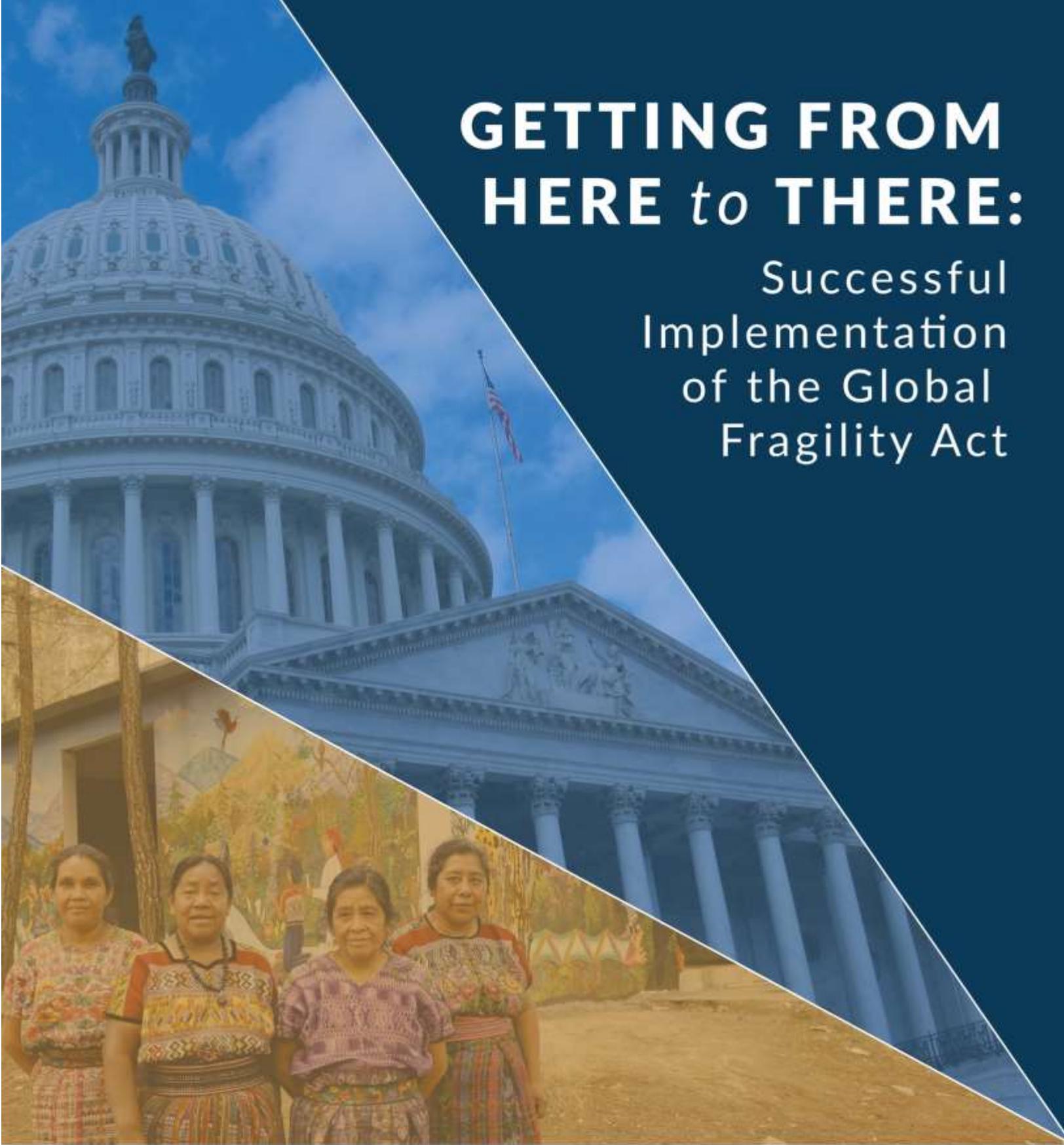


# GETTING FROM HERE *to* THERE:

Successful  
Implementation  
of the Global  
Fragility Act



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## Working Paper:

This is a working paper, and comments or responses are encouraged. Comments are accepted by the authors at [lhume@allianceforpeacebuilding.org](mailto:lhume@allianceforpeacebuilding.org) and/or [dcseyle@oneearthfuture.org](mailto:dcseyle@oneearthfuture.org), and the comment period will be open through March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020. After this date, please contact the authors before citation to inquire about the final content.

## Authors' Note:

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

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**THE ALLIANCE FOR PEACEBUILDING (AfP)** is the leading global network working to end conflict and build sustainable peace worldwide. Our 120+ members work in 153 countries and include some of the world's largest development organizations, most innovative academic institutions, and most influential humanitarian and faith-based groups. We bring together coalitions in key areas of strategy; design, monitoring, and evaluation (DM&E); and policy to elevate the field, tackling issues too large for any one organization to address alone.

**ONE EARTH FUTURE (OEF)** fosters sustainable peace by partnering with innovative world leaders, global development agencies and communities to see complex problems at the root of armed conflict in new ways and solve them together through orchestrated collaboration.

## 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 implementing the GFA will face the same challenges that other attempts to deliver coordinated work have in the past.

Based on a review of existing empirical research, direct consultations with governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders, and several workshops, **the following report highlights and addresses important recommendations that must be addressed in the strategy, implementation, and reporting of the GFA.**

We find the following key recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1: Consultations with civil society must be inclusive, transparent, credible, and early.** The GFA text calls for coordination with civil society, building on lessons learned that show the importance of ensuring engagement with nonstate 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 influence for civil society organizations to the strategy.
- **Recommendation 2: Who owns it? The need for senior-level ownership and interagency cooperation.** Ensuring effective coordination will require senior 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 the State Department aim higher and designate the Deputy Secretary of State or an Under Secretary to lead the development of the strategy.
- **Recommendation 3: The US government must approach implementation intentionally and ensure that 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.
- **Recommendation 4: The need for data-driven selection of countries.** 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 impact 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.
- **Recommendation 5: The need for data-driven strategy and evaluation.** 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: Local ownership is critical in the strategy and implementation of the programming.** Past experience with stabilization strongly supports the idea that addressing fragility requires active and engaged local ownership of the process. In turn, ensuring local ownership requires engaging locally legitimate authorities and local peacebuilders in strategy development, ownership, and more flexible procurement mechanisms.
- **Recommendation 7: The need for existing and planned development and security assistance programs to be at least conflict sensitive and integrated in the GFA 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. A body of research on conflict sensitivity in humanitarian assistance has begun to develop frameworks for conflict sensitivity in international assistance, and this calls for the activities planned under the GFA to incorporate conflict sensitivity into their plans and operations.
- **Recommendation 8: Linking diplomatic and programmatic efforts.** The GFA explicitly calls for closer coordination between diplomatic and programmatic efforts than has historically been the case. Actually executing this through both information sharing and coordination around strategies and goals is key to the success of the GFA. Treating diplomatic activities as disconnected from development or security attempts to address fragility is likely to undermine both efforts.
- **Recommendation 9: Use the whole iceberg: partner and coordinate with other actors in the area.** Effective and sustainable support for stabilization requires more than only US government actors. Ensuring that policy and practice allows for effective coordination with other actors, including the private sector and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), will be important for sustainably addressing fragility.
- **Recommendation 10: The human element is important, and 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: Streamlined, less prescriptive and quicker procurement mechanisms that are more diversified, faster and adaptive which allow for longer duration of programs are necessary for successful implementation of the GFA.** 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 development procurement and the USAID/OTI model must be designed that fits the GFA strategy.
- **Recommendation 12: Material Support: It's Time for a Legislative Fix.** The GFA requires the Administration to reduce the risk that policies, programs and resources are not exploited by extremists, but U.S. laws already impose severe restrictions on material support for violent extremism. Without a change to these restrictive laws, efforts by the U.S. 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 U.S. government and implementing partners that operate programs designed to prevent violent extremism.

*In July 2019, UN Secretary-General António Guterres assessed soberly, “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.”<sup>1</sup>*

The status quo is not working, and new ideas and approaches are needed to prevent and reduce violent conflict and build peace. Wars and violence have triggered the worst displacement and refugee crisis ever recorded, displacing more than seventy million people.<sup>2</sup> Conflicts now drive 80 percent of all humanitarian needs.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> Today’s violent conflicts are much more complex and protracted, with which traditional development assistance and diplomacy have not kept pace.

The bipartisan Global Fragility Act<sup>6</sup> 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.

Specifically, the GFA accomplishes the following:

- 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 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 identify the foreign assistance programs and diplomatic approaches that are most effective at preventing violence and conflict
- Requires internal interagency coordination and external partnerships with stakeholders, including civil society

Advocacy co-led by the Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP) and Mercy Corps and a coalition of sixty-seven organizations, supported the enactment of the Global Fragility Act. However, the work is not over, and

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<sup>1</sup> UNDESA, “SDG Progress Reports 2019: Are we on track to achieve the global goals?” 8 July 2019, retrieved 10 March 2020 from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/sustainable/sdg-progress-reports-2019.html>

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank, “Fragility, Conflict, and Violence Overview” retrieved 10 March 2020 from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/overview>

<sup>3</sup> The World Bank, “Fragility, Conflict, and Violence Overview”

<sup>4</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, (2019, Sydney: Institute for Economics and Peace)

<sup>5</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Peace Index 2018: Measuring Peace in a Complex World (2018, Sydney: Institute for Economics and Peace)

<sup>6</sup> The GFA was adopted by Congress in 2019 and on December 20, 2019, President Trump signed into law the Global Fragility Act which was included in the 2020 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

AfP and One Earth Future Foundation have conducted a research project focused on the challenges and opportunities of implementing the GFA. The following report focuses on the requirements of the law, including timelines, often-overlooked operational needs, and the interagency coordination mandated by the GFA. This report follows the timelines as mandated in the law, starting with the development of the Global Fragility Strategy and identification of countries/regions that are required 270 days after passage (September 15, 2020). The report also outlines issues that address operationalization of the GFA strategy and country-specific plans. Based on research, roundtables, and a series of discussions with expert practitioners, *we believe the following recommendations are critical to ensure successful implementation of the GFA:*

## **Recommendation 1:**

**Consultations with civil society must be inclusive, transparent, credible, innovative, and iterative.**

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 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.”<sup>7</sup>

Consultations are already being set up by the interagency, and we believe an interagency survey for stakeholders on the GFA strategy is forthcoming, and the outreach and inclusion with civil society is encouraging. However, for the process to be meaningful, it must be comprehensive and transparent. In Washington, DC, closed-door meetings with select organizations and networks and a public event are already being planned. However, we strongly recommend that meetings and consultations are also held outside of Washington, DC. While experts in Washington, DC, have significant expertise, it is imperative 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’s also important that the consultations not be one-off engagements. Instead, an iterative process of check-ins and consultations will allow stakeholders comment on evolving policies and also be more connected to the strategies as they see their perspectives being integrated.

### **Explore low-cost technologies to extend engagement**

While in-person interviews are the best approach for focused engagement, there are other approaches to ensure local voices are incorporated into the strategy. The United Nations recently conducted an innovative approach to solicit feedback for Community Engagement Guidelines<sup>8</sup> in the run-up to the ongoing 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review. Afp member Peace Direct coordinated an online consultation for these guidelines online through [www.platform4dialogue.org](http://www.platform4dialogue.org), which Peace Direct built specifically to encourage and facilitate open discussions with large numbers of participants from local civil society across multiple time zones. This platform is a very simple and intuitive platform that is cost efficient and works extremely well to engage a wide variety of local actors and extend engagement. This

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<sup>7</sup> Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Sec 504(b)

<sup>8</sup> UN Working Group on System-Wide UN Community-Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (2019). “UN system-wide Community-engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace (community-engagement through local civil society actors), DRAFT” New York, NY: United Nations

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 early consultation will not suffice. Additionally, a new development is the pandemic COVID-19. As COVID-19 continues to spread, many organizations are canceling meetings and restricting travel for staff members, which will make in-person meetings—even in Washington, DC—increasingly difficult. Therefore, the US government should immediately develop virtual online platforms.

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. The United Nations, in 2019, 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 (FCV). Both 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 eighty-eight 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 a similar (albeit shortened) model when developing the Global Fragility Strategy (GFS). A comprehensive multifaceted and virtual approach would ensure the US government benefits from broad public input, as well as to increase transparency and promote an exchange of innovative ideas from stakeholders in conflict affected and fragile states.

The US government can 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 (FY) 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 as well as 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 NGOs 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 (CSOs) to apply and account for US government funding were not addressed in USAID Forward.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the process must provide safeguards so key

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<sup>9</sup> In 2010, the [US Agency for International Development](#) launched [USAID Forward](#), an agency-wide reform agenda aimed at strengthening aid mechanisms, improving the impact of development programs, and fostering innovative solutions for the most pressing development challenges. One key component of this strategy involves allocating 30

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.

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percent of agency funding to local partners by 2015. USAID never got to this target, and by 2017 USAID Forward had ended.

## Recommendation 2:

### Who owns it? The need for senior-level ownership and interagency cooperation

Global Fragility Act section 504(a)(4) outlines the broad range of activities to be implemented under the Global Fragility Strategy, including civil society empowerment, conflict resolution, justice sector reform, good governance, inclusive and accountable service delivery, civilian security, and security sector reform. To execute this comprehensive mission, a comprehensive, multisectoral approach to addressing the causes of fragility and violence is necessary. No one agency, bureau, or office is responsible for all of these sectors. In other words, successful 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.

#### 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.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.

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 the State Department aim higher and designate the Deputy Secretary of State or an**

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<sup>10</sup> Speaking remarks at event “Global Fragility Act Implementation,” January 16, 2020, Washington, DC: Alliance for Peacebuilding

<sup>11</sup> [Robert](#) M. Perito “Integrated Security Assistance: The 1207 Program” (2008, Washington DC: US Institute of Peace)

**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 also to ensure that regional bureaus are brought into the GFA alongside 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 and violence 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 a field focused and deeply integrated bureau to reduce duplication, increase efficiencies, and capitalize on the agency's three decades of working in conflict-affected countries, 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 early on into GFA strategy development and implementation. 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 the evaluation element integrated into biannual 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 by 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 is 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 and local leadership of GFA implementation a reality.

### **DoD interventions must be integrated in the GFA strategy and county/region plans**

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 also recognizes the important role of the Department of Defense (DoD) in the development of the GFS but it does not articulate specific activities for the agency to execute as part of the law. DoD interventions must be integrated in the GFA strategy and country/region plans, and the role of DoD in a GFA country/region can't be in isolation. The U.S. government must integrate existing and planned security assistance and cooperation programs in each GFA priority country/region with the strategy and mitigate risks. 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.<sup>12</sup> DoD should prioritize security sector reform and building security capacity to transition successfully to host-nation providers. This requires increasing U.S. military capacity to provide training and security force assistance, with educational content developed by the civilian interagency.<sup>13</sup>

While the U.S. government has worked to improve coordination between DoD and civilian agencies, 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.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, an important part of increased synergy between DoD and civilian agencies is mitigating risk and ensuring DoD interventions do not cause harm to stabilization and conflict prevention efforts.

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<sup>12</sup> Guilan Deneoex and Lynne Carter. Guide to the drivers of violent extremism (2009, Washington DC: USAID)

<sup>13</sup> Robinson, Linda, Sean Mann, Jeffrey Martini, and Stephanie Pezard, Finding the Right Balance: Department of Defense Roles in Stabilization. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2441.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2441.html).

<sup>14</sup> Robinson, Linda, Sean Mann, Jeffrey Martini, and Stephanie Pezard, Finding the Right Balance: Department of Defense Roles in Stabilization. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2441.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2441.html).

### **Recommendation 3:**

The US government must approach implementation holistically, intentionally, and professionally to ensure timelines are met and authorization matches timelines and appropriations.

“Holistically, intentionally, and professionally” in the context of GFA implementation means that the USG is drawing from the comparative advantages of all the relevant departments and agencies. “Intentionally” means a policy-driven effort rather than post-ad-hoc consequentialism that retrofits programs and results. Finally, “professionally” means 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): 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 the following: empowering local and national actors; ensuring multisectoral approaches; assigning roles for relevant Federal Departments and agencies, identifying mechanisms to improve coordination between the U.S. government including the Department of Defense, foreign governments, and international organizations and public-private partnerships; describing the criteria and metrics for monitoring and evaluation of programs and objectives; and outlining activities to reduce the risk of corrupt, repressive local actors or extremists gaining support from programs and policies of the US government. Additionally, the GFS requires a list of priority countries and regions selected and the rationale.
2. Section 506: Not later than one year after the date of enactment (December 20, 2020), the President in coordination 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 U.S. government with respect to each of the countries and regions selected.
3. Section 508—Biennial Reports: No later than two years after the submission of the plans, and every two year 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.

As outlined above, there are key dates and reporting structures established by the GFA, and it is encouraging to see the seriousness and 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 eighteen months later.<sup>15</sup> 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 the GFS specifically outline how it will support the related objectives of the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocity Prevention Act; the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy; and the Stabilization Assistance Review.

*The selection of countries/regions must be thoughtfully matched to resources and timing.* The process and scope of recommended engagement 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. 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, “P/CVE programs should consider concentrating programming more intensively in fewer zones in order to maximize the effect of the resources – intensity of programming has been shown to have a large impact on P/CVE programming.”<sup>16</sup> Additionally, learnings and findings from pilot GFA countries can be applied to non-GFA countries throughout the ten-year strategy. Therefore, GFA implementing agencies should limit the number of planned engagements. However, best practices learned from GFA countries and regions should not wait until a new country strategy is developed. These findings should be integrated into existing country strategies so they can be replicated in non GFA country and regions.

To date, there has been very little discussion about the selection of countries or regions. AfP recently released a report titled Ethiopia: Conflict Dynamics Amid Sweeping Reforms Require a Peacebuilding Approach.<sup>17</sup> This report outlined Ethiopia’s historic political transition that 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, especially as the proposed August 2020 elections approach. The report’s recommendations state that the U.S. foreign assistance to Ethiopia can’t be “business as usual,” and the U.S. diplomatic and development approach in Ethiopia needs to adapt to the new conflict dynamics and changing political landscape. AfP is not advocating for Ethiopia to be a prevention country under the Global Fragility Act. However, a GFA approach is what is needed for the U.S. government to reorient development assistance to ensure a peaceful transition to sustainable democracy in Ethiopia. Reorienting

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<sup>15</sup> Office of the President of the United States, United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (2019, Washington, DC: Office of the President of the United States)

<sup>16</sup> Steven E. Finkel et al., “Peace through Development II: Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger” (Washington, D.C, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> Alliance for Peacebuilding “Ethiopia: Conflict Dynamics Amid Sweeping Reforms Require a Peacebuilding Approach” (2020, Washington, DC: Alliance for Peacebuilding)

assistance towards prevention in fragile states is the essence of the GFA, and Ethiopia fits the criteria for a prevention country as discussed in Recommendation 4.

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 further away.

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 single countries 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 in to 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 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.<sup>18</sup> 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

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<sup>18</sup> Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Sec 509(a)(3)(A)(i–ii), Sec. 510(b)(1)

to attract contributions from and enhance coordination among other donor governments, philanthropic organizations, and the private sector.<sup>19</sup>

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 counter global fragility, including through the Global Fragility Strategy,”<sup>20</sup> 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 or other terrorist organizations, or violent extremist organizations.”<sup>21</sup>
- \$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”<sup>22</sup> 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 ninety 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.”

## 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

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<sup>19</sup> USIP, Taskforce on Extremism in Fragile States (2019). <https://www.usip.org/programs/task-force-extremism-fragile-states>

<sup>20</sup> Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Sec. 509(a)(3)(A)(i)

<sup>21</sup> Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Sec. 509(a)(3)(A)(ii)

<sup>22</sup> Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Sec. 510(b)(1)

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 at the 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 NGOs and other key stakeholders.

It is also imperative that the appropriate committees hold public hearings, and 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 congressional delegations visit GFA countries and regions to build strong congressional relationships with country teams, implementing partners and critical local stakeholders.

## Recommendation 4:

### The need for data-driven selection of countries and programs

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 [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.”<sup>23</sup>

In laying out these criteria, the authors of the bill are providing a pathway to balance 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.

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 to refine the list. We specifically propose a process with the following steps:

1. Use empirical prediction methods to identify countries at 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 on the basis of US interests and strategies. The final ranking of the identified countries can be based on which countries intersect most strongly with US national

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<sup>23</sup> Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Sec. 505

interests and the perceived effectiveness of engagement. Additional criteria include vulnerability to climate change and displaced populations.

There are multiple ways the implementers of the GFA can approach using objective criteria to identify priority countries. **Within our Technical Appendix found at the end of this report**, we include a sample approach to identifying prevention countries (where there is currently no major fighting, but war may emerge). Our intent is not to claim that this is the sole approach that may 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.

We also use these data to highlight one way that implementing agencies can assess the possible efficacy of various programs. As part of this illustration within the Technical Appendix, we examine how different program types (such as development, rule of law, and/ or good governance promotion) affect the risk of emerging violence. While this is merely an example of one avenue implementing agencies may pursue in identifying programs, it underscores the advantages of using objective metrics when prioritizing programs as part of the GFA.

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. Once the feedback loop of violence has begun, it's 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.

## **Recommendation 5:**

### Evidence-based and adaptive strategies for design and monitoring of programs

The GFA specifies that within one year after the date of the enactment of the GFA, the President, along with relevant Federal agencies and departments, must submit to Congress a detailed ten-year strategy to prevent and address violence in at least five priority countries. This strategy must explain why each country was selected as a priority and include: a baseline analysis for each respective country, descriptions and timeline of goals and objectives, interagency plans that involve local government and civil society actors, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and descriptions of how such actions will strengthen US partnerships with foreign governments, donors, multilateral organizations, and the private sector.

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 operate according to these best practices. This implies 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, as well as at the national level.

#### **Improve evidence-based DM&E**

Most implementing partners do not or cannot prove 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, that is further magnified by a dearth of consistent donor DM&E requirements. 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.”<sup>24</sup> 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 early integration and robust design. The 2019 AfP report “Perspectives in Peacebuilding”<sup>25</sup> 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 few funds

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<sup>24</sup> [United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\) “Acquisition and assistance strategy” \(2018, Washington DC: USAID\)](#)

<sup>25</sup> Alliance for Peacebuilding “Perspectives in peacebuilding: Assessment of current dynamics in the peacebuilding system” (2019, Washington, DC: Alliance for Peacebuilding)

are allocated toward DM&E, disadvantaging implementers and predisposing sub-par-quality research from the proposal and design phase.<sup>26</sup>

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, 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 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; 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 and that also must be released. The Office of Transition Initiatives 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 high-quality research on peacebuilding impact, and engender an ethos of transparency through the open dissemination of findings are critical components to support data-driven strategy and evaluation. However, even when there is research and data available, as a field, we don't 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 are 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<sup>TM</sup>. 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.

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<sup>26</sup> Alliance for Peacebuilding “Perspectives in peacebuilding: Assessment of current dynamics in the peacebuilding system”

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 an 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's possible for DM&E systems to commit to data that can't reasonably be collected, or through methods that may turn out to be disruptive to program activities. A conscious design not only of projects but 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 is knowledge 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.

### **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."<sup>27</sup> 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 defining clearly technical requirements.

### **Evidence-based selection of interventions**

A similar approach to the one described above can be used to identify the relative priority of interventions. The debate about intervention sequencing and selection is an active and complex one, in part because the complexity of conflict means that lessons from one country must be carefully adapted in translation to another. That complexity means that there is no single algorithm that can be used to identify which intervention to prioritize across all countries.

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<sup>27</sup> Alliance for Peacebuilding "Snapshot of Adaptive Management in Peacebuilding Programs" (2018, Washington, DC: Alliance for Peacebuilding)

However, quantitative assessment as an input to decisions can be an important tool for mitigating the biases that any individual or group brings to the table. The same process described above, of identifying specific end states and applying quantitative analysis to identify the predictors of these outcomes, can be used to suggest which specific interventions may be most useful.

The Technical Appendix includes the results of one such analysis, which examines how different program types (such as development, rule of law, and/or good governance promotion) affect the risk of emerging violence in the dataset that we have. While this is merely an example of one avenue implementing agencies may pursue in identifying programs, it underscores the advantages of using objective metrics when prioritizing programs as part of the GFA. This input provides an alternate analysis that can be used to identify which programs should be considered in the country-level plans developed under the GFS.

## Recommendation 6:

Local ownership is critical in developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the GFS strategy and country and regional ten-year implementation plans.

Sec 504(a)(4) of the GFA specifically addresses the need to encourage and empower local ownership, and this provision is also highlighted throughout the law. Therefore, the GFS and the ten-year plans with respect to the countries and regions selected must outline how to engage and partner with locally legitimate authorities and local civil society during the consultation period for the GFS and throughout implementation of the ten-year plan.

There are significant challenges to ensuring local ownership and partnership with bilateral and multilateral donors and international NGOs. 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 (DM&E) 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.<sup>28</sup> US personnel should also integrate the lessons and tools outlined in cutting-edge findings from *Stopping As Success*.<sup>29</sup> 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 international non-government organizations (INGOs); INGOs that promote local leadership are 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.”<sup>30</sup> 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

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<sup>28</sup> Peace Direct “Local peacebuilding: What works and why” 10 July 2019, retrieved 10 March 2020 from <https://www.peacedirect.org/us/publications/whatworks/>

<sup>29</sup> *Stopping As Success: Transitioning to Locally Led Development (SAS)* is a three-year USAID-funded collaborative learning project that is looking at responsible transitions of INGOs from a variety of different contexts. It is being implemented by a consortium consisting of Peace Direct, Search for Common Ground, and CDA Collaborative Learning. <https://www.stoppingassuccess.org/>

<sup>30</sup> [United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\) “Acquisition and assistance strategy”](#)

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 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 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 CSOs 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.”<sup>31</sup> 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

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<sup>31</sup> International Crisis Group. Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action (Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group 2016)

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.<sup>32</sup> For example, in Ethiopia, 41 percent of the population is under fifteen, and more than 28 percent is aged 15 to 29, while in South Sudan, nearly 74 percent of the population is under thirty.<sup>33</sup> Youth face structural challenges in receiving US foreign assistance and are often on the tail end of funding distribution,<sup>34</sup> even though youth-led programs and initiatives function on very modest budgets, the majority as low as \$10,000 year, according to a recent study.<sup>35</sup> 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 conflict 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 a separate or add on program. Whether it is supporting youth in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) 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 contribute 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.<sup>36</sup> 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

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<sup>32</sup> [1] UNFPA (2014). State of World Population 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.unfpa.org/swop-2014>

<sup>33</sup> USAID (2017). Developing Ethiopia's Youth. Retrieved from: [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Fact\\_Sheet\\_Developing\\_Ethiopia's\\_Youth\\_Jul\\_2017.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Fact_Sheet_Developing_Ethiopia's_Youth_Jul_2017.pdf); 2015 figures from United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.

<sup>34</sup> Rhize and the Atlantic Council (2017). Understanding Activism. Retrieved from: [https://www.iyfnet.org/library/2017-global-youth-wellbeingindex?fbclid=IwAR0raWTI3YkhGYKvVAU2ygb2Hyq6s51hq2d5xxofc9DA\\_L-V7UjzRoCmBsg](https://www.iyfnet.org/library/2017-global-youth-wellbeingindex?fbclid=IwAR0raWTI3YkhGYKvVAU2ygb2Hyq6s51hq2d5xxofc9DA_L-V7UjzRoCmBsg)

<sup>35</sup> UNOY Peacebuilders and SFCG (2017). Mapping A Sector: Bridging the Evidence Gap on Youth-Driven Peacebuilding, The Hague.

<sup>36</sup> [Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017](#). *Congress.gov*. October 16, 2017.

part of stability solutions<sup>37</sup>— gender experts, academics, and civil society must become familiar with the new GFA and push for meaningful gender-informed implementation.

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<sup>37</sup> World Economic Forum (2018). <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/12/why-do-humanitarian-crises-disproportionately-affect-women/>

## Recommendation 7:

The need for existing and planned development and security assistance programs to be conflict sensitive and integrated in the GFA strategy and the country and regional ten-year plans when appropriate.

Section 504(a)(4) outlines the broad range of activities to be implemented under the Global Fragility Strategy, including civil society empowerment, conflict resolution, justice sector reform, good governance, inclusive and accountable service delivery, civilian security, and security sector reform. The GFS must break down silos and support cross-sectoral collaboration. 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, among itself and from other sectors.<sup>38</sup> The need to break down silos and better integrate peacebuilding efforts across sectors, including health and humanitarian aid, was a consistent theme that respondents cited as both critical opportunities for the field and the greatest reform needed to build sustainable peace.

This theme echoes the developing consensus in the empirical literature 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."<sup>39</sup> In particular, there is evidence that good governance—governance systems 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.<sup>40</sup> However, it is critical to note that funding for US democracy and governance programs has been in steady decline.

Therefore, programs in a selected GFA country across all the pillars of good governance and development need to be adapted so that indicators and outcomes address conflict dynamics.<sup>41</sup> Ongoing conflict assessments should be a critical component of the GFS and especially the ten-year implementation plan. Unfortunately, even when these conflict assessments are done, their findings are not integrated into the US government's own country strategy. 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.<sup>42</sup> 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 inequality.

Conflict sensitivity is an accepted fundamental principle in peacebuilding programs and by donors. However, even though "do no harm" has been around for more than two decades (a key component of a conflict assessment), many organizations and practitioners struggle to integrate conflict sensitivity into

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<sup>38</sup> Peace Direct and Alliance for Peacebuilding "Local peacebuilding: What works and why"

<sup>39</sup> James D. Fearon, "Governance and Civil War Onset," World Development Report 2011 Background Paper (The World Bank, 2010), 3–4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., David Cortright, Conor Seyle, and Kristen Wall. *Governance for Peace: How Inclusive, Participatory, and Accountable Institutions Promote Peace and Prosperity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>41</sup> [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pnady739.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnady739.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> <https://allianceforpeacebuilding.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/GFA-Prevention-Candidate-Bangladesh-1.pdf>

programming. Conflict sensitivity, or “do no harm,” refers to a set of principles for operating in conflict and 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.<sup>43</sup> How do we ensure that these principles are meaningfully integrated into all development sectors?

It is critical that all programs in selected countries, including security sector reform programs, minimize the potential for 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 burned. This example shows that even development programs that are perceived as “neutral” can be targets of violent conflict and need to be conflict sensitive. Therefore, development programs must be included when it is appropriate in the GFS strategy and country and regional ten-year plans. The advantages of ensuring all development sectors and humanitarian assistance initiatives are conflict sensitive will ensure the programs do not cause violence and conflict and, just as importantly, contribute to peace and security. Otherwise, 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, governance and conflict funding is limited, and violent conflict and violent extremism have increased, with potential to upend the preceding health and development gains.<sup>44</sup> Ensuring a conflict sensitive approach by other development programs in the country and regional ten-year plans will greatly assist in addressing conflict dynamics. For example, in Somalia, 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.<sup>45</sup> This example shows the importance of development sectors integrated with conflict prevention programming as part of the GFS and ten-year country and regional plans.

However, the challenges of ensuring that all development and humanitarian programming is conflict sensitive include a lack of understanding of how to implement the principle, low demand from donors, not enough time and resources, and a belief or reluctance of some development and humanitarian implementers that their programs are operating in conflict affected or fragile areas. Additionally, many development and humanitarian actors believe they must be completely impartial and 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 sensitivity and simplifying the practice by providing practical guidelines of what works instead of what does not work. Additionally, there may be a need to adjust terminology to make conflict sensitivity more palatable to other sectors and develop conflict prevention impact indicators tailored to their sector.

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<sup>43</sup> Anderson, *Do No Harm*. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2016. Do No Harm Workshop Participants’ Manual. Cambridge, MA: CDA. <http://cdacollaborative.org/publication/no-harm-workshop-trainersmanual-2016/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://allianceforpeacebuilding.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/GFA-Prevention-Candidate-Bangladesh-1.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> [Mercy Corps “If youth are given the chance: Effects of education and civic engagement on Somali youth support for political violence” \(2018, Portland, OR: Mercy Corps\)](#)

## Recommendation 8:

### Linking Diplomatic and Programmatic Efforts

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 be just 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 effective and legitimate institutions. 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 implore host governments and build coalitions 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 deter 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 also is critical to galvanize support from regional actors, donor governments, and multilateral organizations that can help burden-share costs associated with addressing the causes of fragility and violent conflict and also address how to change and align a GFA government’s policies. US diplomacy is also essential to protect 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, policy makers 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 actors in the area.**

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.”<sup>46</sup>

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 business and civil society (especially those based in the US or with ties to USG actors), regional governments, and international governmental organizations (IGOs) operating in the region. Groups of all types organized around specific identity groups can be valuable as well. Faith leaders, groups specifically engaging women, and groups representing different ethnic or religious communities in areas of fragility can be important to include.

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 more formal incentives and risk mitigation approaches, similar to those offered to military personnel, like the

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<sup>46</sup> Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Sec 504(a)(8–9)

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.

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 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,

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.<sup>47</sup>

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.<sup>48</sup> 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.

Achieving this may require the following specific adaptations or changes:

- 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 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.

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<sup>47</sup> Stabilization Assistance Review, “SAR: Stabilization Assistance Review” (Washington, DC: US Department of State, USAID, US Department of Defense, 2018).

<sup>48</sup> Alexander B. Downes and Jonathan Monten, “Forced to Be Free?: Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization,” *International Security* 37, no. 4 (April 1, 2013): 90–131, [https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC\\_a\\_00117](https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00117).

*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 situations<sup>49</sup> but remain relatively under engaged partners in conflict prevention and stabilization work. They also, of course, can contribute knowingly or unknowingly to drivers of conflict.

The potentially positive role that private sector actors can play 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 messages, 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 only interested in profit, this can have an unexpected side benefit of positioning them to be seen as a neutral mediator in conflict settings,<sup>50</sup> although it can also make it more challenging to convince them to take an interest in the conflict.

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.

*Coordinate or collaborate with other multilaterals and bilateral donors.*

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 USG will duplicate efforts, if not even undermine or be undermined by the work being done by other organizations.

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.

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<sup>49</sup> Conor Seyle and Jinghong Wang, “Private Sector Peacebuilding: A Review of Past Cases and Lessons Learned” (Broomfield, CO: One Earth Future Foundation, 2019).

<sup>50</sup> Victor Owuor and Scott Wisor, “The Role of Kenya’s Private Sector in Peace Building: The Case of the 2013 Election Cycle” (Broomfield, CO: One Earth Future Foundation, 2014).

## **Recommendation 10:**

The human element is important, and 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. Section 504(a)(6) lays out specific roles for the Departments of State and Defense and USAID, while 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.”<sup>51</sup>

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—has hampered the effectiveness of coordination across multiple institutions.<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup> On the more positive side, a consistent element of case studies of effective coordinated missions is a community of engaged professionals who had strong enough interpersonal relationships to develop coordination tools and approaches directly.<sup>54</sup>

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 achieve 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 of 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, it will depend on the engagement and support of the embassy staff. This means that early engagement with the

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<sup>51</sup> Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Sec 504(c)(4)

<sup>52</sup> Susanna P. Campbell and Anja T. Kaspersen, “The UN’s Reforms: Confronting Integration Barriers,” *International Peacekeeping* 15, no. 4 (August 1, 2008): 470–85, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310802239634>.

<sup>53</sup> Sebastiaan J. H. Rietjens, “Managing Civil-Military Cooperation: Experiences from the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan,” *Armed Forces & Society*, May 9, 2007, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X06297601>.

<sup>54</sup> Nancy C. Roberts, Robert F. Durant, and William G. Resh, “Spanning ‘Bleeding’ Boundaries: Humanitarianism, NGOs, and the Civilian-Military Nexus in the Post-Cold War Era,” *Public Administration Review* 70, no. 2 (2010): 211–22.

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 the GFA. 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 requires specific expertise. Whether this expertise comes from the development of organic capacity through training and support or imported expertise, the GFA acknowledges that planning and execution without specific expertise in conflict dynamics and stabilization will not likely 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 /education for these relevant skills, and 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 State and USAID is just as critical to protecting U.S. 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 for 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 countries. 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 both improve the specific plans and strategies, as well as generating 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 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. 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:

Streamlined, less prescriptive and quicker procurement mechanisms that are more diversified, faster and adaptive which allow for longer duration of programs

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.<sup>55</sup> USAID's procurement process was not built for speed and adaptation. 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 that 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. 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 is the need to increase the speed of the program design, award and program start-up timeline.

Even under the current reforms, the speed of procurement and the lack of flexibility of funding accounts is extremely problematic for the GFA strategy. In a conflict affected and fragile state, quick and adaptive programming is critical for success. Some U.S. government officials' question if they can meet the needs of the GFA, without relief from strict and lengthy procurement processes and funding account earmarks. USAID/OTI, has notwithstanding authority,<sup>56</sup> 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.<sup>57</sup> A hybrid procurement model must be designed that fits the GFA strategy; Procurement mechanisms in the GFA strategy must be designed for a ten-year strategy that allow longer program cycles that support greater local ownership, and are highly adaptive. Finally, earmarked funding accounts are a significant detriment to the flexibility of funding that is needed for the successful implementation of the GFA.

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<sup>55</sup> Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Sec 504(a)(6)(B)

<sup>56</sup> OTI's legislative authority is based on the disaster relief provision of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/bureaus/bureau-democracy-conflict-and-humanitarian-assistance/office-1>

## Recommendation 12:

### Material Support: It's Time for a Legislative Fix

Sec. 504(a)(12) specifically addressed the need to reduce the risk that programs, policies, or resources that will facilitate corruption, empower or abet repressive local actors, or be exploited by extremists<sup>58</sup>. The GFA requires the Administration to reduce the risk that policies, programs and resources are not exploited by extremists. However, the U.S. laws already impose severe restrictions to prevent people from engaging in violent conduct such as violent extremism. These restrictions limit the effectiveness of U.S. government programs to prevent violent extremism and deliver humanitarian assistance in conflict-afflicted areas, and US counter-terrorism laws have not kept pace with evolving challenges and new programmatic approaches to end conflict, reduce violence and build sustainable peace. In U.S. law, providing material support for terrorism is a crime prohibited by the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) [title 18 of the United States Code](#), sections [2339A](#) and [2339B](#). Specifically, the broadly defined criminal prohibition on material support of terrorism bars all forms of communication or engagement with listed Foreign Terrorist Organizations named by the Secretary of State, even as part of peace processes or demobilization, demilitarization and rehabilitation programs (DDR). In addition, most terrorism-related Executive Orders (EOs) issued under sanctions authority include a “material support” prohibition.<sup>59</sup> Because the EOs do not define the term, the AEDPA definition is generally used, so that the problems associated with it are then imported into the sanctions context.

While these laws were not designed to limit peacebuilding, preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) programs and assistance to victims of terrorism, 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<sup>60</sup> the State Department has not exercised this power in relation of programs to end conflict, reduce violence and build sustainable peace, resulting in lost opportunities to reduce violence.

U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy seriously criticized the laws during the humanitarian relief in Somalia in 2011.<sup>61</sup> 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... 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,” Leahy urged 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. 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.”

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<sup>58</sup> Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Sec 504(a)(12).

<sup>59</sup> For example, see [EO 13886](#), (Sept. 10, 2019), updating [EO 13224](#) (Sept. 25, 2001) ( [EO 13536](#) April 12, 2010

<sup>60</sup> See 18 USC 2339B(j)

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.leahy.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/080311LeahyToHolderClinton-SomaliaAidRelief.pdf>

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 is 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.<sup>62</sup> While this note was declassified, it has not been widely published. 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.)<sup>63</sup>

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

1) OFAC Licensing Process Unworkable

The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the U.S. 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 Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control for such activities.<sup>64</sup>

2) The Vetting Process is Increasingly Draconian and Expensive

Federal law and regulations require the U.S. 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 (A/LM) 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.

Without a change in this outdated legal environment, efforts by the U.S. government, nonprofit organizations (NPOs) 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 116<sup>th</sup> Congress has taken a critical step toward violence reduction 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

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<sup>62</sup> Department of Justice “Online Activities to Counter Violent Extremism” Undated. Available online at <https://charityandsecurity.org/system/files/DOJ%20Online%20Engagement%20Final%20Document.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> Charity & Security Network, “[Suit Alleging Carter Center Provided Material Support Dismissed](#)” June 12, 2018

<sup>64</sup> Center for Strategic and International Studies, Task Force on Humanitarian Access, “[Denial, Delay, Diversion: Tackling Access Challenges in an Evolving Humanitarian Landscape](#)” Sept. 18, 2019 See p. 22

protection for NPOs that operate programs designed to prevent violent extremism and conflict and ensure there is adequate tailoring of means to fit the compelling ends.

# Technical Appendix: Example of Data-Driven Identification

## 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 from the end of the Cold War through 2018. As 2018 is the last year when 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 nonstate 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, as well as 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 from sudden escalations in intrastate armed conflicts as well as nonstate 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 nonstate actors are drawn from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program Global Events Database (or UCDP GED).<sup>65</sup> The UCDP GED includes detailed information on instances of armed conflict, where nonstate actors battle with governments, and nonstate 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 nonstate violence to an annual basis. We therefore create a panel dataset of country years, ranging from 1989 to 2018. To operationalize violence, we measure both the total number of individuals killed from state-based and nonstate violence as well as sudden *surges* in violence. Based on previous research on the onset of wars, we use a threshold of one thousand or greater deaths to identify an escalation or surge in violence.<sup>66</sup> To isolate stabilization countries, we included all countries that suffered two thousand 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 one hundred deaths from armed conflict and/or fighting between nonstate actors (see Table II below for a complete list of countries). The use of one hundred 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 ten years to ensure they were consistent.

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<sup>65</sup> Sundberg, Ralph, and Erik Melander, 2013, “Introducing the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset”, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 50, no.4, 523–532.

<sup>66</sup> Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.” *American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 75–90.; Lyall, Jason and Isaiah Wilson. 2009. “Rage Against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counter-Insurgency.” *International Organization* 63(1): 67–106.; Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. 2002. “On the Incidence of Civil War in Africa.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46(1): 13–28; Collier, Paul, Anke Hoeffler, and Dominic Rohner. 2009. “Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War.” *Oxford Economic Papers* 61 (1): 1–27.

## Statistical approach and predictors included

We rely both on 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 nonstate violence as well as state-based violence. The second measure looks more specifically at the likelihood that countries experience a sudden surge in violence. Surges in violence are measured by one thousand or more deaths from either state-based or nonstate 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. As a significant body of past research has highlighted that inclusive political institutions decrease the risk of war, we include a measure for the presence of a representative democracy. This measure is drawn from the V-Dem Dataset.<sup>67</sup> 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,<sup>68</sup> past violence (both nonstate and state-based), wars fought in neighboring countries, foreign military interventions, the number of active militant groups inside countries, previous military coups,<sup>69</sup> and the use of government repression to stop the conflict.<sup>70</sup> These data are drawn largely from the UCDP Armed Conflict Database, the V-Dem Dataset, and the REIGN data project. Finally, all models include country-specific measures to capture the relative wealth, size, and dependence on natural resources.<sup>71</sup> 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.

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<sup>67</sup> Coppedge, Michael, John Gerring, Carl Henrik Knutsen, Staffan I. Lindberg, Jan Teorell, David Altman, Michael Bernhard, M. Steven Fish, Adam Glynn, Allen Hicken, Anna Lührmann, Kyle L. Marquardt, Kelly McMann, Pamela Paxton, Daniel Pemstein, Brigitte Seim, Rachel Sigman, Svend-Erik Skaaning, Jeffrey Staton, Steven Wilson, Agnes Cornell, Lisa Gastaldi, Haakon Gjerløw, Nina Ilchenko, Joshua Krusell, Laura Maxwell, Valeriya Mechkova, Juraj Medzihorsky, Josefina Pernes, Johannes von Römer, Natalia Stepanova, Aksel Sundström, Eitan Tzelgov, Yi-ting Wang, Tore Wig, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2019. "V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v9," *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)*; Pemstein, Daniel, Kyle L. Marquardt, Eitan Tzelgov, Yi-ting Wang, Juraj Medzihorsky, Joshua Krusell, Farhad Miri, and Johannes von Römer. 2019. "The V-Dem Measurement Model: Latent Variable Analysis for Cross-National and Cross-Temporal Expert-Coded Data," V-Dem Working Paper No. 21. 4th edition. University of Gothenburg: Varieties of Democracy Institute.

<sup>68</sup> Kreutz, J. 2010. "How and When Armed Conflicts End: Introducing the UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset." *Journal of Peace Research* 47(2): 243–50.

<sup>69</sup> Bell, Curtis. 2016. *The Rulers, Elections, and Irregular Governance Dataset (REIGN)*. Broomfield, CO: OEF Research.

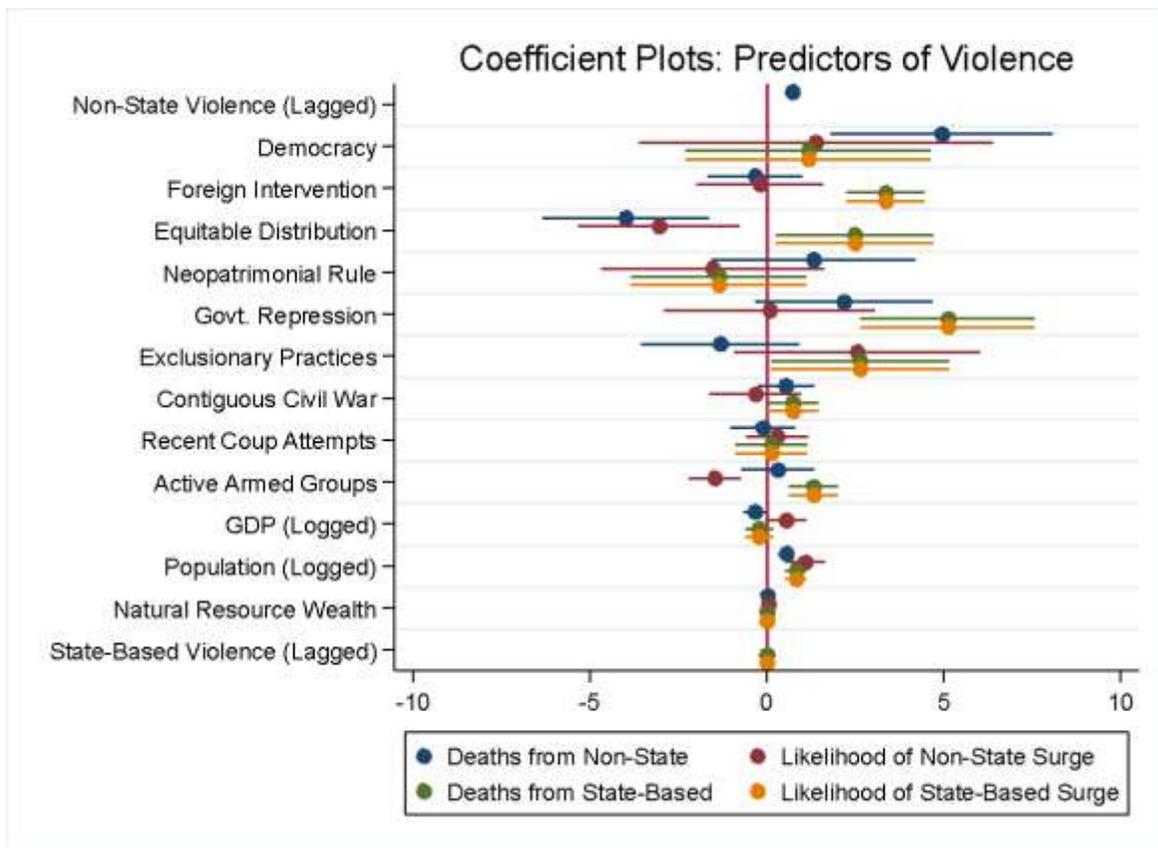
<sup>70</sup> Coppedge et al. (2019) V-Dem Dataset.

<sup>71</sup> World Bank. "Indicators - World Bank Data." Accessed November 1, 2019: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator>

## Findings: Prediction of risk

The results largely indicate that state-based violence and nonstate violence are driven by different factors. Specifically, nonstate 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) tend to emerge and experience higher rates of violence when foreign powers intervene and the domestic government attempts to eliminate dissents with heavy-handed repression (consistent with past research).<sup>72</sup> 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) helps 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.*

<sup>72</sup> Young, Joseph. 2013. "Repression, dissent, and the onset of civil war." *Political Research Quarterly* 66(3): 516–532.

Figure I.

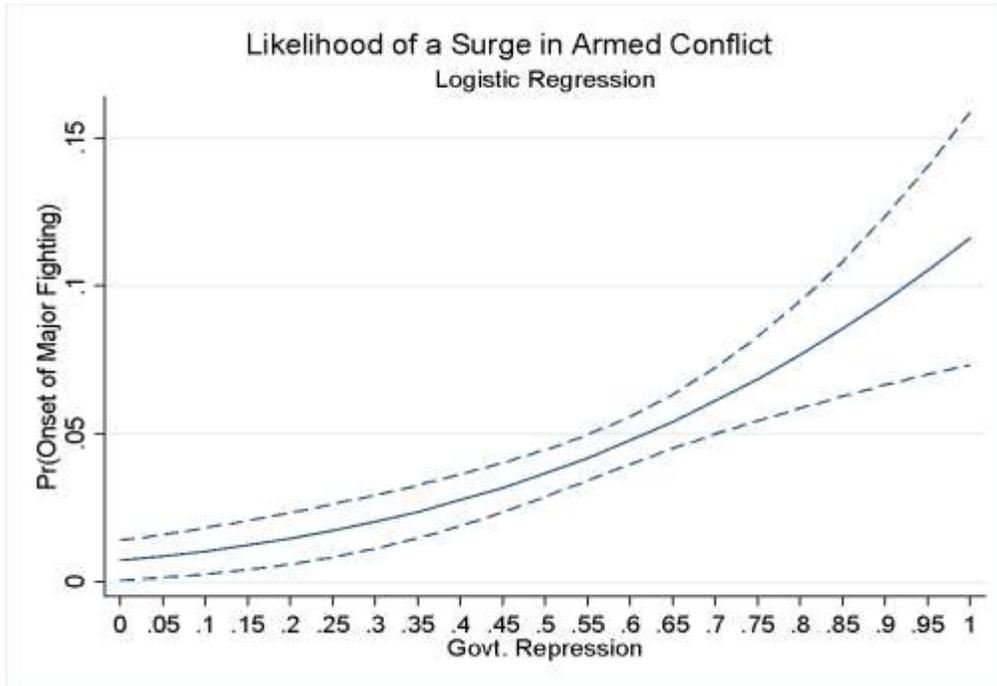
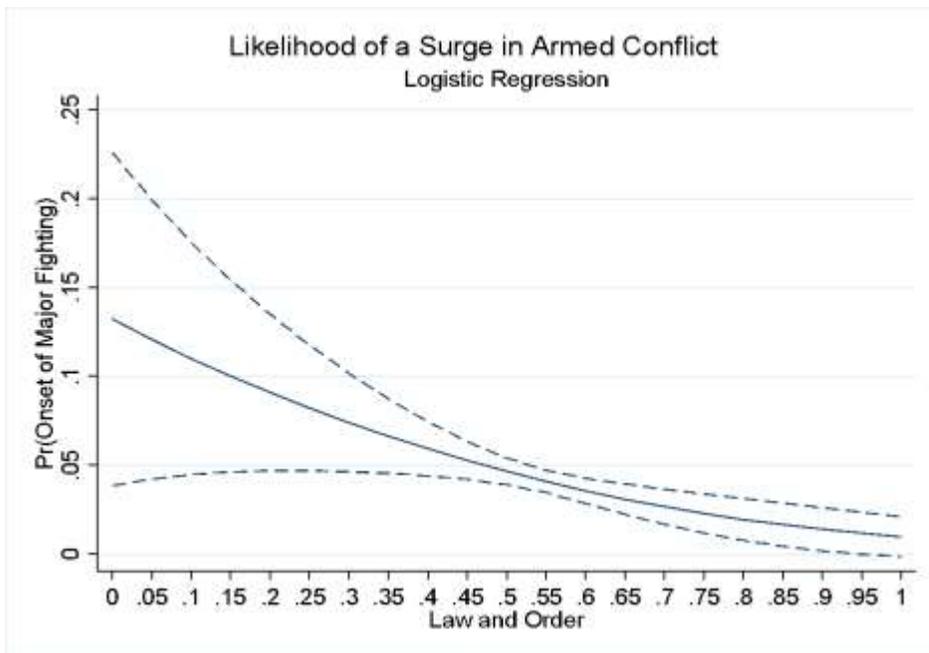
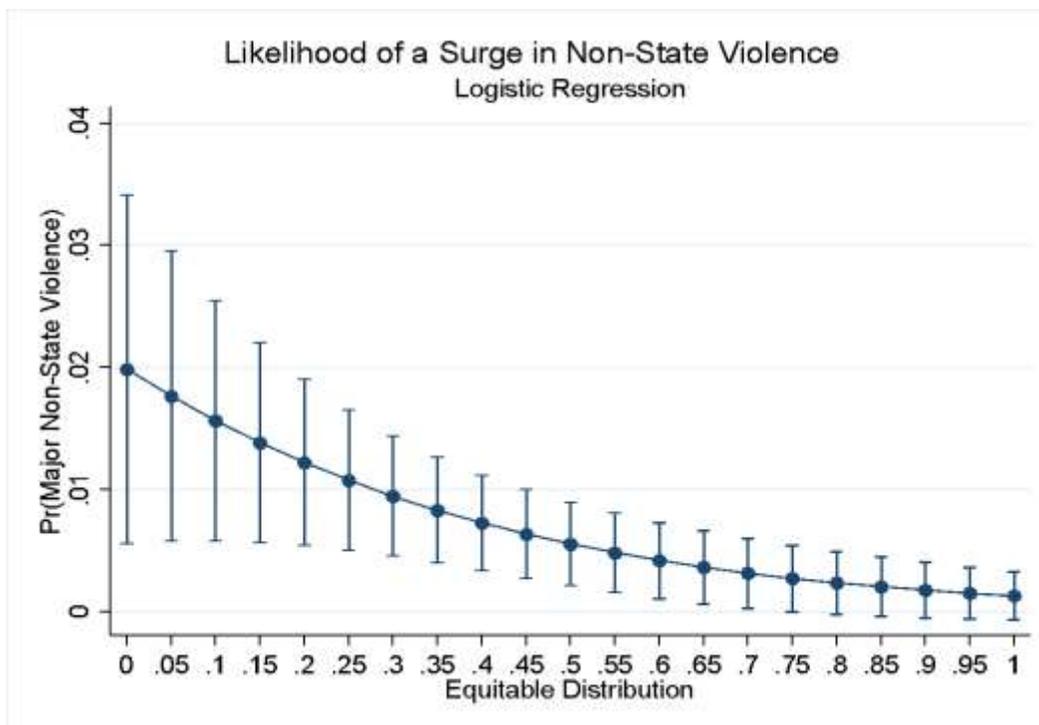


Figure II.



On the other hand, escalations in violence between nonstate 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 nonstate 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 actual individuals killed from fighting, and more as a gauge on the expected risk (with greater numbers indicating a higher risk).<sup>73</sup> For models estimated using logistic regressions (e.g., surges in nonstate 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 ongoing that would cleanly fit into the *stabilization* category of countries (such as Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Ukraine, etc.), but were at 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, 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 twenty nonstabilization countries at risk for increased state-based and nonstate 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 nonstate 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 nonstate):

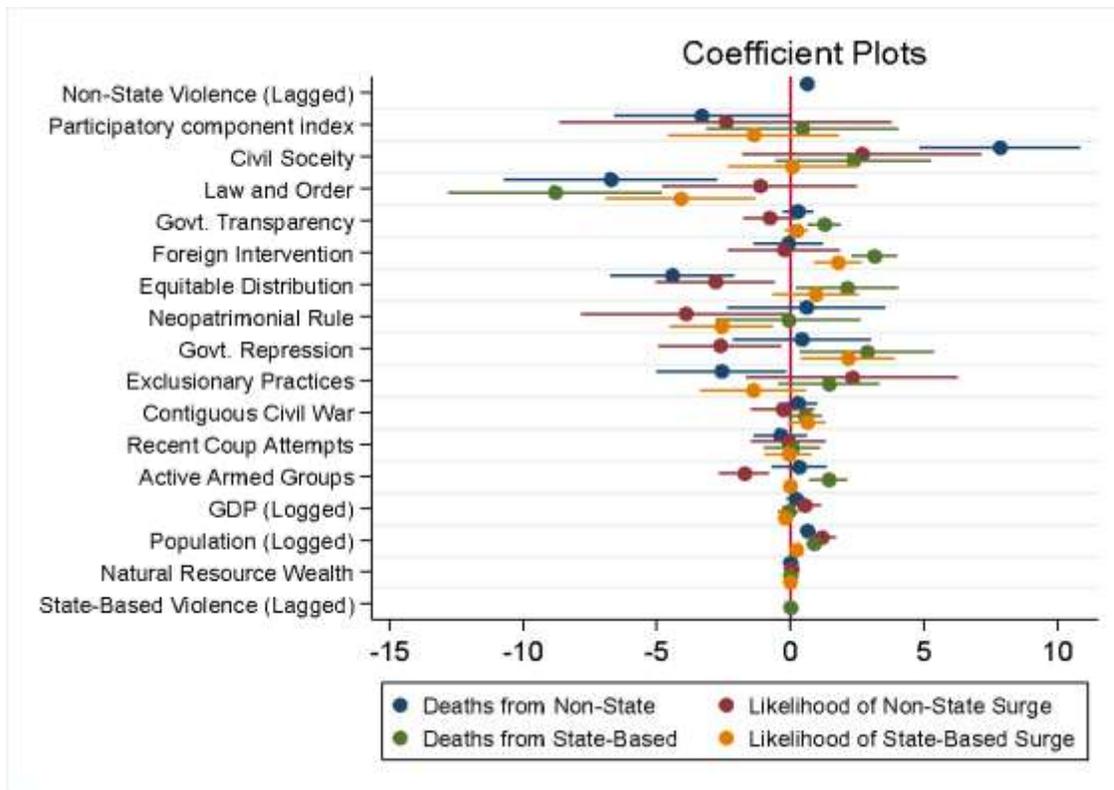
<sup>73</sup> Predictions from maximum likelihood estimation are sensitive to the specific values for each variable.

	Location	Pr Nonstate Deaths)	(# Pr(# Nonstate Surge)	Pr(# State- Based Deaths)	Pr (State- Based Surge)
1	Myanmar	16.819719	0.000262 77	37979.043	0.01252596
2	Ethiopia	150.12598	0.004383 85	648.93768	0.00255861
3	Bangladesh	2.1805463	0.000241 17	393.43423	0.0160113
4	Uganda	0.8314535	0.000157 48	22112.141	0.31945571
5	Sahel Region (Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso)	12.113223 3	0.000042 796	275.833549	0.02401122

## Assessment of prevention-related activities

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 nonstate violence, total deaths from state-based violence, surge in nonstate violence (one thousand or more deaths), as well as a surge in state-based violence (one thousand 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 of 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 effects 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 to 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 to reductions in violence, they are primarily related to reductions in nonstate violence. Again, nonstate violence is categorized as violence that results from active fighting between rival nonstate 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 nonstate violence. Similarly, the equitable distribution of goods and services is significantly tied to both reductions in total deaths as well as a decreased likelihood that a major surge in nonstate 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.

### Likelihood of Major Non-State Violence Logistic Regression

