GOOD INTENTIONS: EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF UNITED STATES’ FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ON GOVERNMENT VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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By

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GOOD INTENTIONS: EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF UNITED STATES’ FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ON GOVERNMENT VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis looks at U.S. security and governance-focused foreign assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa, to evaluate its impact on recipient-state violence against civilians, from 2002 to 2017. I combine U.S. security and governance assistance project data with recorded instances of political violence in Sub-Saharan Africa. By creating a single panel dataset of foreign assistance, the number of recorded fatalities resulting from government violence against civilians (GVAC) per country per year, and other variables measuring different aspects of governance and political violence, I can isolate the relationship between U.S. foreign assistance and GVAC fatalities resulting from civil unrest over time. I find that U.S. foreign assistance does not directly have a relationship with government violence. At best, U.S. foreign assistance has little impact on government violence against civilians, and at worst, increases repression in recipient countries.

Keywords: foreign aid, repression, Africa, violence against civilians, corruption.

JEL code: F35.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction .............................................................................................................1  
Chapter 2: Background ...........................................................................................................5  
Chapter 3: Literature Review .................................................................................................10  
Chapter 4: Conceptual Framework ..........................................................................................15  
Chapter 5: Data and Methodology .........................................................................................19  
Chapter 6: Descriptive Statistics .............................................................................................27  
Chapter 7: Regression Results .................................................................................................35  
Chapter 8: Policy Discussion and Implications ......................................................................42  
Chapter 9: Conclusion .............................................................................................................45  
References ..............................................................................................................................50
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: A look at where government violence against civilians is happening in Sub-Saharan Africa…………………………………………………………………………………….30

Figure 2: U.S. Foreign Assistance projects have been carried out in every country in Sub-Saharan Africa …………………………………………………………………………………….30

Figure 3: U.S. security and governance assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa was almost nothing before 2000, but from 2001 onwards grew to several billion dollars each year……………………………………………………………………………………….31

Figure 4: It is tempting to associate a larger population with more violence, but evidence shows that is not always the case………………………………………………………………...31

Figure 5: Democratic governments tend to be less violent towards their citizens………………32

Figure 6: Countries that are better able to control corruption tend to have less government violence as well……………………………………………………………………………………32

Figure 7: There is a positive correlation between assistance obligated and fatalities……………33
Chapter 1: Introduction

Violence against civilians is the scourge of conflicts and repressive regimes around the world and throughout history. This is especially true when it is a state’s security forces committing violence against their fellow citizens. Governments commit violence against their own civilians typically as a means of maintaining control over the populace, through suppressing protests and other forms of civil unrest. Under an international order that emphasizes state sovereignty, governments typically have wide latitude to maintain civil authority and crackdown on unrest. In many developing countries, there is also a culture of impunity for government actors and government-aligned proxy groups, in which citizens feel that government forces can do whatever they want with few repercussions or avenues for redress. Government leaders and members of security forces may also believe that lethal violence is the only way to deal with civil unrest or other uncertain situations. As I heard at a UN workshop in Ghana in 2019 under Chatham House rules, “it takes three hours to teach someone how to shoot, and a lifetime to learn when not to.”

This is especially true in Sub-Saharan Africa, where many governments are still developing basic governance capacity, including respect for human rights. The early 21st century has been dubbed “Africa rising” to highlight the rapid economic development experienced by much of the continent since 2000 (World Bank, 2014). However, this growth is far outpacing governments’ abilities to manage their ballooning populations and economic rise. Despite economic advances, political reforms have been slow in coming to many Sub-Saharan African countries, including reforms to how governments maintain internal security and maintain public order. Using violence to suppress civil unrest of all stripes remains the default response for
many regimes. A 2018 Congressional Research Service report on U.S. foreign assistance to Africa (Husted et al., 2018) noted:

like governance trends, human rights conditions vary widely across Africa. Several countries have maintained generally positive human rights records in recent years but continue to face challenges such as security abuses, poor prison conditions, violence against women and children, discrimination against vulnerable groups, and human trafficking. Multiple states (such as Togo, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Zimbabwe) actively restrict citizens’ right to dissent through protest bans and/or violent repression. (p. 5)

Many donor states, of which the United States is the largest, provide billions of dollars in foreign aid every year to help other states improve their governance capability, including internal and regional security, governance, democratization, and respect for human rights. For the United States, foreign aid advances global development, which was a pillar of US national security strategy under the President Barack Obama and George W. Bush administrations (Obama White House Archives, 2015 & U.S. Department of State Archives, 2006, respectively). Increasing respect for human rights around the world, in addition to being its own intrinsic moral good, helps make the world safer and more secure in the long run, benefitting the U.S. Foreign aid is also used to build political alliances and partnerships with other countries, especially those critical to U.S. security interests (McInnis and Lucas, 2015). However, there is a growing concern among many researchers and watchdogs that providing aid to countries makes regimes more repressive towards their citizens (Sandholtz, 2016).

By law, the U.S. government is heavily restricted in how it can give foreign assistance to recipients who have been credibly accused of committing gross violations of human rights, and many regimes are barred entirely from receiving foreign aid because of their extensive human rights violations (McInnis & Lucas, 2015). Regardless of the administration in office and their motivations for disbursing aid, the U.S. government and independent observers should be
concerned as to whether U.S. foreign assistance contributes to government violence against civilians. The object of foreign assistance is to improve safety and security around the world. If U.S. security and governance assistance makes government violence worse, then this aid would be counterproductive to the stated goal, and indeed would be contributing to make the world less stable and less secure over time.

In this thesis, I will examine the relationship between foreign assistance, as U.S. foreign aid is formally referred to, and government violence against civilians in Sub-Saharan Africa. My analysis uses the U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Foreign Aid Explorer (FAE) database and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED)¹ project database to look for a relationship between U.S. security and governance assistance and government violence against civilians. I will use panel data to track the amount of U.S. foreign assistance, by total dollar amount obligated, per country per year, as well as the number of fatalities resulting from a violent interaction between government forces and civilians per country, per year. I examine specific types of foreign assistance projects aimed at improving governance, security, and the rule of law, projects which are most likely to impact how a government responds to civil unrest. I also use ACLED data, which unlike many other data sets has no minimum fatalities to record an event, meaning events with no fatalities, such as a peaceful protest, would still be included in the dataset, and codes events by the type of actors involved and the nature of the event. This allows for differentiation between government-civilian interactions and government-rebel group or government-government interactions.

¹ ACLED is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit that collects information on all recorded political violence from a number of regions around the world, including all of Africa. It receives funding through grants from the U.S. Department of State, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German Federal Foreign Office, and several other nonprofit foundations and institutions.
This thesis is organized into these subsequent sections: the background section, in which I will examine U.S. foreign assistance specific to governance and security and Sub-Saharan Africa; the literature review of existing research on and around my topic; the conceptual framework I will use to test my hypothesis; the data and methodology I will be using, including my key explanatory and dependent variables; descriptive statistics and data visualizations of the data I will be using; my regression analysis and results; a discussion of policy implications; and my conclusion, limitations, and opportunities for further research.
Chapter 2: Background

Perhaps one of the most often stated but misconstrued talking points in discussions of U.S. foreign policy is how much money is spent on foreign aid. Many people seeking to cut foreign aid claim it consumes up to 25% of the federal budget. Its defenders point out that foreign assistance makes up between one and one-and-a-half percent (1% to 1.5%) of the federal budget per fiscal year (McBride, 2018). In fairness, this is still a lot of money, $50.1 billion in fiscal year 2017 (Lawson & Morgenstern, 2019). While $50 billion may seem like a lot (though for comparison, the defense budget in FY 2017 was $582.7 billion) (Lawson & Morgenstern, 2019), it is distributed to over 150 countries around the world (including France and North Korea) (USAID, n.d.). A handful of countries (Israel, Egypt, Afghanistan, Jordan, and Iraq) claim the lion’s share of foreign assistance, and the remaining assistance flow is spread out widely, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, which received roughly 25% of U.S. foreign assistance in FY 2017, across all official assistance channels and recipient countries (Lawson & Morgenstern, 2019).

Sub-Saharan African countries have steadily risen in the ranks of recipient countries for U.S. foreign assistance. In FY 1997, Rwanda was the only Sub-Saharan country to make the top 10 recipients list, while in FY 2017 Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, and Nigeria were all in the top 10 (Lawson & Morgenstern, 2019). While most of U.S. foreign assistance to Africa is directed to health-related programs (especially combating HIV/AIDS) and emergency response aid to natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies, the U.S. gave over $1 billion in FY 2017 in security and governance assistance activities (USAID, n.d.).

Foreign Assistance is the official term for the money, resources, and technical assistance the U.S. gives foreign partners, but it is often used interchangeably with foreign aid.
(ForeignAssistance.Gov, n.d.).² Calling something foreign assistance can be useful to distinguish assistance from the U.S. government as opposed to aid from other donors. How the U.S. measures and allocates its foreign assistance was codified into law and policy in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which brought together different programs under one new agency to coordinate and lead on foreign assistance programs. USAID was created to oversee U.S. foreign assistance. However, as the Cold War grew to encompass more aspects of foreign policy, multiple agencies and departments began conducting their own foreign assistance programs. The federal agencies that provide the most foreign assistance are USAID (part of the Department of State), the Department of Defense, the Department of State (separate from USAID programs), and to a lesser degree the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of the Treasury, though there are 22 departments and agencies that conduct some form of foreign assistance program (ForeignAssistance.Gov, n.d.; Lawson & Morgenstern, 2019). The key assumption underlying foreign assistance is that “the United States will achieve its national security goals as well as ensure a positive global economic environment for American products, and demonstrate benevolent and respectable global leadership” (Lawson & Morgenstern, 2019). Foreign assistance helps other countries improve their governance and quality of life for their citizens, helps open up new markets for American goods and services, and can help the U.S. achieve regional and international security goals. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 defines foreign aid as:

any tangible or intangible item provided by the United States Government [including ‘by means of gift, loan, sale, credit, or guaranty’] to a foreign country or international organization under this or any other Act, including but not limited to any training, service, or technical advice, any item of real, personal, or mixed property, any agricultural commodity, United States dollars, and any currencies of

² For the rest of this paper, I will use the term “foreign assistance” to refer to U.S.-provided money for security and governance assistance activities, projects, and programs. It is interchangeable with “security and governance assistance,” unless otherwise noted.
any foreign country which are owned by the United States Government (§634(b)).
(Lawson & Morgenstern, 2019, p. 1)

This does not include aid from private donor organizations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, or smaller nonprofits, as this is not considered official forms of foreign assistance, but it does include assistance paid for by the U.S. government and implemented by a non-governmental entity, such as a charity, consulting firm, or government contractor.

While loans are the traditional aid mechanism, most U.S. foreign assistance now comes in the form of a grant to avoid further contributing to developing countries’ debt loads (Lawson & Morgenstern, 2019). For development purposes, a grant may include the provision of assistance—training, expert advising, infrastructure construction, and direct grants to local organizations, without the recipient needing to repay the cost of the project. Projects are by far the largest type of foreign assistance offered, making up 77% of all foreign assistance by dollar value of obligations in fiscal year 2017 (Lawson & Morgenstern, 2019).

Although most foreign assistance goes directly to the recipient country’s private sector, nonprofit, community, or individual entrepreneur entities, development assistance can go to recipient state governments where the intention is to bring about policy reforms, build government capacity, or where the government is a significant player in an industry sector (Lawson & Morgenstern, 2019). This thesis focuses on security and governance assistance, which primarily goes to governments, including their military and law enforcement arms. However, I also included assistance to civil society organizations that focus on increasing respect for human rights and decreasing violence against civilians. I identified 17 unique project purposes for assistance to Sub-Saharan African countries of relevance to this research (USAID, n.d.). The goal of these projects is to improve security and governance capacity within recipient
governments. This includes responding to armed groups like Boko Haram, public order management, and how to conduct fair and transparent elections:

- Anti-corruption organizations and institutions
- Child-soldiers (prevention and demobilization)
- Civilian peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution
- Decentralization and support to subnational government
- Democratic participation and civil society
- Elections
- Ending violence against women and girls
- Human rights
- Legal and judicial development
- Legislatures and political parties
- Narcotics control
- Participation in international peacekeeping operations
- Reintegration and SALW (small arms and light weapons) control
- Relief co-ordination, protection and support services
- Public sector policy and administrative management
- Security system management and reform
- Women's equality organizations and institutions

These projects are aimed at either state governments, international or regional multilateral organizations, or members of civil society. They are all focused on increasing respect for human rights, improving government effectiveness, or strengthening state security forces, either through equipment provision, training, or other capacity-building programs. For example, a State Department-led foreign assistance project in Mali provided logistics, training, and equipment to African Union and United Nations peacekeepers deploying to Mali (USAID, n.d.). Another project, through USAID, aimed to improve the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of regional and local governments in Kenya and better connect Kenyan citizens with their governments (USAID, n.d.). These types of projects that are designed to bring about a change in how governments manage and value security and human rights. They are most likely to have

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3 Activity Project <unknown>, Activity ID: 78687, FY 2012.
4 Activity Project # AID-615-C-14-00002, FY 2018.
a relationship, compared to other forms of foreign assistance, with how governments respond to civil unrest and government violence against civilians.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

There is by now a well-established link between foreign aid and state repression. Receipt of U.S. foreign assistance is nominally conditioned on respect for human rights and democratization, and its proponents argue that the threat to withhold assistance can induce states to improve their human rights records. However, much of the existing literature instead points to a darker relationship between the two. Wayne Sandholtz (2016) found that receiving U.S. military assistance correlates with a worsening human rights record by the recipient, using the Cingranelli and Richard (CIRI) Physical Integrity Rights Index to measure changes in countries’ human rights records over time. Sandholtz uses a natural log model, with an indicator variable of whether a recipient state received aid the previous year, to find that there is a negative relationship between receiving U.S. military assistance, and a worsening human rights record over time. Further, Sandholtz also tests the reverse relationship, and finds that a bad or worsening human rights record has minimal impact on whether military assistance continues or not.

Douglas Gibler (2008) finds that human rights concerns do impact the decision of whether or not to grant U.S. foreign aid to recipient countries, but it was the scale of need that determined how much aid was given once the decision to provide assistance had been made. Gibler uses a two-stage model to simultaneously analyze the decision to grant aid, and the amount given to each recipient country. Gibler argues that leaders in partially free states were more likely to improve their human rights records because of the opportunity cost of receiving aid, specifically the aid they were missing out on because of their poor human rights records. Leaders of repressive regimes were unlikely to improve because they were already unlikely to receive aid.
Patricia Sullivan, Leo Blanken, and Ian Rice (2018) use an instrumented measure of weapons transfers and military aid flows following 171 violent civil conflicts around the world between 1956 and 2012 to assess the impact on governments following civil conflicts. They find that receipt of military aid and weapons is associated with an increase in government repression following the end of civil conflicts.

Joppe de Ree and Eleonara Nillesen (2009) examine the impact of foreign aid on civil conflict, using Gross Domestic Product (GDP) levels of donor countries to instrument for aid allocation, and control for unobservable country specific effects by first differencing. This allows them to account for malfunctioning institutions, political grievances, and other determinants of war. Through this model, de Ree and Nillesen find that increasing aid flows tends to decrease the duration of civil conflict, but that there is no effect of aid flow on the probability that a conflict would start.

Ahmed Faisal (2016) uses exogenous variation in legislative fragmentation5 within the U.S. House of Representatives to instrument for bilateral aid disbursements to recipient countries from 1978 to 2008. His research finds that U.S. foreign assistance harms political rights and increased government repression because the aid provides government revenue outside of taxation, weakening government accountability by making it less reliant on tax collection from the public.

Aaron Hansen (2018) echoes Sandholtz’s research, looking at whether worsening human rights conditions lead to a decline in U.S. military assistance, whether receiving increasing amounts of aid correlates with worsening human rights conditions, and if so, why. Hansen looks

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5 Legislative fragmentation refers to the number of parties in a legislature. More parties, or other political divisions, increases fragmentation.
specifically at the top 30 recipients of U.S. military assistance from 1992 to 2011, and finds that the amount of military assistance a country receives does not decline as that country’s respect for human rights decreases. Hansen also finds that while corruption and government effectiveness within recipient states does not change with increases in aid, there is a negative relationship between increasing amounts of aid received and government accountability.

Idean Salehyan and Cullen Hendrix (2017) look at potential drivers of government repression in Africa using a cross-sectional analysis with data from the Social Conflict in Africa Database (SCAD), to determine why different regimes repress some anti-government groups and activities but not others. Salehyan and Hendrix find that the likelihood of responding to anti-government groups and events with repression increases as the threat these groups and activities posed to the regime increases. They also find that governments whose security forces have a history of factionalism and disloyalty are less likely to use them to violently suppress dissidents because those security forces might refuse to carry out their orders to shoot civilians.

Darin Christiansen (2018) examines the role geography plays in repression in Africa using the SCAD developed by Hendrix and Saleyhan. Christiansen uses a multiple regression model with country-year fixed effects, a matrix variable to capture repressive-event characteristics, and population density as a proxy for rural or urban locations of events. Christiansen finds that while urban protests are repressed more often, when rural protests are repressed, government forces are more likely to use lethal force to suppress them. Christiansen theorizes that this was because suppression of protests in rural areas was less likely to result in popular backlash against the regime and escalation than the use of lethal repression in urban areas.
Stephen Watts et al. (2018) authored two concurrent RAND Corp. studies, which find that U.S. security sector assistance (SSA) after the Cold War has little to no significant effect on political violence in Africa. Watts et al. collect data on all U.S. SSA allocations to African countries after 1945, along with data on civil wars and insurgencies, terrorism, and state repression and human rights violations. They build three models with a dichotomous variable for whether a civil war broke out in a given country in a given year, the number of terrorist attacks in a given country in a given year, and the level of state repression using the CIRI human rights index, with the aggregate amount of SSA funding per country per year as their main independent variable. The studies find that there is no relationship between receiving SSA and declines in the likelihood of civil war, political violence, or state repression, which was the goal of SSA programs. Watts et al. noted that while some specific types of SSA projects, such as military and governance education might have small positive benefits, it was overshadowed by the ineffectiveness of much larger training and equipment programs. However, Watts et al. do find that SSA appears more effective within the context of multilateral peacekeeping operations, that is, when U.S.-funded SSA projects are carried out in conjunction with a United Nations (UN) or African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission.

It is evident from the existing literature examining foreign aid and political repression in Africa that there is a relationship between increasing foreign aid and more repression. Prior studies have identified a theory that receiving foreign aid likely makes governments less accountable to their constituents, allowing them to become more repressive. This appears to be an incidental effect of receiving foreign aid. Even if unintentional, it is still concerning, because it is the opposite of what foreign assistance and foreign aid more broadly is intended to do. U.S. foreign assistance is aimed at severing the link between weak governance and instability, and the
potential for state collapse and the ensuing problems it can create. By helping states better conduct themselves, they can lower the risk of popular dissatisfaction leading to civil unrest and uprisings or other threats to stability. African countries marked by weak governance, political instability, low economic development, and multiple humanitarian crises pose serious security challenges to the United States. Unstable states may collapse, allowing for terrorist groups, transnational criminal organizations, and other malign groups to establish themselves and operate openly. This kind of instability and political unrest can also lead to government violence against civilians, which can in turn aggravate and escalate civil unrest, possibly into armed insurrection. State collapse can also create humanitarian emergencies that the U.S. and other countries then must respond to. I will contribute to the discourse on the relationship between U.S. foreign assistance and state repression by looking specifically at the impact of the specific types of assistance most likely to influence how governments respond to their citizens during civil unrest. I will look at whether these governments become more violent towards their citizens when faced with civil unrest (i.e. protests, riots, etc.), and will look to establish, or falsify, a link between the two.
Chapter 4: Conceptual Framework

The assumption underpinning U.S. foreign assistance is that foreign assistance helps make recipient countries more stable and secure, with regimes that are less repressive, bolstering U.S. national security. Over time, foreign assistance should give recipient governments and security forces the training and equipment they need to respond to civil unrest appropriately, without unnecessary force, and gradually change the mindset and culture of recipients to better respect human rights and be able to govern and maintain security more effectively. My research question is: What is the impact of United States security and governance assistance on government violence against civilians in Sub-Saharan Africa?

My hypothesis is that U.S. foreign assistance decreases fatalities resulting from incidents of civil unrest in Sub-Saharan African countries because security forces become better trained in how to respond without resorting to lethal force. While most studies suggest that U.S. foreign assistance has the opposite effect, they also indicate that this relationship is indirect, and that it is corruption and weak governance that are more to blame for increased repression. I will attempt to control for the role corruption and weak governance capacity may play in influence GVAC, in order to isolate the relationship between U.S. foreign assistance and fatalities. I will also include several measures of a regime’s authoritarian and liberal-democratic tendencies to further isolate assistance from other factors that may influence how a government responds to civil unrest. Lastly, I add in demographic and economic factors to control for population and wealth disparities between different countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

While U.S. foreign assistance is the primary independent variable of interest, I include a number of other independent variables to control for differences in governance, demographics, and wealth between countries that may also play a role in government violence against civilians:
• **Urban population:** Based on Christiansen’s research, government violence against civilians when dealing with civil unrest should be more violent in rural areas (Christiansen, 2018). I expand this to a country-level, to control for whether the percentage of a country’s population lives in an urban or rural area has an association with how violent governments are in responding to civil unrest.

• **Population:** Countries with larger populations tend to have more of everything else associated with having a larger population. The population of Sub-Saharan African countries varies wildly, from barely one million (Djibouti) to over 200 million (Nigeria) (World Bank, n.d.). I include this variable to control for disparities in population to control for the risk of countries with higher populations also having higher rates of fatalities obscuring the relationship between foreign assistance and fatalities.

• **Corruption:** The amount of corruption in a country is difficult to measure, but is an important variable that may affect other measures of governance quality and efficiency, including the ability to provide effective safety and security. It is plausible that more corrupt regimes are more likely to use violence to suppress civil unrest because of a culture of impunity and using the offices and powers of government for self-interest makes them less concerned with political dissent.

• **Government capacity:** Violent repression to respond to civil unrest (and all other threats to public and regime security) is a hallmark of weak and unstable governments. Weak governments are also more likely to receive U.S. foreign assistance because they are more in need of outside assistance to improve, and more at risk of political violence.
• Political stability: Regimes may be more tolerant of dissent and political protests when they are stable and not facing other threats, such as armed insurrection, interstate war, or terrorism. The need to maintain public order and challenges to its rule may override other concerns in an emergency, leading to more violence against civilians than would otherwise be used.

• Gross Domestic Product: GDP is a reflection of a country’s wealth and in part, GDP changes can be used to measure a country’s fluctuating economic conditions. This can assess whether economic conditions are improving or worsening in a country, and such changes can both show whether governance is improving, or if declining economic conditions lead to more civil unrest and violence.

• Military expenditures: How much a regime spends on its security forces is a reflection of how much a regime prioritizes its own security, and how it conceptualizes geopolitical risk (and values mitigating those risks). It is plausible that a country spending more on its own military faces a higher risk, real or perceived, of political unrest, and in turn moves more aggressively to suppress civil unrest, resulting in more fatalities.

• Voice and accountability: How well citizens can voice their grievances and have them addressed by their government is important to their own satisfaction with their government, including seeing elites being held accountable for wrong-doing. Countries with little voice for citizens or accountability for government officials may be more likely to have severe episodes of civil unrest and violence (Faisal, 2016). This is especially true if there is little accountability for government officials or security force members responsible for committing such violence.
• Armed forces size: While typically small relative to the entire labor pool of a country (World Bank, n.d.), the portion of working-age citizens serving in a country’s security forces can be a reflection of a government’s security priorities, which in turn may influence how forcefully they respond to civil unrest.

• Political regime type/strength: Violence against civilians is commonly associated with more authoritarian and/or weak governments unable to provide effective public order or security. Authoritarian governments have a lower tolerance for dissent and face fewer repercussions for using force. However, a weak democratic government may see civil unrest as a greater threat to its legitimacy and respond more forcefully as a result. Measuring the entrenched authoritarian or democratic tendencies of a government can help determine whether this assumption that authoritarian governments tend to be more violent against civilians (Carey, 2010).

• Territorial fragmentation: The loss of territorial control of a portion of a country can make the central government adopt emergency measures to reinforce its political control over its remaining territory. Under such circumstances, it is conceivable that governments would be less willing to tolerate dissent or civil unrest and take more forceful measures to quash it.

These factors likely play a role in influencing the severity of government violent against civilians, and to varying degrees exist independently of U.S. foreign assistance. By including them in my model, I attempt to control for the association these factors have with fatalities resulting from government violence against civilians in order to isolate the relationship between U.S. foreign assistance and GVAC fatalities.
Chapter 5: Data and Methods

The key explanatory variable of this research is U.S. foreign assistance. While most foreign aid to Sub-Saharan Africa is focused on financial assistance and HIV/AIDS treatment, the United States provides tens of millions of dollars in security and governance assistance through projects to benefit the government, civil society, and security forces of recipient countries. This subset of foreign assistance is of primary interest because its main purpose is to improve the capacity and quality of security services and government bureaucracy in recipient countries. The data for the explanatory variable comes from the USAID FAE database. USAID is the United States’ lead agency for international development, though not the only agency responsible for conducting foreign assistance. Under Section 634 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, USAID is also responsible for compiling and reporting all foreign aid from across US government agencies (Departments, agencies, sub-agencies, etc.). This data is compiled and updated regularly on USAID’s website. It does not include any classified programs or activities. Since it would be exceedingly difficult to assess the quality and content of trainings, I instead condense the money obligated for each project or assistance program into a topline assistance amount per country per fiscal year. While fiscal years do not line up with calendar years exactly, most money obligated must be spent within one or two years of obligation (Interagency Alternative Dispute Resolution Working Group [ADR.Gov], n.d.), and actual calendar year data was too incomplete in the FAE data set to be useable.

The project assistance money went to a variety of actors in recipient countries, predominantly governments, but also non-governmental organizations, and international organizations active in those countries (i.e. UN peacekeepers) in a conflict-prevention or mitigation role. I include UN and African Union (AU) peacekeepers and other multilateral
conflict-mitigation organizations in the data set because the majority of UN peacekeepers come from and are deployed to crises in Sub-Saharan African countries, and often receive US-supported training prior to deployment (USAID, n.d.). Therefore, even if this money did not directly flow to a government for assistance regarding its own people, it would capture money going to other security forces. Further, as the RAND studies (2018) noted, U.S. security assistance tends to have the most positive relationship with decreasing political violence when conducted in conjunction with multilateral peacekeeping operations. On the dependent variable side, I included violent events between multilateral or foreign (to a given country) security forces and civilians.

The dependent variable is a discrete variable, fatalities resulting from recorded incidents of GVAC, per country, per year. This is an amalgamation of several different types of incidents: peaceful protests, riots, mob actions, and others, featuring an interaction between government forces and civilians, including government-aligned nonstate actors such as proxy groups and private militias belonging to political elites. The fatalities variable is based on data from the ACLED Project. This data includes individual events that happen within civil and interstate wars, and other political events. Unlike many other databases, ACLED does not have a minimum threshold for fatalities to record an event. This allows it to incorporate nonviolent gatherings, negotiations, violent events with no fatalities, and other events that may be related to political violence but do not have reported fatalities.

The ACLED data set codes each actor in an event into one of seven “Inter Codes;” State Forces (1), Rebel Groups (2), Political Militias (3), Identity Militias (4), Rioters (5), Protesters 6 Activity Project <unknown>, Activity ID: 78684, FY 2008. 7 Identity militias is a term used by ACLED to encompass armed groups based in a certain ethnic group, tribe, clan, religious organization, region or other communal characteristic, with actions and goals that are typically localized in nature.
ACLED organizes events into interactions, and assigns a numeric code based on the types of actors involved. For example, a police (state forces) crackdown on rioters (civilians rioting) would be coded as 15; 1 for state forces and 5 for civilian rioters. Police responding to a peaceful protest would be 16, with the 6 representing peaceful protestors (civilians). Each row in the dataset also contains the broad event category, event sub-type, a brief description of the event, the number of fatalities, and other spatiotemporal information. Selecting specific Inter Codes allows me to isolate specific event types by actors involved. This allows for differentiation between different actors (like a police action against a militia group vice a police action against civilians) in order to exclude events that may involve political violence but are irrelevant to this research, such as an armed rebel group attacking state forces.

I identify seven types of interactions as government violence against civilians. They are state forces (police and military) against rioters (such as suppression of a demonstration by police); government forces against protestors (which are peaceful, while a violent protest would be coded as a riot); government forces against civilians (including state repression and arrests); political militia against rioters; political militia against protestors; political militia against civilians; and international government forces against civilians. ACLED uses the label political militia to mean an armed non-state group that is either aligned with the government, or associated with specific individuals in the government, such as a provincial governor or a political party. Armed groups in opposition to the government are coded as rebel groups. I decided to include political militias because, due to their proximity to state governments, it is plausible that they may receive some form of or benefit from U.S. security and governance assistance, which may influence their behavior.
I also chose to include international forces, as this most often refers to peacekeepers from the UN, AU, or Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It may also include a Western military that has intervened militarily, such as the French intervention in Mali in 2013 (Hirsh, 2013). These peacekeepers are frequently contributed by other Sub-Saharan African states and are often trained or supported by the United States.

I will be examining 43 countries in mainland Sub-Saharan Africa: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of the Congo, Cote d’Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini (Swaziland), Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, for a total of 911 country-year observations.

I recognize that it may take several years of assistance to make a noticeable change in a recipient government’s capacity in all sectors, especially public security and managing civil unrest. Therefore, I will conduct a longitudinal study of Sub-Saharan African countries from 1998 to 2018 to identify if the number of GVAC-related fatalities changes in relation to how much security and governance assistance each country receives. While there are many differences between each country in any given year, and many countries are prone to changes internally over time, an advantage of conducting a longitudinal study of the same countries over time is that I can create dummy variables for each unit of observation (country-year), to control some of these differences across time and space. I developed a model to identify how the number of fatalities changes in
relation to foreign assistance obligated and control for other demographic, political, and economic variables, which are explained in Table 1:

\[
\text{Fatalities}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Foreign Assistance Obligated})_{it} + \beta_2(\text{GVAC events})_{it} + \beta_3(\text{Corruption})_{it}
\]
\[
+ \beta_4(\text{Armed Forces Percent of Labor Force})_{it} + \beta_5(\text{Territorial Fragmentation})_{it}
\]
\[
+ \beta_6(\text{Regime Durability})_{it} + \beta_7(\text{Voice and Accountability})_{it} + \beta_8(\text{Military Expenditures, Percent of GDP})_{it}
\]
\[
+ \beta_9(\text{Military Expenditures, Percent of Government Expenditures})_{it}
\]
\[
+ \beta_{10}(\text{Regulatory Quality})_{it} + \beta_{11}(\text{Rule of Law})_{it} + \beta_{12}(\text{Political Stability})_{it}
\]
\[
+ \beta_{13}(\text{Government Effectiveness})_{it} + \beta_{14}(\text{Combined Polity Score})_{it} + \beta_{15}(\text{Population})_{it}
\]
\[
+ \beta_{16}(\text{Urban Population Percentage})_{it} + \beta_{17}(\text{GDP})_{it} + \alpha_i + \gamma_t + u_{it}.
\]

In this model, (\( \alpha_i \)) represents country fixed effects (creating a dummy variable for each country), and (\( \gamma_t \)) represents year fixed effects (creating a dummy variable for each year). The error term is represented by (\( u_{it} \)), which measures the difference between the observed and predicted dependent variable value due to omitted variables. I will run this model under four different specifications to test my hypothesis. The first will be a linear ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, in which each country-year is an observation, but I do not include country or year fixed effects. Second will be using country fixed effects to control for unique characteristics within each country that do not change over time. The third model will use year fixed effects to control for characteristics that are common across all countries but may vary year to year. The fourth model will incorporate both country and year fixed effects to minimize country- and year-specific characteristics not captured by variables in my model that may influence GVAC fatalities per country per year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Stata Name</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISO</td>
<td>International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 3-digit numeric country code.</td>
<td>iso</td>
<td>USAID FAE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISO 3</td>
<td>ISO alpha 3-letter country code</td>
<td>iso3</td>
<td>USAID FAE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Name of Country</td>
<td>country</td>
<td>USAID FAE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>year</td>
<td>USAID FAE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatalities</td>
<td>Number of recorded fatalities caused by interactions between civilians and government or government-aligned proxy forces in civil disturbances and political-related events, such as peaceful demonstrations, protests, riots, and assassinations.</td>
<td>fatalities</td>
<td>ACLED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Assistance Projects</td>
<td>Total amount of U.S. Foreign Assistance obligated for a country per year, in dollars.</td>
<td>constant_amount</td>
<td>USAID FAE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Obligated)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces (Percent of total</td>
<td>The size of the armed forces compared to the total labor force.</td>
<td>afperspct</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor force)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of Corruption Estimate</td>
<td>An estimate of the extent to which public power is used for private benefit (i.e. corruption), measured by public perceptions of the extent of corruption, aggregated into units of a normal distribution, from -2.5 to 2.5. A higher value is associated with less corruption.</td>
<td>Corrupt</td>
<td>Worldwide Governance Indicators (World Bank)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Territorial political</td>
<td>The amount of national territory under political control of an entity not recognized by the central government (i.e. breakaway regions, or regions occupied by a foreign power). The scale is 10%, 10-25%, or more than 25%.</td>
<td>fragment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fragmentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Regime Type has been in</td>
<td>The number of years since the most recent regime change (type of government, not personnel).</td>
<td>durable</td>
<td>INSCR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Stata Name</td>
<td>Data Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Effectiveness</td>
<td>An estimate of the quality of public services, including policy formulation and the independence of civil servants from political interference, aggregated into units of a normal distribution, -2.5 to 2.5.</td>
<td>govteffect</td>
<td>Worldwide Governance Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Expenditures (Percent</td>
<td>The percent of a country's total government budget spent on the military.</td>
<td>imp_milexpgov</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Government expenditures,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imputed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Expenditures (Percent</td>
<td>The percent of a country's GDP spent on the military.</td>
<td>imp_milexpgdp</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of GDP, Imputed)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Regime Type</td>
<td>This variable measures the strength of institutionalized democracy or autocracy on a dichotomous, continuous scale. 0 represents anarchy, with no central government effective control.</td>
<td>polity2</td>
<td>INSCR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Political Stability and Absence of Violence estimate</td>
<td>An estimate of public perceptions on the likelihood of political instability and politically motivated violence, including terrorism, aggregated into units of a normal distribution, -2.5 to 2.5.</td>
<td>polstab</td>
<td>Worldwide Governance Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory quality estimate</td>
<td>An estimate of the government's ability to formulate and implement policies that support private sector development, aggregated into units of a normal distribution, -2.5 to 2.5.</td>
<td>regqual</td>
<td>Worldwide Governance Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule of Law estimate</td>
<td>An estimate of the extent to which parties adhere to the rules of society, including policy and the court system, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence, aggregated into units of a normal distribution, -2.5 to 2.5.</td>
<td>rolest</td>
<td>Worldwide Governance Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice and Accountability estimate</td>
<td>An estimate of the extent to which citizens can freely select their government, the extent of their freedom of association, expression, and media, aggregated into units of a normal distribution, -2.5 to 2.5.</td>
<td>voice</td>
<td>Worldwide Governance Indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Stata Name</td>
<td>Data Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Urban Population (Imputed)</td>
<td>The percent of a country's population living in an urban area.</td>
<td>imp_urbanpop</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (Imputed)</td>
<td>A country's total population each year.</td>
<td>imp_population</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GVAC events per year</td>
<td>Number of recorded events of GVAC in a country per year.</td>
<td>gvac_events</td>
<td>ACLED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP (in constant 2010 US dollars, Imputed)</td>
<td>A country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), measured in constant 2010 U.S. dollars.</td>
<td>gdpconstant2010us</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6: Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for my key independent variable (amount of money obligated) and dependent variable (fatalities due to government violence against civilians), as well as control variables. The unit of analysis is country-year, capturing country-level data on the amount of money obligated (in 2016 dollars to make comparison across years easy) and the number of fatalities, as well as control variable information from the World Bank and Integrated Network of Societal Conflict Research (INSCR), when available. When simply comparing U.S. foreign assistance funding to GVAC fatalities, the correlation coefficient is 0.2272. This suggests that while there is a relationship between the two, the amount of fatalities in a given country in a given year is influenced by a variety of other factors as well.

Comparing the average number of fatalities in Sub-Saharan African countries against several other variables often blamed for GVAC reveals some surprising results. Figure 1 shows that while GVAC occurs in every country across the continent, just a handful of countries: Sudan, South Sudan, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Eritrea, are responsible for most GVAC fatalities. Figure 2 shows the spread of U.S. foreign assistance money (as measured by obligations) across Sub-Saharan Africa. Every country has received some assistance, including highly sanctioned countries like Zimbabwe (more than $300 million in 2016 dollars in total) and Eritrea (a little more than $20 million in 2016 dollars in total) (USAID, n.d.). However, much like violence, most U.S. security and governance-focused foreign assistance to the subcontinent has gone to just a few countries, often the same ones as having the highest frequency of GVAC fatalities. It should be noted that most of these countries also had severe humanitarian crises at the same time: the Darfur crisis, and civil war that birthed South Sudan, in Sudan, civil war in Somalia, and a maelstrom conflict in Democratic Republic of Congo.
beginning with the Second Congo War and continuing to today. Figure 3 shows that after the Cold War, U.S. security assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa was nearly flat through 2002. Beginning in 2003, security assistance took off, as part of the Global War on Terror, which in addition to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, included smaller operations and extensive security assistance to partner countries around the world, including Africa. Figure 4 shows that higher populations are not always associated with more GVAC fatalities. While Nigeria has the largest population in Sub-Saharan Africa, it’s average frequency of GVAC events per year is less than Sudan and South Sudan, which have a fraction of its population. Figure 5 indicates that more democratic governments tend to have fewer GVAC fatalities than more repressive governments, though not by much. Figure 6 indicates that countries with less corruption tend to have fewer GVAC fatalities as well. Finally, Figure 7 shows that more U.S. foreign assistance does correlate with more GVAC fatalities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISO</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISO 3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>2007.559*</td>
<td>6.357</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatalities</td>
<td>106.241</td>
<td>424.191</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6879</td>
<td>910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Assistance Projects (Obligated)</td>
<td>$15,300,000</td>
<td>$41,900,000</td>
<td>$-8,782,397*</td>
<td>$531,000,000</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces (Percent of total labor force)</td>
<td>1.105</td>
<td>2.285</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control of Corruption Estimate</td>
<td>-0.731</td>
<td>0.572</td>
<td>-1.869</td>
<td>1.217</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Territorial political fragmentation</td>
<td>0.168</td>
<td>0.613</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Regime Type has been in place</td>
<td>10.674</td>
<td>10.667</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Effectiveness</td>
<td>-0.845</td>
<td>0.574</td>
<td>-2.484</td>
<td>0.729</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Expenditures (Percent of Government expenditures, Imputed)</td>
<td>8.88</td>
<td>6.146</td>
<td>0.584</td>
<td>47.7553</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Descriptive Statistics (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military Expenditures (Percent of GDP, Imputed)</td>
<td>2.185</td>
<td>2.522</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td>34.378</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Regime Type</td>
<td>1.432</td>
<td>4.958</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Political Stability and Absence of Violence estimate</td>
<td>-0.673</td>
<td>0.892</td>
<td>-3.315</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory quality estimate</td>
<td>-0.751</td>
<td>0.616</td>
<td>-2.645</td>
<td>0.804</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule of Law estimate</td>
<td>-0.807</td>
<td>0.604</td>
<td>-2.606</td>
<td>0.731</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice and Accountability estimate</td>
<td>-0.723</td>
<td>0.701</td>
<td>-2.226</td>
<td>0.847</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Urban Population (Imputed)</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>16.738</td>
<td>7.83</td>
<td>89.37</td>
<td>904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (Imputed)</td>
<td>19,100,000</td>
<td>27,400,000</td>
<td>558,492</td>
<td>196,000,000</td>
<td>904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GVAC events per year</td>
<td>46.619</td>
<td>109.658</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>895</td>
<td>953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP (in constant 2010 US dollars, Imputed)</td>
<td>$30,400,000,000</td>
<td>$71,700,000,000</td>
<td>$-12,000,000,000</td>
<td>$469,000,000,000</td>
<td>911</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All numbers are rounded to the nearest thousandth (three decimal places).

*Imputations sometimes lead to strange individual values, even if the variable as a whole is statistically valid, such as a GDP of -$12 billion USD.
Figure 1: A look at where government violence against civilians is happening in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Government violence against civilians includes actions taken by state security forces (police and military), as well as state-aligned forces, such as proxy groups and private militias belonging to political elites. While all countries have experienced some violence, just a few countries are responsible for the vast majority of government violence across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Source: ACLED Project, www.acleddata.com

Figure 2: U.S. foreign assistance projects have been carried out in every country in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The United States has carried out foreign assistance projects in every country of Sub-Saharan Africa, from Angola to Zimbabwe. The amount of money intended for each country can vary widely, however. Most security- and governance-related foreign assistance has gone to just a handful of countries: Sudan (including the Darfur region), Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Liberia.

Figure 3: U.S. security and governance assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa was almost nothing before 2000, but from 2001 onwards grew to several billion dollars each year.

Figure 4: It is tempting to associate a larger population with more violence, but evidence shows that is not always the case.
Figure 5: Democratic governments tend to be less violent towards their citizens.

Figure 6: Countries that are better able to control corruption tend to have less government violence as well.
Figure 7: There is a positive correlation between assistance obligated and fatalities.
Chapter 7: Regression Results

Table 3 shows regression results from an ordinary least squares (OLS) linear regression and fixed effects linear regressions. Fixed effects regressions include indicator variables for each observation (in this case, countries and years) to reduce omitted variable bias by controlling for unobserved variables that are constant across time for each country (though they may vary between countries), or are constant across all countries but vary year to year. The OLS regression (Model 1) includes the dependent variable fatalities, key independent variable of obligated foreign assistance per country per year, demographic, economic, and political control variables from the World Bank and INSCR. Model 2 includes the same control variables, and country fixed effects to control for country-specific unobserved variables that are constant for each country but may vary between them. Model 3 includes year fixed effects to control for unobserved variables that are common across countries each year but vary over time. Model 4 includes both country and year fixed effects to control for unobserved variables constant both across countries and time. Each model uses robust standard errors to account for non-constant variance in the error term. The models in table 4 contain 15 years’ worth of observations from 43 countries, for a total of 676 observations, including imputed values. The longitudinal data (following the same countries over time) is an unbalanced panel data set due to missing data for a number of countries across several years and variables. Many of the countries with large amounts of missing data (Somalia, Eritrea) are either incredibly dangerous or have highly

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8 Non-constant variance in the error term means the residual variance of each observation, the difference between the observed and expected value, varies unevenly across the observations (heteroskedasticity).

9 An imputed variable uses the Stata imputation command to estimate what the likely value of a missing value in an observation would be, based on other values in the observation and other variables and values in the model. I conducted a series of visualizations and two-sided t-tests to ensure the imputed variables were statistically valid to use. That is, that they did not statistically significantly differ from the same variable without imputed values. This is done to increase the number of observations that my model can use, as Stata automatically rejects observations that have any missing values.
Authoritarian and isolated regimes, making it difficult for researchers to obtain accurate information about the country (T.G. 2018). Additionally, missing data led to several years being excluded from the models, resulting in the final regressions using only data from years 2002 to 2017. The Model 2 and 4 regressions rejected country fixed-effects due to perfect multicollinearity between each country indicator and other independent variables.

The main independent variable is value of foreign assistance obligated, which as discussed in previous sections measures the dollar amount of U.S. foreign assistance obligated each fiscal year for a governance or security-related project or activity in Sub-Saharan Africa. Other independent variables of interest include Control of Corruption Estimate (“corruption”), and the Degree of Territorial Political Fragmentation (“fragment”) in a country.

Assistance is measured in dollars, displayed in Table 3 as millions of dollars (with robust standard errors adjusted accordingly) for clarity. The regression results in Table 3 show that there is a small, positive relationship between U.S. assistance and fatalities at the 0.05 significance level in Model 1 (OLS), but no statistically significant relationship, after adding country and year fixed effects separately and together in Models 2, 3, and 4. This indicates that there are variables that likely influence both assistance per country per year, and fatalities, not captured in the models used in Table 3.

The variable fragment has a large, positive, and statistically significant relationship with fatalities in Models 2 (country fixed effects) and 4 (country and year fixed effects). Fragment measures the degree to which a country’s physical territory is under the political control of a sub-state entity not recognized by the central government (i.e. separatists, foreign occupation). Fragment is an ordinal variable with four possible values: 0 (no overt fragmentation), 1 (slight fragmentation, less than 10% of a country’s territory is outside effective
central government control), 2 (moderate fragmentation, 10% to 25% of a country’s territory is outside central government control, and 3 (serious fragmentation, 25% to 50% of a country’s territory is outside central government control). While the coefficient in Model 1 (OLS) is not statistically significant, Model 2 (country fixed effects) indicates that for every 1-unit increase in the value of fragmentation, fatalities increase by almost 170 (167.9), controlling for all other variables in the model, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The coefficient increases to 175 fatalities for a 1-unit increase in fragment in Models 3 (year fixed effects) and 4 (country and year fixed effects), holding all other variables constant, and is also statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Fragment indicates that the less effective control a central government had over its territory, the more civilians are killed by government forces. A higher degree of fragmentation is indicative of a weak central government, a severe civil conflict or possibly foreign occupation, or some combination of all three. Under these conditions, the central regime is highly threatened, and it is plausible for the government to take a more aggressive stance in dealing with civil unrest during a period of strife.

Model 1 (OLS) indicates that a 1-unit increase in the variable corruption (i.e. less corruption) correlates with an increase of over 70 fatalities (70.14), controlling for other variables in the model, and this is statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. Models 3 (year fixed effects), and 4 (country and year fixed effects) indicate that a 1-unit increase in control of corruption is associated with an increase of over 160 (160.4) fatalities in a given year, holding all other variables in the model constant. This result is statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. The positive relationship between control of corruption and fatalities remained even under other model specifications such as a fixed effects interaction between country and year, and removing several other variables. It is not clear why a decrease in
corruption would be associated with an increase in fatalities. Salehyan and Hendrix (2017) found that security forces with a history of factionalism and disloyalty were less likely to use lethal means to quell civil unrest, and it is possible that a similar relationship is found here, in which this measure of corruption may capture some effects of perceived disloyalty or factionalism in security forces.

Government effectiveness was large, negative, and statistically significant in Model 1 (OLS) at the 0.01 significance level, but the statistical significance of this variable disappears in the fixed effects models. Similarly, a measure of a regime’s authoritarian or democratic tendencies (Polity2) and regulatory quality both show negative statistically significant coefficients at the 0.05 significance level in Model 1 (OLS), but these lose their statistical significance in Models 2 (country fixed effects), 3 (year fixed effects), and 4 (country and year fixed effects).

Population was found to have a positive, statistically significant relationship with fatalities in Models 1 (OLS) at the 0.01 significance level, 3 (year fixed effects) and 4 (country and year fixed effects) at the 0.05 significance levels. Both Models 3 and 4 indicate that there are 17.7 fatalities for every additional million people in a country’s population, controlling for all other variables in the models. This is not an unexpected result, as countries with more people tend to have more of everything else associated with a higher population. GVAC events was included as a control variable to determine if the number of GVAC events per year had any effect on the number of fatalities. This was done to assess whether government and aligned forces became more or less lethal when responding to civil unrest. The GVAC events variable is positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 significance level in Model 1 (OLS), showing that for each additional GVAC event correlates with 0.965 additional fatalities. Model 2 (country
fixed effects) is not statistically significant, but Models 3 (year fixed effects), and 4 (country and year fixed effects) show that each additional GVAC event is associated with an additional 0.687 fatalities at this 0.1 significance level, controlling for all other variables in the model. This does not indicate a noticeable change in lethality in either direction over time.

Much of the existing literature points to a positive association between receiving foreign aid and increased repression and civil violence in recipient countries. Sandholtz (2016) found that receiving U.S. military assistance correlated with a worsening human rights record in recipient countries. Faisal (2016) found U.S. foreign assistance lead to worsening political rights in recipient countries because the aid provided an external revenue source outside of taxation, which weakened government accountability, making the government more willing to use violent repression against civilians. Hansen (2018) found that there was no relationship between worsening human rights records and whether or not U.S. assistance would be cut off. My research most closely matches the results of the Watts et al RAND studies (2018), which found no relationship between post-Cold War security sector assistance and political violence (civil wars, insurgencies, terrorism, and state repression).

My analysis adds to the well-established body of literature that suggests U.S. foreign assistance does nothing at best and increases repression at worst in recipient countries. This does not mean that the U.S. should cut off all security and governance assistance, and there may be indirect benefits not captured by the models used here. U.S. assistance is a tool of foreign policy, and there may be other reasons for providing assistance such as maintaining political influence and to achieve other geopolitical or security concerns, such as counterterrorism. While having no relationship with GVAC is better, relatively, than making the violence worse, these findings still call into question how the U.S. government allocates, designs and implements its security and governance assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa.

39
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VARIABLES</td>
<td>Fatalities</td>
<td>Fatalities</td>
<td>Fatalities</td>
<td>Fatalities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value of Assistance Projects, in millions (Obligated)</td>
<td>1.09** (0.447)</td>
<td>0.141 (0.398)</td>
<td>0.157 (0.437)</td>
<td>0.157 (0.437)</td>
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<td>Armed Forces (Percent of total labor force)</td>
<td>7.155 (29.95)</td>
<td>-108.1 (74.58)</td>
<td>-139.7 (87.97)</td>
<td>-139.7 (87.97)</td>
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<td>Control of Corruption Estimate</td>
<td>70.14** (34.78)</td>
<td>106.7 (78.49)</td>
<td>160.4** (77.51)</td>
<td>160.4** (77.51)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree of Territorial political fragmentation</td>
<td>135.6 (83.17)</td>
<td>167.9** (79.25)</td>
<td>175.3** (83.15)</td>
<td>175.3** (83.15)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Years Regime Type has been in place</td>
<td>-0.617 (1.90)</td>
<td>-5.555 (6.42)</td>
<td>-2.871 (5.66)</td>
<td>-2.871 (5.66)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government Effectiveness</td>
<td>-222.6*** (78.52)</td>
<td>65.42 (146.40)</td>
<td>-13.4 (106.00)</td>
<td>-13.4 (106.00)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Military Expenditures (Percent of Government expenditures, Imputed)</td>
<td>9.779** (4.62)</td>
<td>-1.147 (7.36)</td>
<td>-3.376 (8.87)</td>
<td>-3.376 (8.87)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Military Expenditures (Percent of GDP, Imputed)</td>
<td>0.677 (26.97)</td>
<td>32.06 (40.32)</td>
<td>41.7 (48.86)</td>
<td>41.7 (48.86)</td>
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<td>Political Regime Type</td>
<td>-13.23** (5.79)</td>
<td>-16.69 (14.32)</td>
<td>-9.671 (11.83)</td>
<td>-9.671 (11.83)</td>
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<td>Perception of Political Stability and Absence of Violence estimate</td>
<td>36.44 (57.14)</td>
<td>77.93 (99.10)</td>
<td>85.21 (93.71)</td>
<td>85.21 (93.71)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Regulatory quality estimate</td>
<td>Rule of Law estimate</td>
<td>Voice and Accountability estimate</td>
<td>Percent Urban Population (Imputed)</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>144.0** (56.60)</td>
<td>241.3 (180.50)</td>
<td>236.8 (186.10)</td>
<td>236.8 (186.10)</td>
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<td>Rule of Law estimate</td>
<td>-43.08 (84.00)</td>
<td>-501.5 (359.50)</td>
<td>-494.7 (323.90)</td>
<td>-494.7 (323.90)</td>
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<td>Voice and Accountability</td>
<td>70.24* (37.71)</td>
<td>153.7 (124.30)</td>
<td>130.7 (110.70)</td>
<td>130.7 (110.70)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent Urban Population</td>
<td>-0.954 (0.70)</td>
<td>-2.101 (9.27)</td>
<td>13.9 (15.26)</td>
<td>13.9 (15.26)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Imputed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population, in millions</td>
<td>3.39*** (1.06)</td>
<td>10.8 (7.5)</td>
<td>17.7** (7.93)</td>
<td>17.7** (7.93)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Imputed)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GVAC events per year</td>
<td>0.965*** (0.23)</td>
<td>0.656 (0.40)</td>
<td>0.687* (0.39)</td>
<td>0.687* (0.39)</td>
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<td>GDP (in millions of constant</td>
<td>0.000376 (0.00034)</td>
<td>0.00243 (0.00232)</td>
<td>0.00127 (0.00193)</td>
<td>0.00127 (0.00193)</td>
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<td>2010 US dollars, Imputed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-75.99 (54.48)</td>
<td>31.62 (227.20)</td>
<td>-654.9 (491.60)</td>
<td>-654.9 (491.60)</td>
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<td>Observations</td>
<td>676</td>
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<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.345</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.211</td>
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<td>Number of iso (countries)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
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</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Chapter 8: Policy Discussion and Implications

The difficulty in identifying a relationship between U.S. foreign assistance and fatalities demonstrates how challenging it is to measure this subject given the number of omitted variables involved (war, coups, U.S. political concerns, etc.). Despite longstanding practices in monitoring and evaluation of assistance projects, including quantitative metrics to assess individual projects, there have been few strategic-level assessments on the impact of foreign assistance, and those that do exist have found the results to be underwhelming (Watts, et al, 2018). Many reports situate the strategic importance of foreign assistance in terms of achieving broader foreign policy and national security objectives. However, macro-level analyses of whether security assistance achieves the country- or regional-level objectives it is nominally aligned for are lacking. One of the consequences of a dearth in strategic assessments is that reform has been slow, since there was little to indicate assistance programs were not working at the strategic level. My research suggests a systematic failure of U.S. security and governance foreign assistance to accomplish its primary goal of reducing fatalities resulting from government violent interactions with civilians.

For many decades, U.S. foreign assistance projects gave training, weapons, and other technologies (computers, etc.) to recipient countries and organizations with little consideration as to whether recipients could effectively use, apply, or maintain what they were being given. As a result, despite years of training and more advanced military hardware, recipient countries showed little growth in their independent capacity to govern or provide security.

Part of this comes from just the low starting capacity many of these countries had after colonization left them unprepared for self-governance. Decolonization occurred around the same time the U.S. began ramping up its foreign assistance during the Cold War. While I only studied
recent assistance and fatalities (2002 – 2017 in the regressions), the U.S. has been providing foreign assistance since at least 1961 (USAID, n.d.), and the assistance provided today builds on whatever legacy previous assistance created in recipient countries.

Another piece of this puzzle comes from the limited strategic planning of assistance programs on a country and continent-wide level. As the two RAND studies (2018) noted, many assistance programs are conducted as a series of one-off activities, not connected to broader improvements in behavior or governmental quality. The concept of building sustainable capacity in recipient countries is relatively new in foreign assistance and international development, as is recognition of the need for recipients to be willing and able to make changes and improvements to their own systems.

Even so, this does not mean that decades of foreign assistance can continue in the same manner it previously has. The U.S. government needs to improve how it designs, implements, and evaluates assistance programs. Assistance should be organized in a cumulative, multi-year strategy that builds, and builds upon, growing capacity and demonstrated improvement in organizational behaviors. Assistance needs to focus on changing mindsets and the organizational culture within governments and security forces to instill a genuine respect for the rule of law and human rights. This needs to be coupled with improved monitoring and evaluation, not just of individual activities, but of countries and assistance programs, to ensure that recipient countries make progress towards improving the quality and culture of government agencies, public officials, and security forces.

My research also supports what some studies have found, that increasing repression or worsening political violence is unlikely to result in a reduction or shutoff of assistance (Gibler, 2008; Sandholtz, 2016). It may be these countries are strategically important to the U.S., and
therefore the U.S. is unlikely to use assistance as leverage to achieve humanitarian/civilian security goals while the country is pursuing other national security goals, such as counterterrorism. A country may also be backed by the U.S. as it engages in an interstate war or fights an internal rebellion, in which the U.S. would continue to provide assistance to the recipient government, but civilian fatalities at the hands of government forces increase as an unfortunate side-effect. Such an episode would also likely correlate with a higher degree of territorial fragmentation.

The U.S. must be willing to cut off assistance to recipient governments who fail to show improvement in their capacity of what the assistance was supposed to achieve, or if security forces commit (or commit more) violence against civilians. The U.S. must also be willing to cut off assistance for countries that show a lack of improvement, or worsening, of their human rights records and repressiveness. Public hand-wringing and other diplomatic avenues may be used to express displeasure, but without a tangible reduction in assistance, these measures tell recipients that the U.S. does not seriously care about human rights and violence against civilians. While it is ultimately on the governments and security forces of each country to decide how violent they are going to be towards civilians when responding to civil unrest, U.S. foreign assistance can be a powerful motivator for improved behavior, if and when used appropriately, corresponding with both improved outcomes for civilians and U.S. goals for a safer and more secure world.
Chapter 9: Conclusion

The original research question I set out to answer was, “what is the impact of U.S. security and governance assistance on government violence against civilians in Sub-Saharan Africa?” I hypothesized that after controlling for other variables like corruption and armed conflict, U.S. foreign assistance would actually achieve its intended purpose of reducing fatalities resulting from government violence against civilians, primarily when they respond to civil unrest. However, these variables do play a role in GVAC, and it appears U.S. foreign assistance is insufficient to overcome them to effectively reduce violence. As a result, after controlling for these and other country- and year-constant variables, U.S. foreign assistance does not appear to help reduce government violence against civilians in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The goal of U.S. foreign assistance is to improve the quality of government and the safety and security of civilians around in recipient countries around the world. By doing so, the U.S. will advance its own national security by creating a safer and more secure world. Despite more than a half-century of foreign assistance, including nearly 20 years of activity since the turn of the century, the U.S. has little to show for its efforts. Based on my fixed effects models in Table 3, we cannot reject the null hypothesis that U.S. security assistance has no effect on the number of fatalities resulting from government violence against civilians. The fixed effects models in Table 3 indicate no statistically significant relationship between U.S. foreign assistance (obligated) and fatalities.

Previous studies have looked at U.S. assistance through the lens of a carrot or stick to change behavior, giving or withholding assistance to incentivize the desired behavior. I attempted to determine if it was the projects, trainings, and other activities themselves, measured by assistance dollars, that caused the outcome. In simplest terms, was U.S. foreign assistance
training or encouraging government security forces to be less violent against civilians? The apparent lack of a relationship suggests that despite U.S. efforts to improve governance, respect for human rights, and security force quality, GVAC fatalities did not decrease over the course of the fifteen years included in my models. However, neither did it increase over the same time period.

There are a number of limitations in my models in Table 3 that make it difficult to draw strong conclusions, even the complete absence of a relationship. There is a high likelihood of omitted variable bias in the models, despite using country and year fixed effects, as demonstrated by the low R-squared values in each model. The multicollinearity of country fixed effects suggests that there are a number of country-specific variables not captured by these models that also relate to both the independent and dependent variables.

I had to use obligated funds instead of disbursements due to missing data regarding the years in which money was disbursed, which made it difficult to assess when the money was actually spent. Since most assistance must be spent or returned within one or two years of when it is obligated (Interagency Alternative Dispute Resolution Working Group [ADR.Gov], n.d.), I assumed 20 years would sufficiently capture most of the relationship between assistance and fatalities. Missing data in other variables resulted in a narrower timespan being used in the models, ranging only from 2002 to 2017. However, this is still 15 years’ worth of continuous data. The dangerousness and authoritarian governance of some countries likely made collecting reliable data difficult, leading to a number of missing values for many countries, some of which have high amounts of violence and are large recipients of U.S. assistance, such as Somalia. There are likely also other variables that would affect both the amount of U.S. foreign assistance, and fatalities due to government violence not captured by the models in Table 3.
Using country and year fixed effects also likely absorbed some of the variation in key dependent and independent variables. This may have had the result of downplaying the strength of the relationship between them, contributing to the non-statistical significance of the coefficient measuring the relationship between U.S. foreign assistance and fatalities. Country fixed effects were rejected in both Models 2 and 4 because of perfect multicollinearity between country dummies and variation in dependent and dependent variables. This indicates that there are country-specific factors in each country that have a relationship with both the amount of assistance each country receives each year and the fatalities due to government-civilian violent events each year. Rejecting the country dummies made it difficult to account for country-specific omitted variables that would relate to foreign assistance and fatalities. This would have the effect of muddying the relationship between the two variables.

The control variables were tested for a statistically significant correlation at the 0.05 significance level before including them in the models shown in Table 3. Many of them also showed statistical significance in Model 1 (OLS), but the fixed effects models (3, 4, 5) indicated no statistically significant relationship to fatalities. This does not necessarily mean that none of these variables have any bearing on government violence against civilians. Rather, it is more likely that the dampening of the relationship between the key independent and dependent variables due to using fixed effects also extended to other control variables as well.

The stronger relationship between fragmentation, representing a loss of territorial control by a central government, and fatalities suggests that during periods of interstate or civil war, governments are more willing to use lethal violence on civilians. It is likely that during these periods, governments are less willing to countenance dissent, and more likely to suppress it violently. Government forces may also engage in the violent suppression of civilians supporting
(or suspected of supporting) opposition or rebel groups as a means of weakening the group’s base of support.

Previous studies have found both a linkage between increased U.S. foreign assistance and repression, and U.S. foreign assistance and conflict, as well as between repression and conflict. It is possible that U.S. foreign assistance to a country would increase if that country is mired in a conflict that impacted U.S. national security concerns, and that as a result of the conflict, the country decreases its tolerance of civil unrest or political dissent (i.e. increases its repression). This would result in a correlation between increased U.S. assistance and increased repression, even if there was no causal relationship between them.

My models also identified a relationship between corruption and fatalities, as other studies have alluded to as well. Although the relationship identified in my research, that fatalities increase as corruption decreases, contradicts conventional wisdom, this unexpected result calls for further research into the relationship. Corruption is often considered a byproduct of foreign aid and weak governance (though all governments have some degree of corruption), something both impossible to prevent but also negligible in its impact. However, isolating corruption and related variables from foreign assistance shows they may play a more significant role than previously believed in how governments maintain public order, and how and when they commit violence against civilians to quell civil unrest.

Further research can re-examine the relationship between U.S. foreign assistance and government violence against civilians, using the lethality of government-civilian violent

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10 This phenomenon is often associated with regimes that are already more tilted towards authoritarianism, but it is universal. It is what the United States did with the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 during the Quasi-War with France.

11 The variable is “control of corruption,” which is measured so that an increased in the value of the variable represents better control of corruption, i.e. less corruption.
interactions to measure impact. While I was unable to design and implement a model to measure lethality in this study, my research suggests it may be a promising avenue to further study the impact of U.S. foreign assistance in training security forces to counter foreign and domestic threats. While many studies have found corruption to be either the result of foreign aid, or the link between foreign aid and repression, corruption as an independent variable has been underappreciated and understudied in the literature. Future studies should determine a way to measure different aspects of corruption and assess the impact corruption has on other problems relating to foreign aid.

Although my results call into question the efficacy of U.S. foreign assistance, I do not believe foreign assistance should be cut as a result. Foreign assistance is still a powerful resource that can be a force for good and achieve U.S. foreign policy goals. However, assistance must be accompanied by strengthened monitoring and evaluation, not just of individual projects, but of whole countries, and regions, to ensure that progress is made towards program goals and governments actually improve as a result.


