly regional patterns to where major violence is occurring (e.g., Cameroon and Nigeria, Iraq and Syria). Past work has highlighted that armed conflict has many international dimensions, where transnational actors may promote instability not only within their homelands but in fragile neighboring states as well. Given this point, it is also important to assess the transnational dimensions of conflict and highlight regional areas of instability in addition to prioritized countries.

In the following section, we highlight countries and regions where there are exceptionally high amounts of violence and where the political realities are more conducive to cooperating with the US government and the international community more broadly.

Highlighted Countries

Table 3 includes a breakdown of top countries for concern.¹⁰² Countries may be grouped into regions if the states listed are currently experiencing threats or challenges from the same group of actors (such as the Lake Chad Basin). When looking at the list of stabilization countries where it may make the most sense for implementing agencies to coordinate on a broad intervention, key factors were considered. Outside of experiencing significant state-based and non-state violence, states were also assessed on the transnational dimensions of the conflict (such as foreign interventions, spread of refugees, and transnational violent non-state actors). As conflicts become more globalized, there is increased risk that other countries will be drawn into major wars. Second, we examined the current relationship between the incumbent government (or future host government) and the US.

This should have an impact on the agency of implementing organizations within the US government. The capacity of these governments was also taken into consideration. Finally, other political factors were noted, such as whether an ongoing peace process was underway (creating opportunities for political

change) or whether there was significant foreign intervention into the conflict zone. While Table 3 includes short summaries of the findings, a more detailed summation of the factors considered is included in the case descriptions below.

Table 3: Top Countries/Regions

COUNTRY/IES	TRANSNATIONAL DIMENSION TO THE CONFLICT	HOST GOVT(S) RELATIONSHIP WITH US	CAPACITY OF HOST GOVT(S)	OTHER POLITICAL FACTORS
Afghanistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transnational insurgencies Foreign interventions Significant refugee flows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependent but complicated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nascent peace process Pending withdrawal of US troops NAP
Syria/ Iraq/ Turkey/Lebanon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transnational insurgencies Foreign interventions Significant refugee flows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exceedingly complicated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong (Turkey) Weak/ Moderate (Iraq) Absent (Syria) Weak (Lebanon) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing skepticism about US intervention, decline in US presence Significant foreign intervention NAP (Iraq)
Somalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transnational insurgencies Foreign interventions Significant refugee flows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absent/Weak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow development of a national government Significant international engagement in country
Cameroon/Nigeria/ Chad/Niger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transnational insurgencies Foreign interventions Significant refugee flows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustained cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak (Niger) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjacent armed conflicts in each country Preexisting cooperation on counterinsurgency NAP (Cameroon/Niger/ Nigeria)
South Sudan/ Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foreign interventions Significant refugee flows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dependent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absent/Weak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing peace process Significant international engagement in country NAP (South Sudan)
Libya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foreign interventions Significant refugee flows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complicated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nascent peace process is underway
Yemen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transnational insurgencies Foreign interventions Significant refugee flows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant foreign interventions Fragile peace process underway

Looking at a cross-comparison of countries considered, it becomes apparent that there are no easy answers on where the US should direct work with regard to the GFA. By far, the countries associated with the Levant¹⁰³ (Syria, Southeastern Turkey, and Iraq) demonstrate the greatest demand for intervention. The cumulative deaths within the region far outstrip those in any other conflict-affected country or region. Furthermore, there are significant international dimensions that undermine broader regional security (as well as global security). Transnational armed actors are posing a risk to US allies and a significant flood of refugees is creating major humanitarian burdens on the international community (to say nothing of the mass suffering borne by the victims of the war). Still, the political realities on the ground make intervention (be it diplomatically, militarily, or economically) more challenging. As discussed in the country descriptions, most incumbent regimes are wary of current US engagement, let alone a massive increase in US-led efforts to foster stability. At the same time, there are US rivals operating in the region who will actively counterbalance efforts to foster stability.

Libya also presents similar challenges. Though transnational militant organizations are playing less of a role in the conflict, foreign powers such as Russia and Egypt seem at cross-purposes with the United Nations-backed government in Tripoli. Similarly, with no unified military to ensure the safety of US implementing agencies, it seems difficult to assume that the capable actors within USAID, the State Department, or the Office of Transition Initiatives will be able to implement critical programs that alleviate the core drivers of armed conflict.

This is not to say that all countries pose similar challenges. The Lake Chad Basin demonstrates a significant need to quell massive violence (primarily in Nigeria and Cameroon), but also offers regimes that are more willing to engage with US agencies to assist in fostering peace. Similarly, these regimes tend to have more state capacity to implement needed reforms (except for Niger). This is not to say that these governments do not also face difficult challenges. Excessive state repression, corruption, and ethnic/sectarian tensions have helped fuel conflicts across the region. With that said, they are in a relatively stronger position to work with US implementing agencies to effect change.

The other countries included in this cross-comparison seem to fall somewhere in between the extreme challenges associated with the Levant region and the more conducive environment offered by the Lake Chad Basin. Decades of involvement in countries such as Afghanistan and Somalia underscore allowing US implementing agencies to build upon past successes and critically evaluate major shortcomings in their efforts to foster peace and development. Similarly, major political transitions in Sudan, South Sudan, and Afghanistan

offer opportunities to possibly effect change. With that said, these countries still include profound challenges to promoting stability. These range from massive government corruption and weak apparatuses (as in Somalia and Afghanistan) to the absence of any national infrastructure to build on (as in South Sudan).

Assessing Feasibility

Based on these various challenges, we categorized each country/region based on its potential for achieving stability through the Global Fragility Act; specifically, which regions and/or countries may be the most conducive to a coordinated intervention by US implementing agencies and international partners. As noted earlier, these categorizations are based heavily on qualitative data that are included in the cross-comparison. Implementing agencies may weigh these metrics differently, thereby producing different results. For example, total casualties from active fighting may far outweigh the challenges of navigating mercurial local governments in the strategic assessment of importance. Agencies may also downplay the risks posed by rivalrous regimes seeking to counterbalance US efforts. Our goal is not to provide a readymade list, but rather to demonstrate an approach to impartially identifying priority countries that require immediate assistance as part of the GFA.

Based on cross-comparisons, we highlight the Lake Chad Basin, where there is a relatively high feasibility of US implementing agencies promoting stability. This is based on preexisting cooperation on security efforts, governments that are more open to US assistance, and a greater degree of state capacity as compared to other war-torn states.

It is moderately feasible that Afghanistan, Somalia, and Yemen, as well as Sudan and South Sudan, will foster stability through GFA-coordinated assistance. While strategic advantages vary by country, there are also profound challenges associated with each state. This will produce major challenges for implementing agencies.

Finally, we believe that there is much less feasibility in US implementing agencies producing change in the Levant region and in Libya. Though there is critical need for international assistance in many forms in these countries, adversarial governments operating within the region will undoubtedly attempt to stymie US efforts. Similarly, host regimes are unlikely to be reliable partners (and may even actively oppose US efforts). Finally, the security situation in these countries is such that implementing agencies will be unable to actively work without a significant increase in US military personnel to provide adequate security. This reduces the feasibility of such an operation over the long term.

Table 4: Potential for Fostering Stability

LOW FEASIBILITY	MODERATE FEASIBILITY	HIGH FEASIBILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Levant region (Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Southeastern Turkey) Libya 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Afghanistan Somalia Sudan/South Sudan Yemen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lake Chad Basin (Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, and Chad)

Conclusion

In this section we offered an approach to identifying (and prioritizing) war-torn states that require immediate assistance to foster stability. As compared to the accompanying prevention analysis, this approach looked at where war was ongoing and assessed the relative feasibility of promoting stability in these countries and/or regions. After highlighting the countries where violence is currently the most acute globally, a cross-comparison of each country was done to identify where there may be an opportunity for effective US intervention (broadly defined). Countries were assessed based on their relative capacity, relationship to the US, and the international dimensions of the conflict (such as whether there is a hostile foreign power involved). Based on these comparisons, we ranked each country/region based on the perceived feasibility of implementing agencies promoting peace.

While a list of countries was generated as part of this process, the intention behind this section is to underscore an objective approach rather than offer a readymade list for implementing agencies. Qualitative metrics may be given more or less weight by implementing agencies, thereby leading to different results. The core approach, though, should remain somewhat the same. Specifically, the process of selecting countries should utilize objective criteria. Similarly, the level of violence alone should not necessarily be the core predictor of where implementing agencies should direct their efforts. Certain political realities may make it less feasible for the US to produce a major coordinated approach to peacebuilding as required by the GFA.

Country Descriptions

Afghanistan

Potential for Impact: Moderate Feasibility

Afghanistan presents a country that has a significant demand for international assistance while at the same time offers numerous barriers for successful US intervention. Afghanistan has been at war since the 1970s, with numerous international actors intervening in the conflict (primarily, the Soviet Union, Pakistan, and the United States). By 1996, the Taliban had

effectively fought its way to power and retained control of the state until 2001 when the US intervened in the country following the 9/11 attacks. Since being removed from office, the Taliban has been waging a protracted insurgency against the fragile Afghan government and the international coalition. For almost two decades, the international community has been unable to foster stability within the country (despite billions spent and thousands of lives lost).

Though the Taliban has been primarily focused on contesting the incumbent government of Afghanistan as well as international forces supporting the state, this organization has also caused profound violence in neighboring Pakistan (underscoring its threat as a transnational organization). Beyond the Taliban, Afghanistan has recently suffered a surge in violence perpetrated by the Islamic State, which has escalated its attacks on civilians and the government as a way to gain greater legitimacy in this region.

While past governments (particularly President Hamid Karzai) have had strained relations with the US, Afghanistan is deeply dependent on continued US financial and military assistance. This may afford the US greater capacity to roll out a more robust and multifaceted approach to stabilization (as called for in the Global Fragility Act). Additionally, with renewed talks emerging between the US, the Taliban, and the Afghan government (added more recently), there may be more room for peaceful development to support these nascent peace talks.

Unfortunately, there are major barriers to any settlement. First, the peace talks that may generate new political emphasis for fundamental change also call on the withdrawal of US Armed Forces from the country. This would put the safety of US implementing agencies in the hands of the Afghan military, an organization that has been significantly hindered by sustained casualties and rampant corruption. The government of Afghanistan may also prove to be a mercurial partner in implementing the GFA. Political infighting has marred multiple elections and widespread corruption has undermined national faith in institutions.

While there is profound need for sustained (and enhanced) assistance within Afghanistan, there are major hurdles that may stymie the work of US implementing agencies.

Levant Region (Especially Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Southeastern Turkey)

Potential for Impact: Low Feasibility

Similar to Afghanistan, ongoing violence across Iraq, Syria, and Turkey underscores a major need for stabilization efforts, while at the same time there are immense challenges that may stymie any intervention. Within the Levant region, intrastate violence has historically centered in Lebanon (during the Lebanese Civil War) and throughout Northern Iraq and neighboring regions of Turkey, driven by persistent Kurdish insurgencies. The latter persist to this day. Since the US invasion of Iraq, though, violence within the region has shifted into a more sectarian conflict that has helped to fuel brutal Sunni insurgencies and harsh responses by Alawite and Shia governments.

Armed groups within the region vary widely in both ideological scope and geographic areas of operation. Kurdish militants with leftwing ideologies (specifically the PKK and the YPG) operate throughout Northern Syria and Southeastern Turkey. The region also hosts a number of largely Sunni rebel groups, many of whom seek to establish theocratic states. Both the Islamic State and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham have emerged as brutal rebel organizations that have engaged in significant civilian victimization within both Syria and Iraq (particularly the Islamic State). By 2014, the Islamic State had effective control over much of eastern Syria and had profoundly destabilized neighboring Iraq. Following an increase in US military intervention, as well as coordinated efforts with Iraqi and Kurdish military units, the Islamic State was defeated militarily (though experts agree that what remains of the organization now operates clandestinely). Finally, Shia pro-government paramilitary organizations operate throughout Iraq and Syria. The militant organization Hezbollah, for example, has played a critical role in stabilizing the fragile Assad regime in Syria.

Though the US government maintains a strong alliance with the government of Turkey and has offered immense military and financial assistance to the Iraqi state, there remain profound barriers to success. Strained US-Iraq relations have recently led to a call for the removal of all US military personnel operating within the country (though the extent of this withdrawal is still unknown). Similarly, poor military coordination and rivalrous objectives have deeply strained US-Turkey relations. In particular, while the US relies heavily on Kurdish militants to help counterbalance the threats posed by the Assad regime (as well as their Iranian and Russian sponsors), Turkey continues to view these same non-state actors as a critical threat to its national security (particularly as violence has surged in its conflict with the PKK).

These challenges, though, pale in comparison to the major hurdles posed by Iranian and Russian influence in the region. Beyond Russia's diplomatic intransigence (posing a risk to forging broader international cooperation), both countries have opted to undercut US influence in the region by backing hardline elements within the incumbent governments of Iraq and Syria. Iran has effectively sponsored militias throughout Iraq that pose a significant threat to US personnel operating in the area. Finally, a coordinated response that alienates (and even antagonizes) Hezbollah in Lebanon may destabilize the fragile Lebanese government.

While there is considerable need for US engagement in this region (particularly as part of the GFA), implementation of any multifaceted program will likely be stymied by rivalrous foreign powers or deteriorating cooperation from regional partners. Though this should not be a long-term barrier for continued engagement in the region, it does pose an immediate threat to the quick timelines required by the GFA.

Somalia

Potential for Impact: Moderate Feasibility

Somalia has been at war since the early 1980s, and there remain persistent challenges for achieving stability in this war-torn country. Despite these challenges, years of international cooperation on promoting development underscore a high degree of buy-in from global partners. The persistence of armed conflict has left the country with an exceedingly weak national government. Security within Somalia has been outsourced in large part to African Union troops as well as subnational security forces (such as those in Puntland). There have been numerous transitional governments formed with the goal of establishing a federalized system, but such efforts have offered slow progress (with the official Federal Government of Somalia emerging in 2012).

Undermining efforts to establish the semblance of national government has been the escalatory violence of al-Shabaab, as well as the emergence of the Islamic State in Somalia. Since 2009, al-Shabaab has terrorized much of Somalia and waged attacks in neighboring states such as Kenya. Though strong international intervention has stopped the group from operating more openly, al-Shabaab has begun to wage a more brutal insurgency (including the development of a shadow government). Violence in Somalia has escalated as the Islamic State in Somalia has emerged as a new threat within the region.

Fortunately, the US and other international partners have a long history of engagement with Somalia. Militarily, the US government has worked with local partners to target and eliminate threats posed by al-Shabaab. Similarly, a myriad of international non-governmental organizations and partner

states have spent billions on development, laying the foundation for future cooperation within the country. With that said, some international partners remain deeply unpopular within Somalia. Though African Union peacekeeping forces have played a significant role in promoting stability, they are widely viewed with antipathy by Somalis (complicating their ability to offer long-term stability).

Significant political barriers also remain. Widespread corruption undermines the legitimacy of the Federal Government of Somalia. Similarly, the decentralized nature of the government (with significant power devolved to regional governments) may make a coordinated response challenging. Finally, Somalia is still years away from developing a capable internal security apparatus. Even with considerable time and capital spent on developing a Somali National Army, the international community has failed to produce an adequate fighting force.

Despite these barriers, the national and subnational governments within the Federal Government of Somalia seem willing to coordinate with international partners to effect change. Sustained economic and military coordination by both regional and more global partners have created the infrastructure for further enhancement of stabilization efforts.

Lake Chad Basin (Specifically Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, and Chad)

Potential for Impact: High Feasibility

Though these West African countries have been rocked recently by significant violence, they offer a critical opportunity for international engagement to reduce violence. Nigeria has suffered a number of insurgencies and incidents of extra-state violence (violent conflict outside of the state) since the Biafran war in 1967. Even with these ongoing conflicts, instability has escalated dramatically in Nigeria following the emergence of Boko Haram in the largely Muslim north of the state. Nigeria has also struggled with intense fighting between pastoralists and farming communities over land access. With regard to Boko Haram, violence perpetrated by this group has flooded across the border to neighboring states, primarily destabilizing parts of Cameroon. Though Cameroon has historically been a relatively stable country within West Africa (barring the conflict with the UPC in 1961), in addition to the recent attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram, Cameroon has also struggled with a secessionist civil war within its largely English-speaking portions. In addition, Niger has recently experienced multiple brutal attacks by violent non-state actors (though the total violence remains much lower than in other states in the Lake Chad Basin).

Though other armed groups have destabilized the region, Boko Haram plays an outsized role in undermining stability.

Seeking to establish a theocratic state, Boko Haram has perpetrated both a low-level insurgency as well as more overt, conventional attacks on Cameroon and on Nigerian government positions (as well as other areas throughout the Lake Chad Basin). Outside of attacks on government positions, Boko Haram has brutally targeted civilians in numerous ways. While the government of Nigeria initially faltered in suppressing the insurgency, the government (in conjunction with international support) has been able to limit overt rebel operations. Still, Boko Haram poses a critical threat in the area and continues to launch deadly attacks.

As compared to many other states experiencing heightened instability, the governments within this region have a relatively strong capacity to respond to state violence. Similarly, within the region, Chad plays a crucial role in supporting counter-insurgency operations to limit the violence perpetrated by transnational non-state actors. Still, there are profound limitations to what these military forces can do. Despite fielding a large army, Nigeria does not have the capacity to keep its troops well-supplied in countering Boko Haram's activities.

These shortcomings in supplies have historically been compounded by both Nigeria's chronic state corruption and persistent use of state repression. Northern Nigeria offered a fertile area for Boko Haram to emerge given that the state had historically underfunded the region. Wealth derived from oil revenues in other parts of the state has also historically been siphoned off by persistent government corruption. There has also been a willingness on the part of government troops to brutally suppress civilians in their efforts to find and sanction insurgents. Finally, governments throughout the region have struggled to defeat the insurgency while dealing with other instances of violence (both insurgencies and communal fighting).

Despite these challenges, governments throughout the region have demonstrated a willingness to partner with global actors to help prevent ongoing violence. Dealing with not only the threat posed by transnational violent actors but the root causes of this violence requires strong international support and enhanced coordination between global partners and regional stakeholders.

Sudan/South Sudan

Potential for Impact: Moderate Feasibility

Sudan and South Sudan have been at war since the 1960s, with recurring insurgencies operating transnationally throughout the region. Despite experiencing decades of persistent armed conflict, both countries have entered into political transitions that may generate room for substantial change. Since gaining independence from Sudan, South Sudan has struggled with

multiple ongoing insurgencies. Violence escalated more dramatically, though, when a battle over political power between longtime rivals (President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar) generated massive interethnic conflict in South Sudan. In 2013, Machar formed the SPLM-IO to contest control of the state, placing the world's youngest democracy into a persistent state of war ever since. Though multiple peace processes have emerged to end the conflict, almost all have led to a recurrence of fighting. This cycle appeared close to ending in 2018 with the signing of a new peace agreement (though only time will tell). Foreign interference by Sudan has exacerbated this conflict, though the recent ousting of Sudan's President Bashir and the formation of a transitional power-sharing government in the country may end this political dynamic.

While multiple rebel groups have emerged throughout both Sudan and South Sudan, the SPLM-IO has played a critical role in undermining stability. The rebel group has operated an external diplomatic mission in neighboring Uganda (allowing President Museveni to play a unique role as peacemaker in the conflict). Similarly, rebel groups in Sudan (particularly, the SPLM-North) have close connections with the South Sudanese government (as they emerged as part of the same opposition movement). The conflicts in both countries have been exacerbated by profound human rights violations perpetrated by the incumbent governments and rebel groups.

Within the last two years, though, recent political transitions in both countries have opened up room for new international engagement. The signing of the most recent peace agreement in South Sudan has conditioned international support on substantive steps taken by warring parties to implement the agreement. Within the last year in Sudan, a military coup and the formation of a transitional power-sharing government have also created room for significant political and economic reforms to offer stability to this war-torn country.

With that said, there are significant structural barriers that may limit the efficacy of international partners in offering assistance. First, political entrepreneurs within South Sudan and Sudan are mercurial and have interests that diverge from the significant sociotropic reforms needed to foster stability. Oil wealth complicates any political process, as the incentives for rentier behavior may stymie political reforms. Finally, South Sudan is exceptionally poor in regard to national infrastructure. It will be a logistical hurdle to assess, monitor, and implement major reforms throughout the entire country (and not just within Juba).

Libya

Potential for Impact: Low Feasibility

The conflict in Libya offers a major challenge to fostering

stability. Numerous militias operate throughout the country and political power within the state has been divided into two (with the eastern part run by General Haftar). While there has been significant international engagement in fostering a settlement, foreign governments have backed rival sides, complicating diplomatic efforts. The country has been in a Hobbesian state of instability since shortly after NATO forces aided opposition groups to topple the Gadhafi regime in 2011. Though there were early hopes that a new democratic government would emerge, the ubiquity of political militias in the country helped to destabilize the post-war period.

The Islamic State in Libya poses a persistent threat to stability within the country, though its capacity has been greatly reduced. While the rebel group posed the greatest threat to stability in 2016 with its attack on the town of Sirte, counterattacks by rival armed groups and targeted US airstrikes have largely pushed the group off of the battlefield. Major fighting in Libya has most recently been led by General Haftar's attempt to overthrow the General National Congress in Tripoli (backed by the Libyan Dawn militia). Still, the Islamic State in Libya continues to operate and may capitalize on the current instability.

Though there is significant international engagement in attempting to end the conflict, foreign sponsorships will likely complicate any efforts by US implementing agencies. Russia and Egypt (a US ally in the region) have both provided significant support to General Haftar, who is currently derailing stability within the country. Recent Turkish efforts to support the General National Congress have also raised the risk of escalatory violence in the country. Operations in Libya are further complicated by the fact that it is difficult for US implementing agencies to ensure the safety of their staff in the country with such a diffuse set of militias across it.

Yemen

Potential for Impact: Moderate Feasibility

Outside of fighting in Libya, Syria, and Iraq, the Middle East has also been rocked by the war in Yemen. Though transnational armed groups have been operating in the country for years (e.g., al-Qaeda/al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula), instability has grown substantially since the Houthi rebels captured Sanaa. The rise of the Houthi rebels has altered the political calculations for Arab governments in the region. The Houthis have been viewed as a proxy for Iranian forces (and now benefit from Iranian patronage). Following the fall of the incumbent government to the Houthis, Saudi and UAE forces responded by supporting armed opposition groups in an effort to retake the Yemeni capital. Additionally, Saudi and UAE forces have also led a campaign of indiscriminate bombings that have dramatically escalated the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

With control of the capital, the Houthi forces represent the incumbent government in Yemen. Elements of the previous regime, in addition to a self-determination movement within the south, operate largely as the opposition movement to the Houthi forces in Sanaa. Former President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi leads the primary opposition to the Houthis. These forces rely heavily on foreign patronage to wage their campaign to retake the capital. In response to increased foreign intervention from Saudi Arabia, Houthi forces have launched a series of remote attacks inside Saudi Arabia.

Though Saudi Arabia has previously shown little interest in promoting a peaceful settlement to the conflict, current political dynamics may change this. With the decline in global oil prices (and the increased risk posed to the Kingdom), Saudi Arabia seems less willing to pursue further intervention in the conflict. The UAE has also drawn down significant forces within the conflict. Despite recent political developments, any peace process will be challenging. Furthermore, it may be difficult to ensure the safety of US implementing agencies in an area that often hosts extremist organizations.

Prevention Country and Region Assessment

Definitions and data sources

As the term “violence” (or violent) is the most common description used by the GFA to discuss global risk and strategies to reduce fragility, we assess the risk of sudden violence for all developing countries since the end of the Cold War through 2018. As 2018 is the last year for which data are available for key indicators used in the models, our temporal domain ends in this year. Similarly, key data on battle deaths (fighting between rebels and the government) and non-state violence only become available after the end of the Cold War. Of note, we do not include battle deaths that emerge from interstate conflicts within this analysis (though we do analyze *internationalized* civil wars). This decision was made for two reasons: 1) interstate conflicts are exceedingly uncommon and are far less bloody in modern years, and 2) the tools and strategies employed by US agencies (such as State, USAID, DoD, etc.) are more uniquely designed to help reduce the risk posed by sudden escalations in intrastate armed conflicts as well as non-state violence (such as communal/ethnic fighting). We do include what are termed *internationalized* armed conflicts in this analysis, where foreign governments are involved in the intrastate conflict (such as ongoing fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Syria, and Afghanistan, to list a few).

Data for both armed conflict violence as well as violence perpetrated by non-state actors are drawn from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program Global Events Dataset (or UCDP GED). The UCDP GED includes detailed information on instances

of armed conflict, where non-state actors battle with governments, and non-state violence perpetrated by groups such as ethnic or sectarian groups, criminal organizations, or movements within civil society (like opposition parties). As we are concerned with the sudden increase in violence, we aggregate armed conflict (hereafter referred to as *state-based violence*) and non-state violence to an annual basis. We therefore create a panel dataset of country years ranging from 1989–2018. To operationalize violence, we measure both the total number of individuals killed from state-based and non-state violence as well as sudden *surges* in violence. Based on previous research on the onset of wars, we use a threshold of 1,000 or greater deaths to identify an escalation or surge in violence. To isolate stabilization countries, we included all countries that suffered 2,000 or more deaths from fighting over the last five years. This figure is drawn from values that exceeded the median value of deaths over the time period for all countries that suffered at least 100 deaths from armed conflict and/or fighting between non-state actors (see Table II below for a complete list of countries). The use of 100 deaths for entry into the sample population ensured that the median value was not based on 1) a global sample population (preventing comparisons between Norway and Cameroon), and 2) excluded low-level violence such as rare bombings or isolated clashes. Lists were also compared to similar estimates over the last 10 years to ensure they were consistent.

Statistical approach and predictors included

We rely on both total counts of deaths as well as the likelihood of these sudden surges in violence to make our assessments. The first measure simply estimates the predicted number of casualties from both non-state violence and state-based violence. The second measure looks more specifically at the likelihood that countries will experience a sudden surge in violence. Surges in violence are measured by 1,000 or more deaths from either state-based or non-state violence. The logic for this second measure is based on the expectation that the engaged stakeholders will be specifically concerned with sudden escalations in fighting that may destabilize the region. Models predicting the total number killed as a result of fighting are estimated using a negative binomial regression. Similarly, surges in violence are estimated using logistic regression.

In order to predict variation in violence, we include a number of key indicators. A significant body of past research has highlighted that inclusive political institutions decrease the risk of war, so we include a measure for the presence of a representative democracy. This measure is drawn from the V-Dem Dataset. Similarly, corrupt and/or exclusionary regimes increase demands for armed conflict. We therefore also control for the presence of corrupt, personalistic governments (as measured by neopatrimonial regimes) and the degree of political exclusion faced by social groups inside a country. Similarly, there are often demands for an equitable distribution

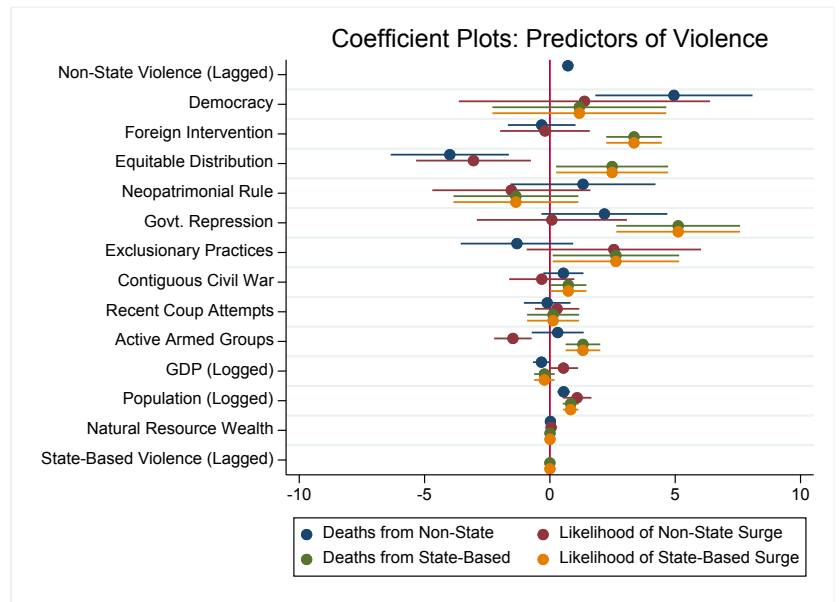
of resources as part of social and political violence. We therefore also include a variable that accounts for the equitable distribution of resources. These variables are all drawn from the V-Dem Dataset.

Another critical predictor of violence is a state's proximity to violence (both historically and geographically) as well as past instability. We therefore also include variables that measure whether there was a previous armed conflict, past violence (both non-state and state-based), wars fought in neighboring countries, foreign military interventions, the number of active militant groups inside the country, previous military coups, and the use of government repression to stop the conflict. These data are drawn largely from the UCDP Armed Conflict Dataset and the V-Dem Dataset, as well as the REIGN data project. Finally, all models include country-specific measures to capture relative wealth, size, and dependence on natural resources. Specifically, controls include the logged per capita gross domestic product of states, the logged population size of states, and natural resource wealth as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Findings: Prediction of risk

The results largely indicate that state-based violence and non-state violence are driven by different factors. Specifically, non-state violence is largely the product of exclusionary economic practices and is compounded by weak government resources. On the other hand, state-based violence (such as civil wars and brutal insurgencies) tends to emerge and experience higher rates of violence when foreign powers intervene and the domestic government attempts to eliminate dissent with heavy-handed repression (consistent with past research). In predicting escalations in state-based violence (as opposed to just the onset of fighting), heavy-handed government repression, foreign interventions, and the proliferation of armed groups promote more instability. Further analysis has also demonstrated that improvements in the rule of law within countries may also help mitigate these risks. While insurgents tend to have more opportunity to contest state control in areas with weak governance, a weak rule of law also enables government forces to use extrajudicial violence to punish expected dissidents (and their sympathizers). The results also demonstrate that improvements in the rule of law (as measured by the V-Dem Dataset) help to reduce the onset of major fighting.

Figure I



**Models estimated with robust standard errors clustered by the country. Temporal splines removed for ease of interpretation.*

Figure II

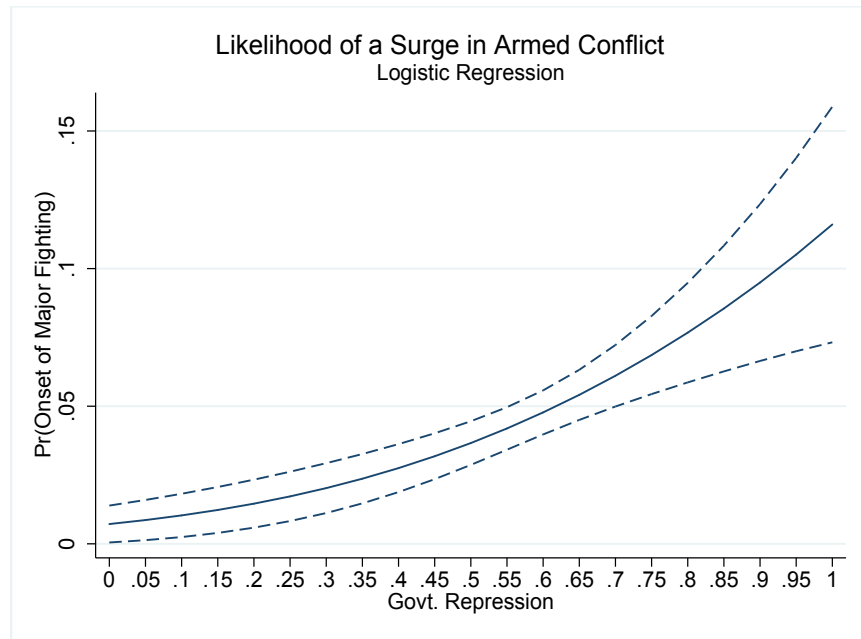
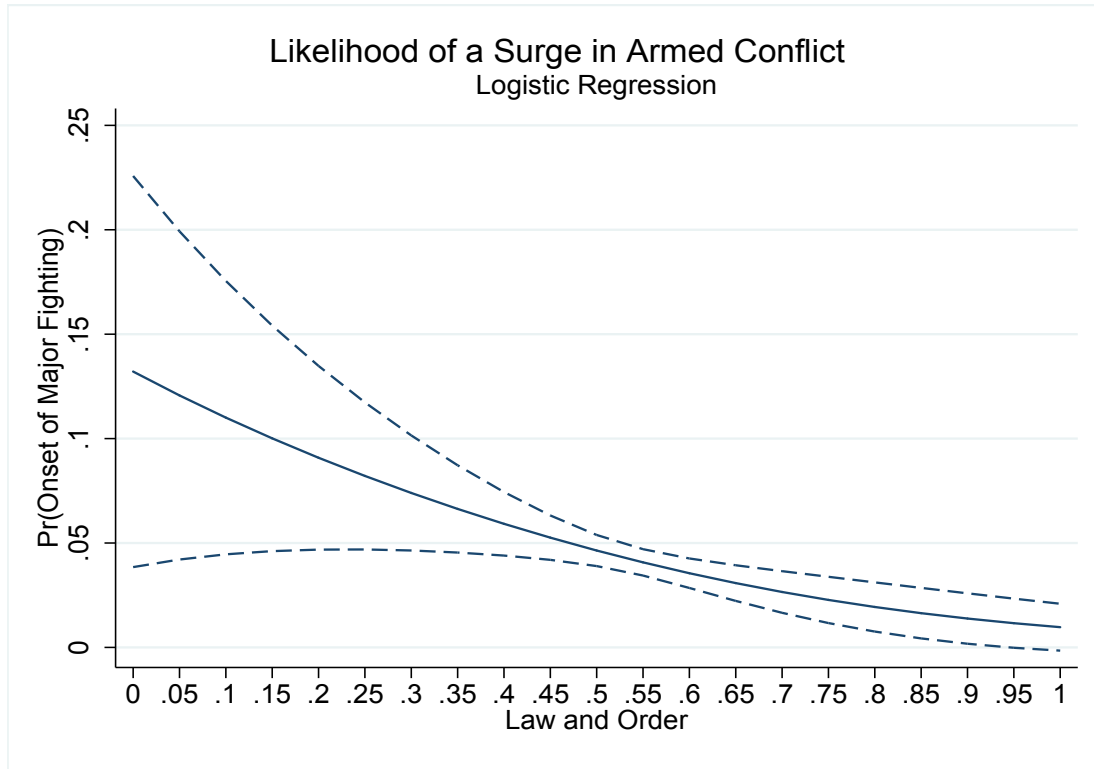
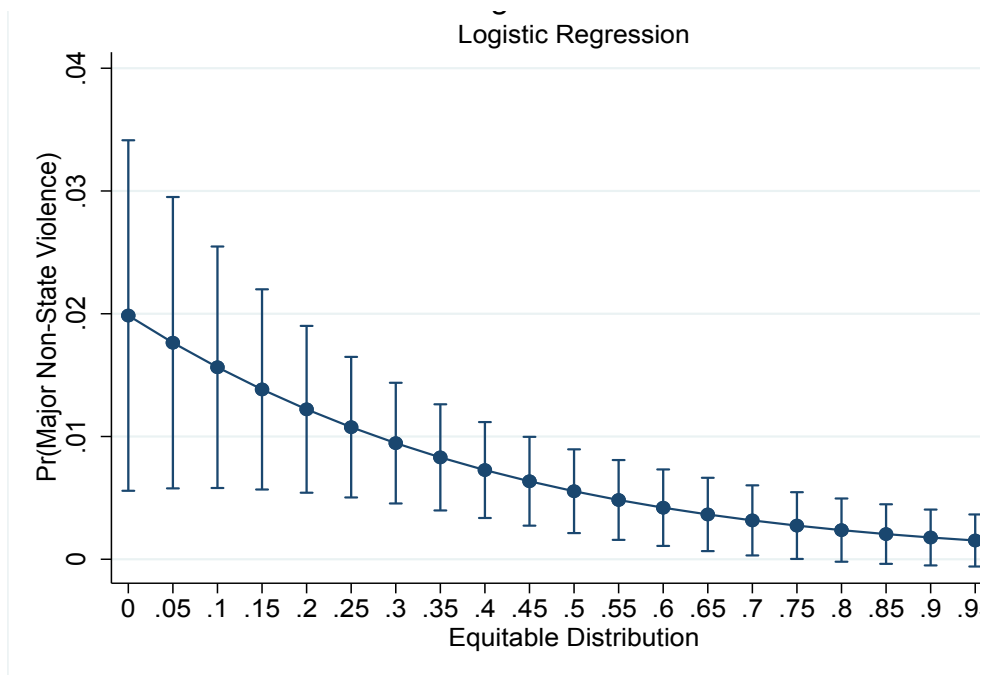


Figure III



On the other hand, escalations in violence between non-state groups, such as attacks by drug cartels or interethnic fighting, are more likely to occur when the government stymies the equitable distribution of resources. The results also indicate that non-state groups are significantly more likely to engage in more brutal fighting when discriminatory practices emerge in more democratic governments, suggesting more frustration with the system.

From these results, we estimated the predicted probabilities of sudden escalations of violence, as well as, based on key indicators, the predicted intensity of fighting (expected deaths from fighting). Note that the predictions on total casualties should be interpreted less as a prediction for a number of actual individuals killed from fighting and more as a gauge on the expected risk (with greater numbers indicating a higher risk).¹⁰⁴ For models estimated using logistic regressions (e.g.,



surges in non-state violence and state-based violence), predicted probabilities are used to determine risk. Predicted probabilities range from zero to one, with higher values indicating an increased likelihood. From these estimations we isolated countries where there were no major intrastate conflicts going on that would cleanly fit into the *stabilization* category of countries (such as Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Ukraine, etc.), but where there was a high risk for escalations of violence. See Table II for countries meeting the definition of stabilization countries.

Table II: Countries Classified as Stabilization Countries

- Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Mexico, Somalia, Pakistan, Sudan, Libya, Ukraine, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Turkey, the Philippines, India, Mali, Egypt, Central African Republic, and Cameroon

As risk varies over time, we looked specifically at the estimated risk in 2018 (the last year of the analysis). From these estimates, we generated lists of the top 20 non-stabilization countries at risk for increased state-based and non-state violence. Based on these lists, common countries and regions were highlighted if they were at risk for both escalations in state-based violence (such as civil wars) and non-state violence (such as intercommunal fighting). From these lists, five countries and/or regions were at an increased risk for escalating violence (both state-based and non-state):

Another approach to this would be to look more regionally as opposed to just at individual countries. Though a region (the Sahel region) was notable for heightened risk across different metrics, major increases in violence within certain countries may contribute to a broader risk of regional insecurity. This is particularly true given the transnational dimensions of armed conflicts. Similar to the analysis above, we added the cumulative risks to each country within specific regions to highlight areas of potential instability. Regions were identified based on increased risk relative to other states, proximity to identified *hotspots* in the previous section, and preexisting geographic areas commonly identified in regional studies (e.g., the Sahel region on the African continent). Based on these metrics, we've identified three additional regions in addition to the Sahel region: Southeast Asia, the African Great Lakes region, and the Horn of Africa. It should be noted that these figures are largely carried by the countries included in the analysis above (e.g., Bangladesh and Myanmar in South Asia). Still, certain countries do underscore the added risk to certain regions. For example, the inclusion of Kenya boosts the expected number of deaths from non-state fighting by 7.7 percent and state-based violence by 5.8 percent in the Horn of Africa.

	LOCATION	PR (Non-State Deaths)	PR (Non-State Surge)	PR (State-Based Deaths)	PR(State-Based Surge)
1	Myanmar	16.819719	0.00026277	37,979.043	0.01252596
2	Ethiopia	150.12598	0.00438385	648.93768	0.00255861
3	Bangladesh	2.1805463	0.00024117	393.43423	0.0160113
4	Uganda	0.8314535	0.00015748	22,112.141	0.31945571
5	Sahel region (Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso)	12.1132233	0.000042796	275.833549	0.02401122

LOCATION	PR (Non-State Deaths)	PR (Non-State Surge)	PR(State-Based Deaths)	PR (State-Based Surge)
Southeast Asia (Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, Bangladesh, and Vietnam)	20.27	0.002	38,033.96	0.036
Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti)	161.71	0.004	686.54	0.006
African Great Lakes region (Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania)	2.90	0.0003	24,522.24	0.459
Sahel region (Specifically Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso)	12.11	0.00004	275.83	0.024

Assessment of prevention interventions

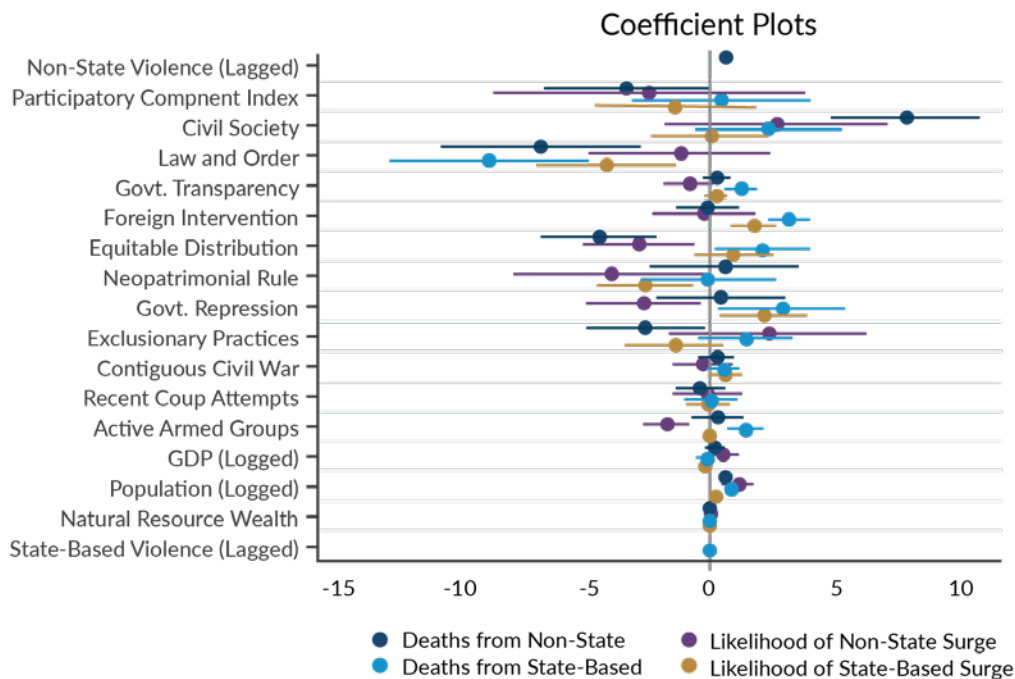
As part of our analysis, we also examined how possible prevention activities are likely to shape the risk of escalatory violence. For this portion of our analysis, we rely on the four dependent variables discussed earlier: total deaths from non-state violence, total deaths from state-based violence, surge in non-state violence (1,000 or more deaths), as well as a surge in state-based violence (1,000 or more deaths). Similarly, models estimating counts of deaths are estimated using negative binomial regression while the likelihood of a surge in violence is estimated using a logistic regression. All models use robust standard errors that are clustered on the countries.

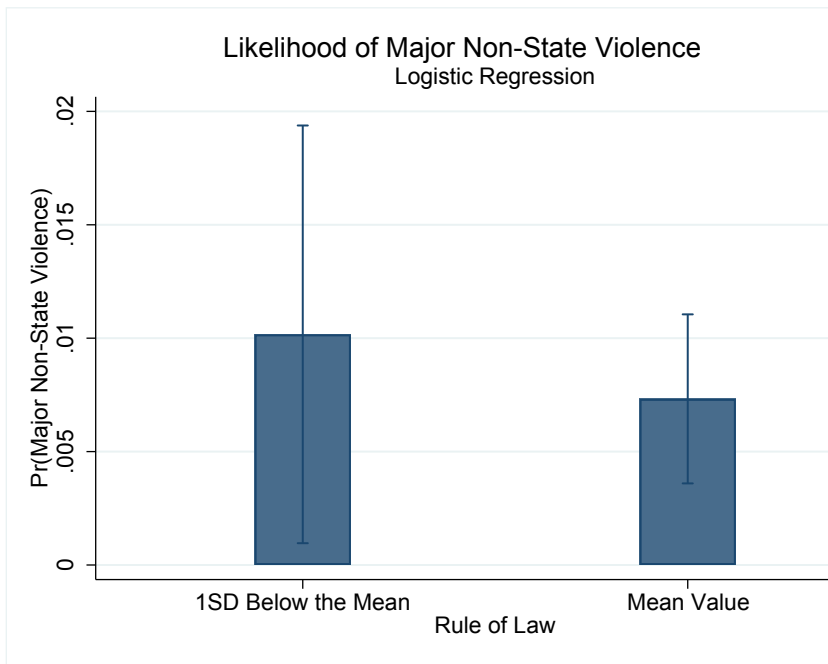
Our primary independent variables used to capture prevention activities are drawn from the V-Dem Dataset. Specifically, we rely on their rule of law index, which measures the degree to which countries equally enforce the rule of law. We also utilize their government transparency index (capturing the relative transparency in the enforcement of law), as well as their indices on political participation, equitable distribution of goods and services, exclusion of social groups, and the strength of civil society. We rely primarily on these indices as compared to looking at the deployment of US programs, given that 1) there is inconsistent data across time on US programs and activities, and 2) there are likely to be critical questions of endogeneity as to US efforts in the developing world. With regard to the latter, US programs are likely sent to the most difficult areas, where it will be equally difficult to parse out whether the programs are influencing stability or whether

the US government is responding to greater instability with more focused aid. We therefore infer the effectiveness of US programs based on their predicted outcomes (e.g., how would improvements in the rule of law affect instability). With that said, we also make reference to US programs that we surveyed as part of this work. This list of US programs and their intended effect on various aspects of peacebuilding can be found at the end of the Technical Appendix.

As illustrated by the results, and discussed in the main document, clear patterns emerge with regard to how such policies shape the emergence of violence. The rule of law index, as compared to other metrics, is statistically (and strongly) tied with most forms of violence. As the rule of law increases in fragile and conflict-affected countries, there is a reduction in the likelihood of violence. While other metrics are also tied with reductions in violence, they are primarily related to reductions in non-state violence. Again, non-state violence is categorized as violence that results from active fighting between rival non-state groups (such as interethnic fighting or battles between rival drug cartels). For instance, participation in the political process is significantly tied to reductions in total deaths from non-state violence. Similarly, the equitable distribution of goods and services is significantly tied to both reductions in total deaths and a decreased likelihood that a major surge in non-state violence will occur.

To estimate the marginal effects listed in the main text, models dealing with surges in violence were used, given the simplicity of their results. Specifically, we estimated the predicted





probability of a surge occurring. Given that these indices are interval measures, we relied primarily on standard deviations to capture the variance of our measures. Specifically, models estimated increases and decreases in 1 standard deviation in reference to the mean, comparing the predicted probability at 1 standard deviation below the mean to the predicted probability at mean value. All other variables were kept to their mean value during these estimations. Illustrations of the marginal effects for key variables are listed in the main document.

List of US Government Stabilization Programs

Rule of Law

- USAID/OTI/Somalia
- USAID/OTI/Niger
- USAID/OTI/Burkina Faso/Burkina Faso Regional Program (BFRP)
- USAID/OTI/Libya/Libya Transition Initiative (LTI)
- USAID/OTI/Iraq Program
- USAID/OTI/Syria
- USAID/Sahel Regional/Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE)
- National Security Strategy (NSS)
- Joint Strategic Plan FY 2018-2022
- State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa (JRS or Strategy)
- Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)
- Security Governance Initiative

- Joint Regional Strategy/Middle East and North Africa
- Joint Regional Strategy/South and Central Asia/Bureau for South and Central Asia
- Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS)
- South Asia Strategy
- Central Asia Joint Regional Strategy (JRS)
- Regional Bureau Strategy/Bureau of International Organization Affairs
- Joint Regional Strategy/Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
- Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI)
- U.S. Strategy for Central America
- Central America Regional Security Initiative
- Good Governance
- USAID/OTI/Somalia
- USAID/OTI/Niger
- USAID/OTI/Burkina Faso/Burkina Faso Regional Program (BFRP)
- USAID/OTI/Libya/Libya Transition Initiative (LTI)
- USAID/OTI/Iraq Program
- USAID/OTI/Syria
- USAID/Sahel Regional/Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE)
- National Security Strategy (NSS)
- Joint Strategic Plan FY 2018-2022
- State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa (JRS or Strategy)
- Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)
- Security Governance Initiative
- Feed the Future Initiative
- Joint Regional Strategy/Middle East and North Africa
- Joint Regional Strategy/South and Central Asia/Bureau for South and Central Asia
- Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS)
- South Asia Strategy
- Central Asia Joint Regional Strategy (JRS)
- Regional Bureau Strategy/Bureau of International Organization Affairs
- Joint Regional Strategy/Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and Bureau for Latin America and

the Caribbean

- Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI)
- Caribbean 2020 Strategy
- U.S. Strategy for Central America
- Central America Regional Security Initiative
- DOS/Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations

Social Cohesion and Civil Society

- USAID/OTI/Somalia
- USAID/OTI/Cameroon
- USAID/OTI's Nigeria & the Lake Chad Basin (NLCB) Program
- USAID/OTI/Niger
- USAID/OTI/Burkina Faso/Burkina Faso Regional Program (BFRP)
- USAID/OTI/Iraq Program
- National Security Strategy (NSS)
- Joint Strategic Plan FY 2018-2022
- State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa (JRS or Strategy)
- Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)
- Security Governance Initiative
- Joint Regional Strategy/Middle East and North Africa
- Joint Regional Strategy/South and Central Asia/Bureau for South and Central Asia
- Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS)
- South Asia Strategy
- Central Asia Joint Regional Strategy (JRS)
- Joint Regional Strategy/Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
- Caribbean 2020 Strategy
- U.S. Strategy for Central America
- Central America Regional Security Initiative
- DOS/Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations

Economic Development

- USAID/OTI/Cameroon
- USAID/OTI's Nigeria & the Lake Chad Basin (NLCB) Program
- USAID/OTI/Niger
- USAID/OTI/Libya/Libya Transition Initiative (LTI)

- USAID/OTI/Iraq Program
- USAID/OTI/Syria
- USAID/Sahel Regional/Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE)
- National Security Strategy (NSS)
- Joint Strategic Plan FY 2018-2022
- State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa (JRS or Strategy)
- Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)
- Security Governance Initiative
- Feed the Future Initiative
- Joint Regional Strategy/Middle East and North Africa
- Joint Regional Strategy/South and Central Asia/Bureau for South and Central Asia
- Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS)
- South Asia Strategy
- Central Asia Joint Regional Strategy (JRS)
- Regional Bureau Strategy/Bureau of International Organization Affairs
- Joint Regional Strategy/Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
- Caribbean 2020 Strategy
- U.S. Strategy for Central America

Violent Extremism Reduction and/or Defection

- USAID/OTI's Nigeria & the Lake Chad Basin (NLCB) Program
- USAID/OTI/Cameroon
- USAID/OTI/Somalia
- USAID/OTI/Niger
- USAID/OTI/Burkina Faso/Burkina Faso Regional Program (BFRP)
- USAID/OTI/Libya/Libya Transition Initiative (LTI)
- USAID/OTI/Syria
- National Security Strategy (NSS)
- Joint Strategic Plan FY 2018-2022
- Security Governance Initiative
- Joint Regional Strategy/Middle East and North Africa
- Regional Bureau Strategy/Bureau of International Organization Affairs
- Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism

- UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy
- Joint Regional Strategy/Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
- DOS/Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations

Illicit Networks/Activities Reduction

- Joint Regional Strategy/Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
- Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI)
- Caribbean 2020 Strategy
- U.S. Strategy for Central America
- Central America Regional Security Initiative

Irregular Migration Reduction

- Joint Regional Strategy/Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
- Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI)
- Caribbean 2020 Strategy
- U.S. Strategy for Central America

Transnational Criminal Organization Reduction

- Joint Regional Strategy/Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
- Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI)
- Caribbean 2020 Strategy
- U.S. Strategy for Central America
- Central America Regional Security Initiative

Inclusion and/or Reintegration of Marginalized Groups

- USAID/OTI's Nigeria & the Lake Chad Basin (NLCB) Program
- USAID/OTI/Niger
- USAID/OTI/Iraq Program
- USAID/OTI/Syria
- State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy for Africa (JRS or Strategy).
- Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI)
- Feed the Future Initiative
- Joint Regional Strategy/Middle East and North Africa
- DOS/Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations

Intercommunal Relations

- USAID/OTI/Cameroon
- USAID/OTI/Somalia
- USAID/OTI/Burkina Faso/Burkina Faso Regional Program (BFRP)
- USAID/OTI/Libya/Libya Transition Initiative (LTI)
- DOS/Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations

Limitations and constraints

While this analysis offers insights into potential risks, it is far from a complete picture as to where instability exists. There are numerous data limitations around the type of violence used (armed conflict vs. murder rate) as well as the significant work being conducted by government agencies and peacebuilding organizations to decrease the risk of violence in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Such limitations may hinder the ability of researchers to include fragile countries in key recommendations or to adjust the risk to governments based on current efforts by the international community. Similarly, it is likely that practitioners and policymakers may have a preference for alternative indicators used to estimate the risk of sudden violence or the key predictors of instability. Despite these substantial limitations, though, the approach offered here does provide a model for how to assess the risk posed to states. The authors of this document would therefore suggest that stakeholders attempt to utilize a similar process when narrowing their search for prevention countries as part of the GFA.

ENDNOTES

- 1 UNDESA, “SDG Progress Reports 2019: Are We on Track to Achieve the Global Goals?” 8 July 2019, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/sustainable/sdg-progress-reports-2019.html>.
- 2 The World Bank, “Fragility, Conflict, and Violence Overview,” 5 March 2020, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/overview>.
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- 103 The Levant also includes more stable regimes such as Jordan and Israel. We only highlight those countries experiencing significant conflict.
- 104 Predictions from maximum likelihood estimation are sensitive to the specific values for each variable.

