

How Civil Wars End

The International System, Norms, and the
Role of External Actors

Lise Morjé Howard
and
Alexandra Stark

Historically, civil wars were fought to the finish, with the complete military defeat of the losing side.¹ But in the 1990s, as this article demonstrates, civil wars were more likely to end in negotiated settlements rather than victory by one side. Why? We argue that civil wars began to end in this historically distinct manner because of a fundamental change in the international norms of conflict resolution—namely, the rise of a norm of negotiated settlement. This norm arose in the context of a new international political environment dominated by U.S. unipolarity and liberal democracy; the ideas and principles of the liberal order undermined the acceptability of military victory.

In the post-September 11 environment characterized by the war on terrorism, however, the norm of negotiated settlement has been challenged by countervailing notions of appropriateness—namely, stabilization over democratization and non-negotiation with terrorist groups. As a result, civil wars are ending less frequently, and less often in negotiation. The dominant international political environment shapes norms of conflict resolution, which, in turn, influence how civil wars end.

Lise Morjé Howard is Associate Professor and Alexandra Stark is a Ph.D. candidate, both in the Department of Government at Georgetown University.

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1. Roy Licklider, "The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945–1993," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 89, No. 3 (September 1995), pp. 681–690, doi:10.2307/2082982; and Barbara F. Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement," *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Summer 1997), pp. 335–364, doi:10.1162/002081897550384.

What else might explain systematic changes in civil war termination over time? The existing literature does not provide many answers. The civil wars literature looks to three essential types of causes. First, domestic-structural factors such as poverty, ethnic fractionalization, indivisibility, and rough terrain render wars easier or more difficult to start or stop.² Second, bargaining dynamics, such as mutually hurting stalemates, the balance of power, and the number and geographic location of actors, may affect parties' willingness to compromise.³ Finally, outside interventions may produce negotiated settlements if they provide effective mediation or credible guarantees, or if they underwrite agreements with the threat of mutual harm/benefit, whereas military interventions may prolong conflict.⁴

Although these factors account for many outcomes, domestic-structural variables cannot explain patterns of civil war termination that change systematically over time. Seeking to comprehend shifting time-sensitive patterns with structural variables amounts to trying to explain change with constants. Bargaining models may clarify shifts in the outcomes of particular civil war scenarios, as fighting reveals preferences and information about capabilities. But

2. James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (February 2003), pp. 75–90, doi:10.1017/S0003055403000534; Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003); Ron E. Hassner, *War on Sacred Grounds* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2009); Lars-Erik Cederman et al., "Transborder Ethnic Kin and Civil War," *International Organization*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (April 2013), pp. 389–410, doi:10.1017/S0020818313000064; and Idean Salehyan, *Rebels without Borders: Transnational Insurgencies in World Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2009).

3. I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 27–47, doi:10.1080/00396339308442672; Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement"; David E. Cunningham, "Veto Players and Civil War Duration," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (October 2006), pp. 875–892, doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00221.x; Peter Krause, "The Structure of Success: How the Internal Distribution of Power Drives Armed Group Behavior and National Movement Effectiveness," *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Winter 2013/14), pp. 72–116, doi:10.1162/ISEC_a_00148; and Sarah Zukerman Daly, *Organized Violence after Civil War: The Geography of Recruitment in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

4. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela R. Aall, *Taming Intractable Conflicts: Mediation in the Hardest Cases* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace [USIP] Press, 2004); Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); Monica Duffy Toft, *Securing the Peace: The Durable Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010); and Patrick M. Regan, "Third-Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (February 2002), pp. 55–73, doi:10.1177/0022002702046001004.

again, such models do not help scholars account for why civil war termination varies in a systematic way over particular periods of time. Finally, while we argue that external factors play a decisive role in ending civil wars, we supplement the existing literature by seeking to answer the prior question of why we observe changes in types of external interventions, including mediation attempts, by time period.

We argue here, in Waltzian fashion, that such a phenomenon cannot be explained “through the study of its parts.”⁵ In contrast to trends in the study of civil wars toward the state level and microfoundations,⁶ we contend that, for our outcomes of interest, we must look to the international level of analysis for explanations. We argue that the international political environment—characterized by both material and ideational factors such as polarity, perceptions of first-order threats, and great power goals—gives rise to clusters of ideas of appropriate behavior, known as norms.⁷ These norms, in turn, shape different types of outcomes, including how civil wars end. In the bipolar world, where the central international contest was viewed as zero-sum, fighting to the finish was the most acceptable way to end a civil war. This normative frame resulted in the material (and social) fact that the majority of civil wars ended in military victory; relatively few civil wars ended in “low activity” (where the number of annual battle deaths falls below a certain threshold) or in negotiated settlements.

With the collapse of the Soviet economy, the demise of the Soviet Union, and the rise of unipolarity, however, the United States and its allies faced an extraordinary new opportunity to help their proxies win outright in numerous civil wars across the globe. The United States had sought one-sided victory for decades; thus one would expect this norm to continue. Americans, however, along with their allies, chose not to seek complete defeat, favoring instead negotiated solutions (or simply allowing wars to fizzle out in low activity), even in cases where settlement meant including opponents of the United States in

5. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Pa.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 19.

6. Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Charles King, “The Micropolitics of Social Violence,” *World Politics*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (April 2004), pp. 431–455, doi:10.1353/wp.2004.0016.

7. Peter J. Katzenstein, “Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security,” in Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 5.

the new government. The choice to try to end civil wars differently was enabled by the end of bipolarity, but nothing from the material fact of unipolarity necessitated this choice. Rather, it was the overarching international political environment, characterized by both the absence of major threats and the quest for democratization,⁸ that led to the appropriateness of civil war termination through mediation and negotiation.⁹ In other words, policymakers in the United States and their great power allies came to believe that civil wars ought to end in a certain way, and they took actions, including attempts to broker mediations, to achieve the goal of ending civil wars through negotiated settlements. Norms were not an epiphenomenal, but rather a necessary and causal factor, in this process.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, although the United States remains the international unipole in a strict material sense, scholars and policymakers have debated the consequences of unipolarity and how to interpret the new strategic threat environment.¹⁰ In this period of uncertainty about the ranking of threats and U.S. responses, the norm of negotiated settlement persists; it has been challenged, however, by countervailing pressure for non-negotiation with terrorists, concerns about the potential for terrorist organizations taking root in states experiencing internal instability, and a renewed acceptability of total military victory. In civil wars, the goal of stabilization has displaced the quest for democratization. The main effects thus far on civil wars have been a decrease in all types of terminations and fewer negotiated settlements in civil wars that include actors labeled as “terrorist groups.” Notions of how civil wars ought to end vary by time period, as do the ways in which they actually end.

8. Michael Barnett, “Building a Republican Peace: Stabilizing States after War,” *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Spring 2006), pp. 87–112, doi:10.1162/isec.2006.30.4.87; and Charles A. Kupchan and Peter L. Trubowitz, “Dead Center: The Demise of Liberal Internationalism in the United States,” *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Fall 2007), pp. 7–44, doi:10.1162/isec.2007.32.2.7.

9. Mediation occurs when a third party facilitates resolution between conflicting parties. Negotiation often implies direct talks between parties without a mediator, although mediators facilitate many negotiated settlements.

10. Kupchan and Trubowitz, “Dead Center”; Martha Finnemore, “Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn’t All It’s Cracked Up to Be,” *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (January 2009), pp. 58–85, doi:10.1017/S0043887109000082; Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, “Don’t Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment,” *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Winter 2012/13), pp. 7–51, at p. 7, doi:10.1162/ISEC_a_00107; and Nuno P. Monteiro, “Unrest Assured: Why Unipolarity Is Not Peaceful,” *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Winter 2011/12), pp. 9–40, doi:10.1162/ISEC_a_00064.

We employ a three-pronged empirical strategy to develop our argument. First, we demonstrate our dependent variable that civil wars ended differently in each of the three time periods. Second, we find that mediation efforts—a key observable implication of our theory—are predicted by time period, even holding other factors constant. Third, we trace the processes that ended the civil wars in El Salvador and Bosnia—one in each of the first two time periods—to demonstrate our causal claims. We deduce expected causal process observations and employ counterfactual reasoning to show logical consistency. Third, we use content analysis (a blend of quantitative and qualitative approaches), supplemented by discourse analysis, to demonstrate changes in how important actors use four key words—democracy, negotiation, terrorism, and stabilization—especially in the third time period. These words reflect changes in key norms.

We offer several empirical, theoretical, and policy contributions for current debates in the field of international relations and the study of civil wars. First, we demonstrate our argument by employing a novel, three-part methodological approach. Each method works to bolster the strategy of the other.¹¹ Second, our use of quantitative and qualitative methods reflects an attempt to build on an emerging theoretical trend of bridging constructivist and rationalist approaches in international relations.¹² We seek to demonstrate how actors respond to the incentive structures of the international political environment, which has both material and ideational roots; both material facts and shared expectations create outcomes. We note, also, that scholars have not yet offered constructivist explanations to address the empirical debates about civil war termination.

Third, this article seeks to specify the historical international environments within which bundles of norms arise, come into competition, and spell the demise of others. In focusing on the causal weight of the international level, we provide a new view of how the levels of analysis in norm creation relate to one

11. Evan S. Lieberman, "Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 99, No. 3 (August 2005), pp. 435–452, doi:10.1017/S0003055405051762.

12. Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Daniel H. Nexon, "Bridging the Gap: Toward a Realist-Constructivist Dialogue," *International Studies Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (June 2004), pp. 337–352, doi:10.1111/j.1521-9488.2004.419_1.x.

another. Unlike traditional analyses of norms, such as the rise of human rights, the death of apartheid, or the abolition of slavery, we offer an explanation of how normative change may occur without individual norm entrepreneurs or civil-society mobilization.¹³

Civil war is the most prevalent type of violent conflict in the international system and has been for decades.¹⁴ Civil wars not only kill many people; they also give rise to related miseries such as refugees, violent extremism, sexual violence, child soldiering, and illicit trafficking. It is therefore important for scholars and policymakers alike to understand why and how civil wars end. Much of the policy-oriented scholarly literature has advocated one type of ending: partition, power sharing, negotiated settlement, or one-sided victory.¹⁵ Our analysis points in a more pragmatic direction. Wars end differently in different time periods, but given that they are susceptible to normative trends, it is possible to change those norms in favor of greater pragmatism: the pursuit of negotiation above all other options is not always prudent, but neither is the unfettered pursuit of military victory or non-negotiation with terrorists. Each civil war is different, and each case ought to be considered on its own merits. Our article demonstrates explicitly the implicit assumption that external actors have the power to influence civil war outcomes. Naming and defining the

13. Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998); Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle against Apartheid* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995); Richard Price and Nina Tannenwald, "Norms and Deterrence: The Nuclear and Chemical Weapons Taboo," in Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security*, pp. 114–152; James Lee Ray, "The Abolition of Slavery and the End of International War," *International Organization*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (July 1989), pp. 405–439, doi:10.1017/S0020818300032987; and Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

14. Erik Melander, Therése Pettersson, and Lotta Themnér, "Organized Violence, 1989–2015," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 53, No. 5 (2016), pp. 727–742, doi:10.1177/0022343316663032; and Nils Petter Gleditsch et al., "Armed Conflict 1946–2001: A New Dataset," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 9, No. 5 (2002), pp. 615–637, doi:10.1177/0022343302039005007.

15. Chaim Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Spring 1996), pp. 136–175, doi:10.1162/isec.20.4.136; Nicholas Sambanis and Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl, "What's in a Line? Is Partition a Solution to Civil War?" *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Fall 2009), pp. 82–118, doi:10.1162/isec.2009.34.2.82; Caroline Hartzell, Matthew Hoddie, and Donald Rothchild, "Stabilizing Peace after Civil War: An Investigation of Some Key Variables," *International Organization*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Winter 2001), pp. 183–208, doi:10.1162/002081801551450; and Toft, *Securing the Peace*.

pressures of the international political environment may enable policymakers to exercise greater freedom of choice.

In the first section, we explain our outcomes of interest. We then review the literature, pointing to its essential gaps. Third, we introduce our theory of the international political environment and the ways in which it produces changes in both norms of conflict resolution and material outcomes in civil wars. We then develop our theory using quantitative, qualitative, and content analysis. In conclusion, we offer several policy implications following from our analysis.

The Rise and Decline of Negotiated Settlements

In her seminal work on civil war termination, Barbara Walter demonstrates that, historically, the majority of civil wars ended in the defeat—political defeat, expulsion, or extermination—of the losing side.¹⁶ This pattern did not hold after the end of the Cold War, however. We use data on civil war termination from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Conflict Termination Dataset (v. 2-2015, 1946–2013) to trace patterns in civil war termination beyond the immediate Cold War period, from 1946 until 2013.¹⁷ Our analysis yields several important findings. First, we confirm that during the Cold War most civil wars ended in victory by one side. In contrast, with the end of the Cold War, many more civil wars ended in negotiated settlements. In addition, the total number of civil war terminations rose between 1990 and 2001, including the many wars that simply died out in low activity. Since the September 11 attacks, fewer civil wars have ended per year (see figure A2 in the online appendix).¹⁸ We still see many negotiated settlements, but the proportion of wars ending in compromise as opposed to military victory has shrunk.¹⁹

16. Walter, “The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement”; and Walter, *Committing to Peace*.

17. Joakim Kreutz, “How and When Armed Conflicts End: Introducing the UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (2010), pp. 243–250, doi:10.1177/0022343309353108. This pattern also exists in different civil war datasets. See V. Page Fortna, “Where Have All the Victories Gone? Peacekeeping and War Outcomes,” Columbia University, August 2009, <https://polisci.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/pdfs/Publications/Fortna/Working%20Papers/victories%20Sept%202009.pdf>.

18. The online appendix is available at doi:10.7910/DVN/JFYSGU.

19. The UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset v.2-2015 codes civil war termination in six categories: peace agreement; cease-fire; victory for the government side; victory for the rebel side; low activity” (fewer than twenty-five battle-deaths per year); and actor ceases to exist. Here, we have

Figure 1. Type of Civil War Termination as a Percentage of Total, by Time Period

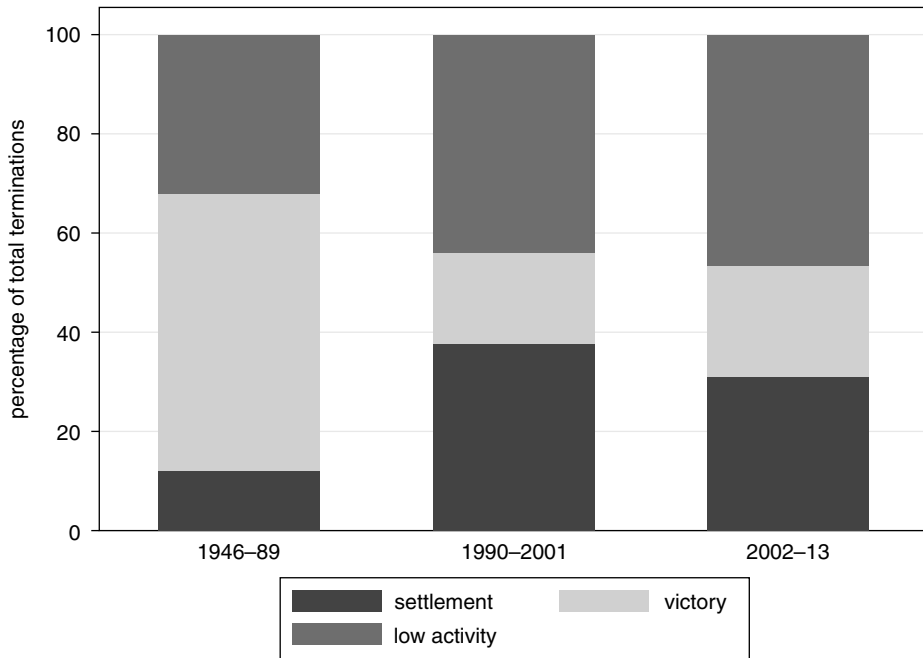


Figure 1 illustrates these trends.²⁰ The figure shows patterns in victories versus negotiated settlements over time. In time period 1 (1946–89), victory was the most common civil war ending (about 55 percent). In contrast, in time period 2 (1990–2001), only 18 percent of civil wars ended in victory; the most common civil war ending became settlement (38 percent). In the third time period (2002–13), the trend appears to reverse: we see the proportion of victories increasing (to 22 percent), while the share of negotiated settlements decreases (to 32 percent). In most years, most civil wars do not end, but during the sec-

recorded both peace agreement and cease-fire as “settlement” (n.b., UCDP codes a conflict as having ended when a conflict year is followed by at least one year of inactivity). We collapse both victory categories into one, “victory.” “Actor ceases to exist” indicates that “conflict activity continues but at least one of the parties ceases to exist or become[s] another conflict actor”; we therefore drop this category from our analysis. See Joakim Kreutz, *UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset Codebook*, v.2-2015, February 19, 2016, p. 4.

20. See also figures 1 and 2.

Table 1. Terrorist Organizations and Civil War Termination, 2002–13

Designated Terrorist Organization?	Victory or Ongoing as of 2013	Settlement or Low Activity	Total
No	27 (58.70%)	54 (87.10%)	81 (75.00%)
Yes	19 (41.30%)	8 (12.90%)	27 (25.00%)
Total	46 (100.00%)	62 (100.00%)	108 (100.00%)

Pearson $\chi^2 = 11.3604$, $p = 0.001$.

ond time period, civil wars were ending more frequently than in the other two time periods (see figures A1 and A2 and table A1 in the online appendix).

We find an additional trend in time period 3: civil wars that involved non-state actors that have been designated by the U.S. State Department as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) are less likely to end in settlement or low activity, and conversely more likely to end in victory or not to have ended by 2013.²¹ Table 1 includes observations of all civil wars that ended in time period 3 as well as all civil wars that were ongoing as of 2013. Of all civil wars that ended in settlement or low activity, only about 11 percent included an FTO, whereas of all civil wars that either ended in victory or were ongoing as of 2013, about 41 percent involved an FTO. In other words, after September 11, we see fewer negotiated settlements when a war involves terrorists.

Existing Explanations for Civil War Trends

The current literature investigates a variety of phenomena such as civil war onset, duration, recurrence, and termination. To explain these outcomes, scholars have turned to three basic types of explanations: domestic-structural vari-

21. Although there are a number of different ways to code “terrorist organizations,” the U.S. Department of State’s FTO list is the most appropriate for our purposes, because it reflects and directly informs policymakers’ views. According to the State Department, FTOs “are foreign organizations that are designated by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).” For the full list, see Bureau of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State, “Foreign Terrorist Organizations” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, n.d.), <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>. To code FTOs, we cross-referenced all organizations listed as Side B (i.e., nonstate actor side) with the State Department’s list of FTOs.

ables, bargaining dynamics, and international interventions. Although these factors explain many trends in civil wars, none can account for why patterns in civil war termination would change in a systematic way across time.

The first category of explanations, domestic-structural factors, explores the underlying conditions of a state or its territory. In a pivotal article, James Fearon and David Laitin argue that poverty, state capacity, rough terrain, and political instability set the conditions that make insurgency, and therefore the outbreak of civil war, more likely.²² Although Fearon and Laitin do not explicitly address war termination, other scholars have used their variables, as well as additional domestic-structural factors such as indivisibility of holy sites, ethnic fractionalization, and co-ethnics in neighboring states, to explain civil war outcomes.²³ Despite their importance, such elements do not change (at least not significantly) over time. These variables, therefore, cannot account for changing patterns in civil war termination in different time periods.

The second category, bargaining dynamics, zeroes in on the processes and difficulties of committing to peace. This line of argument follows from William Zartman's groundbreaking work on "mutually hurting stalemates" and the conditions for a conflict to become "ripe for resolution."²⁴ One of Zartman's predictions is that civil wars will remain very difficult to conclude in negotiated settlements. In response to Zartman, in an article that foreshadowed the rise in negotiated settlements in civil wars after the end of the Cold War, Roy Licklider demonstrates that civil wars can end in settlements, and that the post-Cold War drive toward negotiation would have a significant impact on settlements.²⁵

Ripe-for-resolution arguments spurred other ways of theorizing about bargaining dynamics. James Fearon's bargaining theory of war between states sparked a significant new branch in civil war study, best exemplified in Barbara Walter's work.²⁶ Walter homes in on the problems of credible commitments: if a group agrees to demobilize and cede territory, it may leave itself

22. Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War."

23. Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars"; Toft, *Securing the Peace*; Hassner, *War on Sacred Grounds*; and Julian Wucherpfennig et al., "Ethnicity, the State, and the Duration of Civil War," *World Politics*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2012), pp. 79–115, doi:10.1017/S004388711100030X.

24. Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution*.

25. Licklider, "The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945–1993."

26. James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Summer 1995), pp. 379–414, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706903>.

open to attack by the other side. Third-party security guarantees alleviate this dilemma.

Bargaining theories focus primarily on domestic-level variables, but Walter's theory of credible commitments and Zartman's mutually hurting stalemates open a window to the role of third parties in influencing bargaining dynamics. Many subsequent studies point to the potentially beneficial effects of third-party intervention, negotiated settlement, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping in civil wars.²⁷ In contrast, military intervention may extend civil wars.²⁸ Military intervention also does not correlate with democratization,²⁹ and externally driven military integration attempts often fail to achieve their goals.³⁰ With important policy and theoretical implications for this article, Monica Duffy Toft has shown that negotiated settlements may save fewer lives than decisive military victories.³¹ Other scholars have found that mediation is positively correlated with lasting post-settlement peace.³²

Although the literature on the role of third parties is vast and rich, no scholar has tackled the question of why third parties changed intervention strategies or why they began to mediate more often after the end of the

27. Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, "International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 94, No. 4 (December 2000), pp. 779–801, doi:10.2307/2586208; Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Lise Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Virginia Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Beligerents' Choices after Civil War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008).

28. Patrick M. Regan, *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers: Outside Intervention in Intrastate Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), pp. 59, 71.

29. Alexander B. Downes and Jonathan Monten, "Forced to Be Free? Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization," *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Spring 2013), pp. 90–131, doi:10.1162/ISEC_a_00117.

30. Ronald R. Krebs and Roy Licklider, "United They Fall: Why the International Community Should Not Promote Military Integration after Civil War," *International Security*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Winter 2015/16), pp. 93–138, doi:10.1162/ISEC_a_00228.

31. Toft, *Securing the Peace*.

32. Patrick M. Regan and Aysegül Aydin, "Diplomacy and Other Forms of Intervention in Civil War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (October 2006), pp. 736–756, doi:10.1177/0022002706291579; Andrew Kydd, "Which Side Are You On? Bias, Credibility, and Mediation," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (October 2003), pp. 597–611, doi:10.1111/1540-5907.00042; Jacob Bercovitch and Karl Derouen, "Mediation in Internationalized Ethnic Conflicts: Assessing the Determinants of a Successful Process," *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter 2004), pp. 147–170, doi:10.1177/0095327X0403000202; Molly M. Melin and Isak Svensson, "Incentives for Talking: Accepting Mediation in International and Civil Wars," *International Interactions*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (July 2009), pp. 249–271, doi:10.1080/03050620903084521; and Bernd Beber, "International Mediation, Selection Effects, and the Question of Bias," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (2012), pp. 397–424, doi:10.1177/0738894212449091.

Cold War. Only Stathis Kalyvas and Laia Balcells explore the effects of the end of the Cold War on civil war severity, duration, and outcomes. They locate the changes in the domestic-level variable of the technologies of warfare after the end of the Cold War.³³ They do not, however, examine post-September 11 changes or explicate why or how mediation and negotiated settlements would ensue from systemic change.

Civil Wars and the International Political Environment

To explain why civil wars end differently in different time periods, we look to causes at the level of the international system, or what Kenneth Waltz calls the “third image.” Waltz contends: “The actions of states, or, more accurately, the actions of men acting for states, make up the substance of international relations. But the international political environment has much to do with the ways in which states behave.”³⁴ In seeking to account for the rise and decline of negotiated settlements, we argue that the international political environment largely determines the norms that, in turn, shape the outcomes of civil wars. Table 2 summarizes our argument.

Since the end of the Cold War and bipolarity, the United States has possessed the largest military capacity in the world, “one order of magnitude more powerful than any other military.”³⁵ This military preponderance dominates the international system in ways both material and ideal. Whereas Waltz omitted the role of ideational factors such as “traditions, habits, objectives, desires, and forms of government,” and many neorealists continue to discount the role of ideas, we contend that there is more to unipolarity than simply the material facts.³⁶ We argue that the type of unipolarity and the nature of threats also have systemic effects.

Constructivists privilege the causal role of ideational factors over material

33. Stathis N. Kalyvas and Laia Balcells, “International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (August 2010), pp. 415–429, doi:10.1017/S0003055410000286; and Laia Balcells and Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Does Warfare Matter? Severity, Duration, and Outcomes of Civil Wars,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 58, No. 8 (2014), pp. 1390–1418, doi:10.1177/0022002714547903.

34. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 122–123.

35. Nuno P. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 3.

36. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 99.

Table 2. Time Periods, the International Political Environment, Norms, and Outcomes

	Time Period 1 (1946–89): Cold War	Time Period 2 (1990–2001): Post–Cold War Democratization	Time Period 3 (2002–13): War on Terror
International political environment characteristics	zero-sum ideological polarization	political and economic liberalization	rise of authoritarianism, Islamic fundamentalism, and stabilization
Norms of civil war termination	complete victory	mediation and negotiation	non-negotiation with terrorists
Predominant civil war termination type	victory by one side	settlement/low activity	settlement/low activity (for conflicts without terrorists); increasing victory

power. Alexander Wendt famously characterized anarchy in social terms, where the dominant states view each other as “enemy, rival, or friend,” but he does not theorize about a system where one state—a liberal, democratic state—dominates.³⁷ Like many constructivists, neorealists have also been surprised by the rise and enduring nature of U.S. unipolarity. Moreover, both neorealists and constructivists theorizing about the system say almost nothing about civil wars, even though this has been the dominant form of warfare for decades.

We contend that material U.S. unipolarity is inseparable from the ideological nature of that unipolarity, and that both material and ideational factors must be taken into account when analyzing systemic effects on civil wars. Although we cannot, in the space of this article, fully develop this theoretical position, we describe the general characteristics of each of the three time periods under review, and how they influenced the more specific norms of civil war termination.

During the Cold War, states deemed it acceptable for civil wars to end in complete military victory. In the context of superpower ideological war, members of each side sought to convince others to accept their ideas of appropriate

37. Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chap. 6; and Alexander Wendt, “Constructing International Politics,” *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 71–81.

governance, using both economic and military means. Violent internal conflicts across the developing world became fertile sites for proxy wars. Both U.S. and Soviet decisionmakers believed the victory of the side that adhered more closely to their own ideological position to be of crucial strategic importance. Each side thought the basic tenets of democratic capitalism and communism to be fundamentally incompatible with each other. Given the goal of global political domination on the part of both superpowers, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union was willing to allow vulnerable countries to fall to the other side. Negotiated settlement was therefore deemed an unacceptable outcome in civil wars.

The second period is bookended by the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 11, 1989, and the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Most wars in history ended with the defeat of the weaker side. The Cold War, however, concluded in negotiated settlement, with the United States emerging as the unipole.³⁸ In the late 1980s, the deadlock in the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly subsided, and states created, resurrected, or expanded organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. In the international normative context of the triumph of democracy, the United States and international organizations pressured non-democratic regimes to democratize.³⁹ At the request of the George H.W. Bush administration, the UN Security Council met in 1992 at the level of the Heads of State for the first time in history, during which the world's great powers decided to seek to end civil wars in negotiated settlement.⁴⁰

For states emerging from civil wars, international mediators convinced belligerents to moderate their stances, engage in dialogue, and negotiate political solutions to violent conflict.⁴¹ Mediators repeatedly sought to reach negoti-

38. Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Ideas Do Not Float Freely: Transnational Coalitions, Domestic Structures, and the End of the Cold War," *International Organization*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Spring 1994), pp. 185–214, doi:10.1017/S0020818300028162.

39. Jon C. Pevehouse, "Democracy from the Outside-In? International Organizations and Democratization," *International Organization*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (Summer 2002), pp. 515–549, doi:10.1162/002081802760199872.

40. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "An Agenda for Peace," A/47/277 (New York: United Nations [UN], June 1992).

41. Timothy D. Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts* (New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1996); and Karl DeRouen Jr. and Jacob Bercovitch, "Trends in Civil War Media-

ated settlements. Even in wars that ended in one-sided victory or did not end—for example, in Angola, Rwanda, and Somalia—mediators made significant attempts to broker negotiated settlements. These mediation efforts would not have been possible before the end of the Cold War or without the unipole's choice to pursue this method of conflict resolution.

In the third time period, the international political environment and the goals of the great powers are less certain. The United States remains the most powerful country as measured by material means alone, but its choices are constrained by the rise of anti-liberal ideas and practices, such as Islamic fundamentalism and authoritarianism. China, the European Union, Russia, and the United States are rivals in some arenas but partners in others. One goal on which all great powers have come to agree is that of “stabilization.” For most Western powers, as well as the members of the Security Council, since September 11, the emergence of the threat of Islamic terrorism and the need to stabilize states that could produce extremists, refugees, and other potential security threats has risen to top priority.

In this time period, the great powers have framed adherents to the ideology of Islamic fundamentalism as their adversary, and vice versa. The rise of increasingly powerful nonstate actors such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), al-Qaida, al-Shabaab, and Boko Haram, which are loosely united by their ideological orientation in opposition to the West and others (including Russia and China), characterizes the new threat environment. According to this framing, members of ISIS and similar groups view as anathema the liberal, pluralistic norm of negotiated settlement. Democratic outcomes are precisely what such groups seek to avoid, if not destroy. This ideological type of terrorism enables the spread of non-democratic norms of conflict resolution, because even pluralistic decisionmakers will tend to respond with a similar normative framework: total defeat of the other side is desirable. The United States and dozens of other states have professed that they will not negotiate with terrorists, especially those adhering to the ideology of violent Islamic fundamentalism.

In concert with the norm of non-negotiation, achieving stabilization arose as an approach to ending civil wars after increasing recognition of the barriers to

tion,” in J. Joseph Hewitt, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., *Peace and Conflict 2012* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 59–70.

democratization and nation-building in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. Stabilization sets the bar for success much lower than the approaches of the immediate post-Cold War period. Arising in the same time frame as counter-insurgency (COIN) doctrine, which emphasizes enabling the government to win the support of civilian populations, stabilization operations also aim to secure civilian populations while assisting one side in its military efforts. Both COIN and stabilization efforts also aim to ensure that terrorist and other organizations perceived as security threats cannot take root. As a result, we predict that over time, negotiated settlements will continue to decrease in proportion to victory and low activity.

NORMS OF CIVIL WAR TERMINATION

The argument about norms that we advance here—that shifts in the international political environment change how policymakers believe civil wars ought to end—is unique in several respects. First, although constructivist scholars have explored norms of sovereignty and the use of force,⁴² the benefits of republican peace,⁴³ and the transnational dynamics of civil wars,⁴⁴ none has examined norms governing the outcomes of the most prevalent form of warfare: civil wars. This is an unexpected gap in the literature. Civil wars render states highly susceptible to external forces. By definition, states experiencing civil war do not hold a monopoly over the legitimate use of force within their borders,⁴⁵ and are thus deeply vulnerable to external influences. We therefore would expect external forces—both material and ideational—to have greater effects on civil wars than when such forces target states that are intact and hierarchically organized internally.

42. Mlada Bukovansky, *Legitimacy and Power Politics: The American and French Revolutions in International Political Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); Martha Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs about the Use of Force* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004); Renée de Nevers, "Imposing International Norms: Great Powers and Norm Enforcement," *International Studies Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring 2007), pp. 53–80, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2486.2007.00645.x; Ian Hurd, *After Anarchy: Legitimacy and Power in the United Nations Security Council* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

43. Barnett, "Building a Republican Peace."

44. Jeffrey T. Checkel, ed., *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

45. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 1 (1918; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 56.

Second, endogeneity problems and the difficulty of tracing causal processes make norms challenging to measure empirically. The traditional mode in the scholarly study of normative change explicates processes of “strategic social construction,” whereby individual “norm entrepreneurs” or social activists convince powerful decisionmakers to change state actions, usually in a progressive direction.⁴⁶ Much of the recent literature on norms responds to this causal chain, analyzing a great variety of norm change trajectories, including backsliding, reformulation, dissolution, and failure to change behavior.⁴⁷

Our work, however, elucidates two different types of causal chains. In the transition from the first to the second time period, we see the United States as the democratic unipole (and not individual civil society activists) functioning as norm entrepreneur. But even more striking, in the third time period, we see the norm of stabilization arising not out of the ideational efforts of a single state or individuals, but rather from broad, material circumstances.⁴⁸ By the mid-2000s, the U.S.-led experiments in democratization by force in Afghanistan and Iraq were not bearing much fruit. The Color Revolutions and the Arab Spring also did not lead to snowballing democratization. The failures of democratization, the rise of authoritarian rule, and the already-existing increase of low activity as a form of civil war termination, spurred the spread of a new norm of “stabilization.” Stabilization replaced democratization and nation-building as the new goal in civil war termination not only for the United States, but for the other great powers as well. In other words, the norm of stabilization appears to have arisen largely from a material, rather than an ideational, source.

Below we provide several types of evidence for our arguments about the in-

46. Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention*; Klotz, *Norms in International Relations*; Keck and Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*; Price and Tannenwald, “Norms and Deterrence”; and Thomas Risse, “Let’s Argue! Communicative Action in World Politics,” *International Organization*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Winter 2000), pp. 1–39, doi:10.1162/002081800551109.

47. Jennifer L. Bailey, “Arrested Development: The Fight to End Commercial Whaling as a Case of Failed Norm Change,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2008), pp. 289–318, doi:10.1177/1354066108089244; Katharina P. Coleman, “Locating Norm Diplomacy: Venue Change in International Norm Negotiations,” *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2013), pp. 163–186, doi:10.1177/1354066111411209; and Colin H. Kahl, “In the Crossfire or the Crosshairs? Norms, Civilian Casualties, and U.S. Conduct in Iraq,” *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Summer 2007), pp. 7–46, doi:10.1162/isec.2007.32.1.7.

48. We cannot, in the space of this article, offer a complete theoretical account of these different types of norm change.

ternational political environment and norms in the three time periods. We present statistical tests demonstrating a significant relationship between time period and the likelihood of civil war mediation attempts. Second, we use cases studies from periods 1 and 2 to show that mediation was a crucial variable in producing negotiated settlement and that norms, rather than simply strategic cost assessments, played an important role in U.S. decisionmaking. Finally, for the third time period, we employ content analysis, supplemented by discourse analysis, to depict the fall of democratization and negotiation and the rise of stabilization.

CAUSAL PROCESSES: TIME PERIOD AND CIVIL WAR MEDIATION

Our theory asserts that changes in the international political environment influence conflict resolution norms, which, in turn, affect how civil wars end. As a first cut at providing empirical evidence for our theory, we conduct a statistical analysis demonstrating that the three time periods predict when civil wars are more or less likely to experience a mediation attempt. Attempts by third parties to mediate civil wars are an observable implication of our theory: if great powers believe that civil wars ought to end in settlements rather than victory by one side, they should be more likely to engage in mediation and to support such efforts. There is already a significant body of research demonstrating that mediation makes civil wars more likely to end in durable settlements.⁴⁹ We therefore focus our statistical analysis on our theory's novel contribution. We hypothesize that civil wars will be more likely to experience a mediation attempt in time period 2 as compared to time periods 1 and 3.

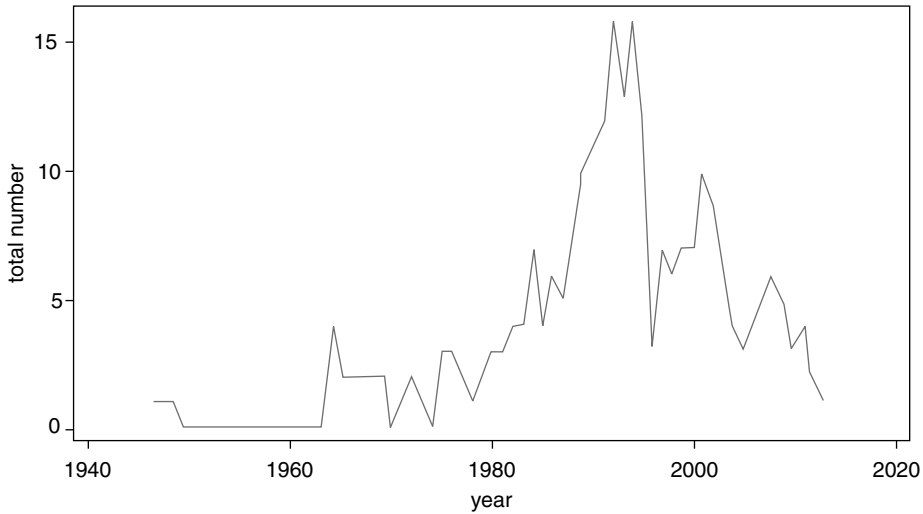
Figure 2 and table 3 demonstrate a correlation between time period and whether a civil war is likely to experience a mediation attempt in a given year. We use the Bercovitch Data Centre for Conflict, Mediation and Peace-Building's Civil Wars Mediation dataset's coding of mediation attempts by other states, international organizations, and nonstate actors.⁵⁰ The dataset codes all instances of civil war mediation from 1946 to 2013.

Figure 2 demonstrates that third-party mediation increased sharply around

49. Regan and Aydin, "Diplomacy and Other Forms of Intervention in Civil War"; Kydd, "Which Side Are You On?"; Bercovitch and Derouen, "Mediation in Internationalized Ethnic Conflicts"; Melin and Svensson, "Incentives for Talking"; Regan, *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers*; and DeRouen and Bercovitch, "Trends in Civil War Mediation."

50. DeRouen and Bercovitch, "Trends in Civil Wars Mediation"; and Karl DeRouen Jr., Jacob

Figure 2. Number of Civil Wars with Mediation on an Annual Basis



1988/89, plateaued in the early 1990s (with a brief dip and recovery in 1996 after the tragedies in Rwanda and Bosnia), and then declined after 2001.⁵¹ Table 3 shows that mediation attempts are correlated with our three time periods. Each observation is a civil war-year, and mediation is a dichotomous variable coded as 1 if a civil war experienced at least one mediation attempt in that year and 0 if it did not. In time period 1, just 9 percent of all civil war-years involved a third-party mediation attempt. In contrast, in time period 2, almost 25 percent of civil war-years experienced a mediation effort. In time period 3, about 13 percent of civil war-years included an attempted mediation—more than in time period 1, but fewer than in time period 2.⁵²

Finally, a logit model demonstrates that this correlation is statistically sig-

Bercovitch, and Paulina Pospieszna, "Introducing the Civil Wars Mediation Dataset," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 48, No. 5 (2011), pp. 663–672, doi:10.1177/0022343311406157.

51. See figure A2 in the online appendix; notably, the number of ongoing civil wars was fairly steady in time period 3 even as the number of civil wars that experienced mediation attempts declined over the same time period.

52. The p -value of a Pearson chi-squared test comparing only time periods 1 and 2 is less than 0.001 (chi-squared = 66.7341); the p -value of a Pearson chi-squared test comparing only time periods 2 and 3 is less than 0.001 (chi-squared = 16.8799).

Table 3. Time Period and Mediation Attempts

Mediation Attempt?	Period 1 (1946–89)	Period 2 (1990–2001)	Period 3 (2002–13)	Total
No	898 (91.35%)	376 (75.81%)	346 (86.72%)	1,620 (86.26%)
Yes	85 (8.65%)	120 (24.19%)	53 (13.28%)	258 (13.74%)
Total	983 (100.00%)	496 (100.00%)	399 (100.00%)	1,878 (100.00%)

Pearson $\chi^2 = 67.3228$, $p < 0.001$.

nificant even when controlling for other relevant variables and using a variety of model specifications.⁵³ Our analysis provides confirmation of a strong correlation between time period and mediation. We now turn to the second and third pieces of our three-pronged empirical approach: case studies and content analysis.

Case Studies of War Termination in El Salvador and Bosnia

In the previous section, we treated mediation as a dependent variable, showing that mediation attempts vary significantly by time period. In this section, we treat mediation as a causal variable, but we also go beyond this factor to weigh other explanations for why, after 1989, civil wars were more likely to end in negotiated settlements.

Causal explanations are difficult to capture quantitatively. A case study approach is more useful for explicating causality, because otherwise, “it is unclear whether a pattern of covariation is truly causal in nature, or what the causal interaction might be. . . . The investigation of a single case may [also] allow one to test the causal implications of a theory.”⁵⁴ Here, we seek evidence of causal processes that we would expect to observe if the United States and its allies were acting only in response to costs as opposed to norms of appropri-

53. See table A3 in the online appendix.

54. John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 45.

ateness.⁵⁵ If they were responding to costs, we would expect to see concerted efforts to reduce them. If they were responding to norms, we would expect to see explicit normative language in documented reflections of the decisions made by key external policymakers about what they thought they ought to do: pursue a one-sided victory or a negotiated settlement, often as part of an effort to democratize.

We chose the cases of the war termination processes in El Salvador and Bosnia-Herzegovina because they are representative of other cases in their time periods, and they provide variation on such factors as time period, type of conflict (ideological vs. ethnic), and the existence of a mutually hurting stalemate as opposed to imminent military victory for the United States' preferred side. Despite this variation, after the shift in the international political environment at end of the Cold War, U.S. presidents and their advisers chose not only to back mediation efforts but also to invest significant material resources in negotiated settlements because they considered it the responsible or right thing to do.

Also in both El Salvador and Bosnia, after 1989, international pressure from other external actors—U.S. allies, Russia, and the United Nations—favored negotiation as opposed to one-sided victory. The significant financial and diplomatic backing by external parties for mediation enabled the mediators to employ a “single text” strategy, whereby the mediation team would draft the details of the peace proposals and present their propositions to each side for review.⁵⁶ The international consensus around the appropriateness of a negotiated settlement and this centralized mediation method secured the negotiated solutions.

For each case, we process trace through the difficult-to-quantify and changing calculations of costs, threats, and norms that drove external decisions not only to seek but also to materially support negotiated settlements after 1989. We present an array of primary source evidence—from speeches, biographical accounts, and declassified documents—to show that norms associated with democratization and negotiated solutions were driving decisionmaking. We

55. “Qualitative research uses causal process observations to . . . slowly but surely rule out alternative explanations until they come to one that stands up to scrutiny.” See Henry E. Brady and David Collier, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield 2004), p. 260.

56. When disputing parties direct the drafting process, they often derail the negotiations.

also detail other case-specific factors that moved the parties toward agreement, and we demonstrate the causal role of third-party mediation. Lastly, we pose the following counterfactual question: Would the outcome have been different in a different international political environment?⁵⁷

EL SALVADOR

El Salvador was home to the twentieth century's longest high-intensity civil war in Latin America. Extending over twelve years, it took the lives of approximately 75,000 people (out of some 4.5 million) and created more than 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons.⁵⁸ The war was fought over the militarization of the political sphere and inequality, particularly in land distribution. After a military coup in October 1979, violence ignited in March 1980 when Archbishop Óscar Arnulfo Romero, known for speaking against poverty and injustice, was assassinated while offering mass. In the months after his tumultuous funeral service, disparate opposition parties began to unify, culminating in the formation of the leftist party Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in December of 1980.

Supported financially and militarily by Cuba, Nicaragua, and the Soviet Union, the FMLN sought to destabilize and delegitimize the Salvadoran government through attacks on government officials as well as on El Salvador's physical infrastructure. The government and various paramilitary organizations dissuaded people in the countryside from supporting the FMLN, often through brutal, public assassinations and broad-sweeping military campaigns.⁵⁹ While the Christian Democratic Party nominally ruled the country for most of the 1980s, the El Salvadoran armed forces, along with death squads associated with the rightist political party Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA) waged brutal warfare. Beginning with the administration of

57. On these methods, see Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005).

58. Estimates vary. See Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 14; Mario Lungo Uclés, *El Salvador in the Eighties: Counterinsurgency and Revolution*, trans. Amelia F. Shogan (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), p. 194; and UN, *The UN and El Salvador, 1990–1995* (New York: UN, 1995) p. 7 para. 14.

59. Jacqueline L. Hazelton, "The 'Hearts and Minds' Fallacy: Violence, Coercion, and Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare," *International Security*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (Summer 2017), p. 102, doi:10.1162/ISEC_a_00283.

President Jimmy Carter, these groups were supported financially, and sometimes were trained, by the United States.

During most of the 1980s, the United States pursued the goal of a decisive military defeat of the FMLN, rather than negotiation. President Ronald Reagan and his advisers saw the conflict as zero-sum: "Central America is a region of great importance to the United States. . . . [I]t's at our doorstep. And it has become the stage for a bold attempt by the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Nicaragua to install communism by force throughout the hemisphere."⁶⁰ Reagan further explained, "We have an entire plan for bolstering the government forces. This is one we must win."⁶¹ The war was deeply unpopular with the American public, but President Reagan sought to appeal to Americans' sense of morality: "Based simply on the difference between right and wrong, it was clear that we should help the people of the region fight the bloodthirsty guerillas bent on robbing them of freedom."⁶²

The official U.S. view of the conflict as zero-sum was mirrored by that of the internal parties. As the far-right colonel Sigrrido Ochoa said in 1987, "We are in a war and somebody has to win. . . . I never heard of a war that was a draw."⁶³ On the opposite side, the FMLN asserted that it had the support of the population, as well as the Soviet Union and other external actors, to continue to seek victory over the government. Like the rightist parties, the FMLN would not negotiate because, as explained in a recently declassified Central Intelligence Agency analytic paper, "[t]he top FMLN Commander Joaquín Villalobos rejects the concept of negotiations as a means to a solution. . . . According to Villalobos, the desire of democracies to negotiate is a vulnerability to be exploited."⁶⁴ Neither the domestic belligerents nor their external sup-

60. Ronald Reagan, "Address to the Nation on United States Policy in Central America," May 9, 1984, Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Simi Valley, California, <https://reaganlibrary.archives.gov/archives/speeches/1984/50984h.htm>.

61. Ronald Reagan, *An American Life: The Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), pp. 447–478, at p. 477. See also recently declassified White House National Security Decision Directive 92, "U.S. Policy Initiatives to Improve Prospects for Victory in El Salvador," February 24, 1983, National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington, District of Columbia.

62. Reagan, *An American Life*, p. 479.

63. Terry Lynn Karl, "El Salvador's Negotiated Revolution," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 147–164, at p. 149.

64. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Directorate of Intelligence, Office of Latin American Analy-

porters believed that the other would negotiate in good faith, even though by 1987 the war had reached a battlefield stalemate.⁶⁵

In 1989, however, the internal and external forces supporting one-sided victory began to shift. In El Salvador, ARENA's Alfredo Cristiani, a Georgetown University-educated businessman, won the presidential election in a landslide. Cristiani sought to move ARENA away from its paramilitary roots, while business elites pushed for an end to economic disruption through negotiations.⁶⁶ Splits within the military began to develop "between a hard-line faction committed to total war and a more moderate or pragmatic faction willing to discuss a negotiated settlement."⁶⁷ Similar shifts were occurring on the other side. In November 1989, the FMLN launched an offensive on the capital of San Salvador, demonstrating that it could make serious inroads and that it would not be defeated militarily. The FMLN's advance, however, was not accompanied by the widespread uprising of political support that its leadership had expected. Negotiation became a possible path forward.

Several days after the FMLN offensive, a rightist rapid-reaction battle group entered the campus of the Jesuit-run Central American University and murdered six Jesuit priests, their cook, and her daughter. This act caused widespread outrage, including in the U.S. Congress, where House member Joe Moakley and others called for a severe reduction in American aid to El Salvador.⁶⁸

On the international stage, on November 11, 1989, the Berlin Wall came down, and many observers declared the Cold War over. The emergence of

sis, "The FMLN in El Salvador: Insurgent Negotiations Strategy and Human Rights Abuses," November 22, 1988, National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington, District of Columbia.

65. Walter C. Ladwig III, "Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency: U.S. Involvement in El Salvador's Civil War, 1979–92," *International Security*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Summer 2016), pp. 99–146, at p. 133, doi:10.1162/ISEC_a_00251; and Aila M. Matanock, "Bullets for Ballots: Electoral Participation Provisions and Enduring Peace after Civil Conflict," *International Security*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Spring 2017), p. 126, doi:10.1162/ISEC_a_00275.

66. Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

67. Susan D. Burgerman, "Building the Peace by Mandating Reform: United Nations—Mediated Human Rights Agreements in El Salvador and Guatemala," *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (May 2000), p. 67, doi:10.1177/0094582X0002700304.

68. Karl, "El Salvador's Negotiated Revolution," p. 151; and Russell Crandall, *The El Salvador Option: The United States in El Salvador, 1977–1992* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 451.

glasnost and perestroika under Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union pulled the proverbial ideological rug out from under many armed resistance groups, including the FMLN. Future Secretary of Defense Robert Gates explained colorfully, “You sort of had the feeling, in contrast to during the mid ‘80s, that by 1989 the Soviets’ heart really wasn’t—that they really didn’t give a sh*t about Latin America.”⁶⁹ In 1989, the Soviets cut off military aid to Cuba and Nicaragua (the main arms suppliers to the FMLN).⁷⁰

As communism imploded, the U.S. Congress continued to press the George H.W. Bush administration to cut off aid to El Salvador if the Cristiani government did not bring the murderers of the Jesuits to justice. Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs Bernard Aronson, the point person in the administration for El Salvador, described the U.S. government’s reaction to the Jesuit killings as follows: “It was such a terrible atrocity, the killing of priests and the housekeeper and innocent people, coming after years and years of efforts to improve the human rights performance of the [Salvadoran] military. It really sent a signal to some members of the Congress—made them re-evaluate their willingness to support the military. . . . For the first time, they [the Salvadoran armed forces] had to contemplate the possibility that the U.S. would cut off military aid. So, I think it gave them a much greater incentive to negotiate more seriously than they had before.”⁷¹

Congress subsequently cut off aid to El Salvador, and the armed forces began a concerted effort to investigate the killings; several months later, aid resumed. The Bush administration was committed to democratizing and human rights reforms in the Salvadoran government and military. According to Aronson, “We pressed very hard for the purging of the worst abuses from the officer corps well before the negotiations got serious. We worked very hard . . . to make it clear that we wanted to see the negotiations go forward. We

69. Quoted in Jeffrey A. Engel, “When George Bush Believed the Cold War Ended and Why That Mattered,” in Michael Nelson and Barbara A. Perry, eds., *41: Inside the Presidency of George H.W. Bush* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp. 100–121, at p. 114.

70. Mark LeVine, “Peacemaking in El Salvador,” in Michael W. Doyle, Ian Johnstone, and Robert C. Orr, eds., *Keeping the Peace: Multidimensional UN Operations in Cambodia and El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 227–254, at p. 231.

71. Bernard Aronson, assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs, interview with Jean Krasno, Yale–United Nations Oral History Project, October 10, 1997, interview transcript, United Nations Oral History Collection, DAG Digital Repository, Dag Hammarskjöld Library, New York, New York, pp. 17–18, <http://repository.un.org/handle/11176/89707?show=full>.

monitored the right wing. . . . We consulted and worked very closely with the four friends. We were involved in a hundred different ways behind the scenes of the negotiating process. . . . We started our own process of talking to the FMLN. We provided an enormous amount of the funding for the peace process."⁷²

To achieve the goal of a negotiated settlement, President Bush promised to increase El Salvador's \$131 million economic aid package by \$50 million.⁷³ The 1990 U.S. financial package to El Salvador would eventually amount to \$228.9 million for economic aid and \$86 million for the Military Assistance Program.⁷⁴ Thus, even though the Soviet Union had cut off military aid and therefore ceased to pose a threat to U.S. strategic interests in the region, the United States continued, and even increased, its costly support for El Salvador.

In February 1990, President Bush's new secretary of state, James Baker, testified before Congress: "We believe this is the year to end the war through a negotiated settlement which guarantees safe political space for all Salvadorans."⁷⁵ Although Baker remained uncomfortable with the prospect of talking directly with the FMLN, as one expert explained, "By finally dropping the notion of the FMLN's military defeat, Baker's words marked a decisive reversal of U.S. policy. The stage was set for political settlement."⁷⁶ The Bush administration pushed for negotiations and democratization by working to include the FMLN in the political process while insisting that its preferred side (the Cristiani government) make significant concessions. The United States was waging a costly effort to negotiate an end to the war.

THE ROLE OF NORMS IN EL SALVADOR. The Soviet and regional threats were gone. Aid to El Salvador was expensive. El Salvador was democratizing, as evidenced in Cristiani's election. If the United States were responding solely according to strategic assessments and costs, it would simply have ceased aid to the Salvadoran government. But rather than abandoning the conflict (as the

72. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

73. Ladwig, "Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency," p. 136.

74. "El Salvador: Accountability for U.S. Military and Economic Aid" (Washington, D.C.: United States General Accounting Office [GAO], September 1990). In 1992, the United States pledged a further \$250 million to aid the National Reconstruction Plan. See "El Salvador: Role of Nongovernment Programs in Postwar Reconstruction" (Washington, D.C.: GAO, November 1992), p. 2.

75. Quoted in Karl, "El Salvador's Negotiated Revolution," p. 154.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

Soviet Union had), or pushing for its preferred side to win decisively (as it had for the previous decade), the Bush administration decided to pursue genuine negotiations. The agreements eventually required both the Cristiani government and the FMLN to concede to deep political and military reforms, including halving the size of the Salvadoran military (to 31,000 troops), inducing the FMLN to disarm and become a political party, redistributing land, and purging the worst human rights violators from the leadership of the armed forces—processes that the United States backed with hundreds of millions of dollars. Why?

The above decisions must be understood in the broader international political environment of the time, which the United States sought to shape. After the end of the Cold War, the United States found itself the unipole, committed not simply to furthering its own power but also to spreading democratic ideals. In his 1991 State of the Union address, often dubbed his “New World Order” speech, President Bush discussed the 1990–91 Gulf War that extracted Saddam Hussein’s military from Kuwait and the larger ideas behind the new U.S. foreign policy. He declared, “What is at stake is more than one small country; it is a big idea: a new world order. . . . The triumph of democratic ideas in Eastern Europe and Latin America and the continuing struggle for freedom elsewhere all around the world all confirm the wisdom of our nation’s founders. . . . And we all realize . . . our responsibility to be the catalyst for peace.”⁷⁷

In El Salvador specifically, upon the first conversation between President Bush and President Cristiani, the White House Spokesperson reported, “The United States is committed to the defense of democracy and human rights in El Salvador. . . . The time has come to end the violence and secure an honorable peace that will protect the rights and security of all Salvadorans, regardless of their political views, to participate in a safe and fair political process.”⁷⁸ The United States was both creating, and acting in line with, a new expectation that

77. George H.W. Bush, “Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,” January 29, 1991, John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, eds., American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=19253>.

78. Marlin Fitzwater, “Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on President Bush’s Telephone Conversation with President-Elect Alfredo Cristiani of El Salvador,” March 22, 1989, Public Papers, George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, College Station, Texas, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/218>.

civil wars should end in negotiation rather than military victory. That did not mean, however, that the civil war in El Salvador would simply stop.

MEDIATOR'S ROLE IN EL SALVADOR. Arduous negotiations ensued from January 1990 to January 1992, while both sides jockeyed for better military position. In mid-1991, FMLN troops advanced again on San Salvador, demonstrating that the war was not going to end on its own or simply fizzle out. There was a stop-and-start nature to the negotiation process: the FMLN and the Salvadoran government signed, and often reneged on, seven different peace plans before concluding the final Chapultepec accord on January 16, 1992.

The lead mediator, appointed by the UN Security Council and approved by the warring parties, was the Peruvian diplomat Álvaro de Soto. He also had the support of an informal group of "friends" in Colombia, Mexico, Spain, and Venezuela.⁷⁹ Reflecting on the negotiations, de Soto explains that "the 'friends' mechanism had the purpose of preempting rival initiatives that might confuse the negotiations."⁸⁰ The "friends" generally deferred to de Soto, while assisting him in exerting pressure on the warring sides to strike deals with each other and to uphold commitments. De Soto adopted the technique of a "single negotiating text," by drafting the peace proposal language himself, presenting the draft to both sides, and then revising in light of suggestions. He and his team continuously suggested avenues of compromise, with provisions on disarmament, as well as military, judicial and constitutional reforms. Such direct mediation was an "unprecedented diplomatic intervention in internal conflict."⁸¹ It is improbable that the war would have ended as it did without such an effective mediator, whose work was enabled by the support of the permanent five members of the UN Security Council, and especially the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia.

79. Teresa Whitfield, *Friends Indeed: The United Nations, Groups of Friends, and the Resolution of Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: USIP Press, 2007).

80. Álvaro de Soto, "Ending Violent Conflict in El Salvador," in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World* (Washington, D.C.: USIP Press, 1999), p. 366. De Soto is referring here mainly to an effort by the Venezuelan government to "hijack" the negotiations, just as the UN had been making progress. See *ibid.*, pp. 368–369.

81. Burgerman, "Building the Peace by Mandating Reform," p. 65. See also William Stanley and David Holiday, "Peace Mission Strategy and Domestic Actors: UN Mediation, Verification, and Institution-Building in El Salvador," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Summer 1997), pp. 22–49, doi:10.1080/13533319708413665.

El Salvador is emblematic of many wars of its time (e.g., Cambodia, Guatemala, and Mozambique), where ideas of how the conflict ought to end shifted with the end of the Cold War. The FMLN was the sworn enemy of the United States. Over the course of the 1980s, the United States spent \$3.5 billion to try to defeat the group.⁸² After the end of Soviet support, the rise of unipolarity could easily have spelled the demise of the FMLN. Instead, the international political environment, shaped by a democratic unipole, shifted to favor negotiations. This normative change brought about moves toward compromise in El Salvador, but not all actors were on board: “The parties in El Salvador could not have ended the war by themselves or made the concessions they made, by themselves. They needed that international framework and pressure and support apparatus to make it work.”⁸³ It took effective international mediation (and UN peacekeeping), which required the investment of considerable financial resources and political capital, to conclude the war in a democratizing, negotiated settlement.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Whereas the end of the Cold War provided momentum to end ideologically based civil conflicts such as the one in El Salvador, it had the opposite effect on others. Ethnofederal regimes in Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia began to fracture. Although the process was mainly peaceful in the first two, Yugoslavia’s break-up was violent: five of the six new republics succumbed to war.

Bosnia-Herzegovina was home to the worst of the fighting. Out of a prewar population of 4.5 million, some 100,000 were killed and more than 2 million forced to flee their homes.⁸⁴ The war was fought, roughly speaking, between Bosnian Serbs (who are generally of Christian Orthodox faith), Bosnian Croats (often Catholic), and Bosniaks (who are mainly Muslim). The Bosnian Serbs were led by the nationalist leader Radovan Karadžić and military commander Ratko Mladić, and sustained by neighboring Serbia and its president, Slobodan Milošević. Mate Boban led the Bosnian Croats, who were buttressed

82. “El Salvador: Accounting for U.S. Military and Economic Aid” (Washington, D.C.: GAO, 1990), p. 2.

83. Aronson, interview with Krasno, p. 38.

84. “Bosnia War Dead Figure Announced,” *BBC News*, June 21, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6228152.stm>.

by the regime of President Franjo Tuđman in neighboring Croatia. President Alija Izetbegović represented the Bosniaks. He did not have a neighboring former Yugoslav republic from which to garner immediate external assistance.

International support for the different sides varied over the course of the war, but in general, the United States favored the most aggrieved group, the (Muslim) Bosniaks. Germany supported Croatia, as it had under Adolf Hitler during World War II. Russia, recalling historical and cultural ties, supported Serbia.

The causes of the war are multiple and complex.⁸⁵ Early on, the “ancient hatreds” thesis was one of the most popular explanations. It held that the ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia hated each other for generations and that no external action could alter such a deep conflict.⁸⁶ Numerous scholars have discredited this view, pointing instead to the role of instrumental domestic elites in their use of ethnicity to hold onto power; the rise and erosion of a Yugoslav national culture; political economic institutions that gained separate force within each of the republics; relative deprivation fueling animosity between wealthy and poor republics; the strategic use of emotion; and international actors that fueled the independence efforts of different sides of the war.⁸⁷ Each of these—largely domestic—factors contributed to the outbreak of the war, but it was outside actors that secured the peace. External action, however, was not immediate.

Beginning in 1992, U.S. and European leaders viewed the conflict as an internal one that could not be resolved by external efforts other than diplomatic. U.S. decisionmakers generally felt that Bosnia-Herzegovina was a European problem and that Europeans should therefore lead the way in negotiations to

85. David Campbell, “MetaBosnia: Narratives of the Bosnian War,” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (1998), pp. 261–281, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20097522>.

86. Dusko Doder, “Yugoslavia: New War, Old Hatreds,” *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1993, <http://foreignpolicy.com/1993/06/19/yugoslavia-new-war-old-hatreds/>; and Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (London: Macmillan, 1994).

87. V.P. Gagnon Jr., “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia,” *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 130–166, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539081>; Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Making a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998); Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1995); Roger D. Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Brian C. Rathbun, *Partisan Interventions: European Party Politics and Peace Enforcement in the Balkans* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004).

end the war. Europeans tended to agree, while also insisting that the impetus for resolution arise internally.

U.S. policymakers generally concurred. The George H.W. Bush administration's secretary of state, Lawrence Eagleburger, declared, "I have said this 38,000 times . . . until the Bosnians, Serbs, and Croats decide to stop killing each other, there is nothing the outside world can do about it."⁸⁸ When Bill Clinton became president, he initially echoed the previous administration's view.

Despite evidence of war crimes being committed by the Yugoslav national army and its Bosnian Serb allies, European and U.S. leaders did not want to employ force to end the conflict. The conflict did not directly threaten their countries, but it was embarrassing, and some officials in the first Clinton administration argued that failure to address it was undermining U.S. "leadership both at home and abroad."⁸⁹ They preferred to provide humanitarian aid, employ sanctions against Serbia, and deploy UN peacekeepers to freeze the fighting and encourage all sides to negotiate a way out of the conflict.⁹⁰ They would not consider coercive military options. Negotiation was the preferred means and outcome: "We could [not] use significant force to punish the Bosnian Serbs because UN peacekeepers might be taken hostage and the humanitarian mission derailed."⁹¹ European leaders also argued, contrary to many U.S. foreign policy makers, that an arms embargo on all parties would keep the violence contained.⁹² Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright handily summed up the first several years of external efforts: "Our goal was a negotiated solution, but we never applied the credible threat of force necessary to achieve it. Instead we employed a combination of half-measures and bluster that didn't work."⁹³

From 1992 to 1994, external actors presented numerous peace plans—five in

88. Quoted in Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (New York: Random House, 1998), p. 23.

89. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright as quoted in Derek Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords: A Study of American Statecraft* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 39.

90. Jon Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention: Beliefs, Information, and Advocacy in the U.S. Decisions on Somalia and Bosnia," *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Spring 2002), pp. 112–142, doi:10.1162/016228802753696799.

91. Madeleine Albright, *Madam Secretary: A Memoir* (New York: Hyperion, 2003), p. 233.

92. Many U.S. foreign policymakers were against the arms embargo because it disproportionately affected the Bosniaks, which they saw as unfair. Senator Bob Dole was a leader in this effort.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

all—but after each crumbled, the external actors decided to shift course to achieve their desired outcome. A body similar to the aforementioned “group of friends” in El Salvador, called the “Contact Group” came together and drafted the penultimate plan. The Contact Group included representatives from Britain, France, Germany, Russia, the United States (and later Italy), and introduced the concept of a Muslim-Croat Federation that would govern separately from a Bosnian Serb entity, in a united country where the Serbs would hold 49 percent of the territory and the Federation 51 percent. This concept, agreed exclusively among the external parties, would form the basis of the final Dayton agreement. At the time the Contact Group formulated this plan, the Serbs occupied some 70 percent of the territory. It was therefore unclear how the plan would materialize, but subsequent events made it a reality.

In July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces attacked the town of Srebrenica—a UN-designated “safe area.” The forces waged a genocidal massacre that killed approximately 8,000 Bosnian Muslims, mainly men and boys, and ethnically cleansed some 40,000 people.⁹⁴ The horror of Srebrenica spurred the United States and its partners in NATO to greater action. President Clinton designated his formidable assistant secretary of state for European affairs, Richard Holbrooke, to serve as the top U.S. mediator in the Balkans. Holbrooke explained that given Serb advances, “as diplomats we could not expect the Serbs to be conciliatory at the negotiating table as long as they had experienced nothing but success on the battlefield.”⁹⁵ With U.S. persuasion, Russia agreed to support NATO aerial bombing and to participate in a follow-on UN peacekeeping mission.

In mid-September 1995, the NATO aerial operation “Deliberate Force,” coupled with major ground campaigns by both Croatian and Muslim-Croat Federation forces, brought the Bosnian Serb armed forces to the edge of military defeat. Federation forces in Bosnia had retaken more than 50 percent of the territory, and the Bosnian Serb stronghold of Banja Luka looked likely to

94. Ewa Tabeau and Jakub Bijak, “War-Related Deaths in the 1992–1995 Armed Conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Critique of Previous Estimates and Recent Results,” *European Journal of Population*, Vol. 21, Nos. 2–3 (June 2005), pp. 187–215, doi:10.1007/s10680-005-6852-5.

95. Holbrook, *To End a War*, p. 73.

fall next, which would essentially vanquish the Serbs.⁹⁶ But rather than allowing a complete military defeat for the Bosnian Serbs, the United States and its European partners called off the Federation's advance and pressed for a negotiated solution.

THE ROLE OF NORMS IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA. The Serbs were the aggressors in this war, and the United States preferred the Federation—especially the Bosniaks. Russia was weak and would not defend the Serbs militarily. The Serbs did not pose a serious physical threat to the United States or to Europe—most militaries in Europe could have defeated them, if desired. Europeans were happy to have the United States take the lead in ending the conflict. In Banja Luka, defeat of the Serbs by the Muslim-Croat Federation was imminent. Why did the United States halt the Federation's advance and instead pursue a negotiated solution? Holbrooke explains his decision in his memoir: "A true practitioner of Realpolitik would have encouraged the attack [on Banja Luka] regardless of its humanitarian concerns. In fact, humanitarian concerns decided the case for me. I did not think the United States should contribute to the creation of new refugees and more human suffering."⁹⁷

Others in the Clinton administration supported this view. National Security Adviser Anthony Lake and then-UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright pushed for a negotiated solution as the first choice, with the option to use military force to pursue a victory only in the event of failed negotiations. Albright reasoned, "If a negotiated settlement were not forthcoming, we should urge withdrawal of the UN mission and train and equip the Bosnian military behind the shield of NATO air-power."⁹⁸ President Clinton concurred: "I agree with Tony and Madeleine. We should bust our ass to get a settlement within the next few months. We must commit to a unified Bosnia. And if we can't get that at the bargaining table, we have to help the Bosnians on the battlefield."⁹⁹ The Europeans and, importantly, the Russians also wanted to press

96. Christiane Amanpour, "Sacirbey and Silajdic Positively Giddy," *CNN.com*, September 17, 1995, <http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/Bosnia/updates/sep95/9-17/pm/index.html>; and John Pomfret, "Bosnia, Croatia Agree to Halt Offensive" *Washington Post*, September 20, 1995.

97. Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 166.

98. Albright, *Madam Secretary*, p. 240.

99. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 241.

a negotiated solution. Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev asserted, "All we want to do is to end this bloody goddamned war, and to end it in a way that's a visibly cooperative achievement."¹⁰⁰

The U.S. team, with the support of other external actors, was operating according to normative impulses. The team chose to employ military means to achieve not a military victory but a negotiated settlement. The costs of pursuing this goal would run into the billions, and American public opinion was not generally supportive of U.S. intervention in Bosnia.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, the administration was willing to provide significant financial support for this normative agenda. In a major speech on Bosnia-Herzegovina, President Clinton explained why he made the choice to push for a negotiated solution while securing the peace by providing more than 20,000 U.S. troops (of 60,000 total) under NATO command: "Today, because of our dedication, America's ideals—liberty, democracy and peace—are more and more the aspirations of people everywhere in the world. It is the power of our ideas, even more than our size, our wealth and our military might, that makes America a uniquely trusted nation. . . . Nowhere has the argument for our leadership been more clearly justified than in the struggle to stop or prevent war and civil violence. . . . [W]e have stood up for peace and freedom because it's in our interest to do so, and because it is the right thing to do."¹⁰² Clinton and his team chose this course of action not because of domestic pressure, threats, or a desire to reduce costs, but because in the post-1989 international political environment they thought that it was normatively appropriate.

MEDIATOR'S ROLE IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA. In the fall of 1995, although the battlefield was primed to achieve a negotiated solution, the warring parties were not generally supportive of such an outcome. According to Ivo Daalder,

100. Quoted in Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 85.

101. According to a GAO report, U.S. military expenditures for 22,000 American troops deployed through NATO in 1996 amounted to about \$3 billion. See "Bosnia: Costs Are Exceeding DOD's Estimates" (Washington, D.C.: GAO, July 25, 1996), p. 2. Since then, the United States has spent a total of about \$17 billion in military, humanitarian, and development assistance to Bosnia. See David Rohde, "Bosnia's Lesson: When American Intervention Works (Partly)," *Atlantic*, April 27, 2012, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/04/bosnias-lesson-when-american-intervention-works-partly/256471/>. On U.S. public opinion, see Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention," p. 146.

102. William J. Clinton, "Balkan Accord: Clinton's Words on Mission to Bosnia—'The Right Thing to Do,'" *New York Times*, November 28, 1995.

who coordinated U.S. policy on Bosnia from 1995 to 1997, “It would take two more months of arduous and creative negotiations to arrive at a successful conclusion.”¹⁰³ Holbrooke was in charge of the Dayton negotiations. Like de Soto in El Salvador, he insisted on employing a “single-text” mediation, where his team would draft the proposals for consideration. He also insisted on three important, centralizing preconditions, which he argues made successful negotiations possible. First, “A central dilemma confronting the United States had been with whom to negotiate on the Serb side.”¹⁰⁴ Thus Holbrooke’s opening move was to convince Milošević to persuade the Bosnian Serb leadership—namely, Karadžić and Mladić, who had been indicted on war crimes—to allow Milošević to negotiate on their behalf.¹⁰⁵ His second step was to limit the negotiations to the three central presidents involved—Izetbegović, Milošević, and Tuđman, each of whom promised “not to talk to the press or to other outsiders.”¹⁰⁶ And finally, although many nations were interested in being involved in the peace process—which would have added derailing veto players—Holbrooke managed largely to exclude them. He consulted with European and Russian leaders only to ask for their support in applying pressure on Izetbegović, Milošević, and Tuđman at various points. After twenty days of negotiations on a sequestered air force base in Dayton, Ohio, the mediator and negotiators emerged with a workable, if not perfect, peace agreement. While in the post-1989 international political environment external actors generally supported a negotiated outcome, it took military intervention, and effective mediation, to produce one.

COUNTERFACTUALS

Given what scholars know about the El Salvador and Bosnia cases, it is possible to conduct some counterfactual thought experiments, imagining how the wars might have ended in different time periods.¹⁰⁷ Before the end of the

103. Ivo H. Daalder, *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America's Bosnia Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p. 134.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

105. Holbrooke, *To End a War*, p. 29.

106. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

107. Philip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin, eds., *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

Cold War, is it conceivable that the war in El Salvador could have ended in a negotiated settlement through internal momentum alone? Such an outcome would have been highly unlikely, given the zero-sum positions of both internal and external actors. If the Salvadoran war had endured until after 2001, it remains likely that external actors would have continued to press for a negotiated settlement because the conflict did not involve Islamic terrorists.

In Bosnia, if the war had occurred during the Cold War, it is inconceivable that the United States and the Soviet Union would have joined together to support NATO bombing and a UN peacekeeping mission to end the war in compromise. If it were fought today, the same might be true. Moreover, given the current popular anti-Muslim sentiment, it is unlikely that Americans—across both sides of the aisle—would have expressed such sympathy for the Muslim-majority Bosniak population.

CASE SUMMARIES

The El Salvador and Bosnia-Herzegovina cases demonstrate our main causal claims. The war in El Salvador is representative of those that spanned the first and second time periods: during the Cold War, there was no perceived avenue for negotiated settlement because in the zero-sum international political environment, such an outcome was inconceivable and unacceptable. After the end of the Cold War, in the new international political environment characterized by the absence of existential threats and an emphasis on democratization and liberalization, the United States, along with many other outside actors, chose not to pursue outright defeat of opponents but rather pressed to end wars in negotiated settlement. Despite calls from Congress to cut costs, the George H.W. Bush administration increased aid to El Salvador to enable democratic reforms and a negotiated settlement, in its effort to act in line with, and shape, a democratic new world order. The pursuit of negotiation did not apply only to ideological conflicts.

Also during period 2, but in the context of an ethnic conflict, U.S. policymakers faced a choice: allow their preferred side (the Muslim-Croat Federation) to win on the battlefield or insist that the Federation stop short of military victory and instead undergo U.S.-led mediation to produce a negotiated solution. Rather than withdrawing from the decisionmaking process, or allowing the impending one-sided victory, the United States chose to spend

billions of dollars and risk potential U.S. military casualties to ensure a negotiated settlement.

In both cases, centralized, U.S.-supported mediation was the precipitating causal factor that enabled the wars to end in negotiations rather than victory for one side. External ideas of appropriate conflict resolution, and their pursuit in policy, proved decisive for the eventual outcomes. External influence on civil war outcomes continued into period 3, but we demonstrate this phenomenon using a different methodological approach.

PERIOD 3: FROM DEMOCRACY TO STABILIZATION

For period 3, we could have explicated a study of Syria, Iraq, or Afghanistan to demonstrate how external ideas and actions have led to the duration of these conflicts, or we could have traced the post-September 11 negotiated settlements in Timor-Leste, Liberia, or Sierra Leone—conflicts that did not include an Islamic terrorist group. These processes are already obvious to many observers, however, and space is limited. Instead, we examine the words and actions of powerful policymakers to detect the work of norms through content analysis.¹⁰⁸

The UN Security Council is the highest international authority that makes decisions about the legitimacy of the use of force.¹⁰⁹ Most mediation efforts, and eventual negotiated settlements, enjoy the blessing of the permanent five members of the Council—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It is important, therefore, to try to get a picture of normative trends in the Council, which reflect the thinking of the great-power permanent members.

A key measure of norms is the extent to which to great powers use words associated with those norms, followed by actions. The Security Council produces an annual report to the UN General Assembly that surveys the issues discussed in the Council and its subsidiary bodies. These reports therefore

108. On this and alternative strategies, see Gary Goertz and Paul F. Diehl, "Toward a Theory of International Norms: Some Conceptual and Measurement Issues," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (December 1992), pp. 634–664, doi:10.1177/0022002792036004002.

109. Erik Voeten, "The Political Origins of the UN Security Council's Ability to Legitimize the Use of Force," *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (July 2005), pp. 527–557, doi:10.1017/S0020818305050198; and Hurd, *After Anarchy*.

reflect the collective concerns and activities of the world's great powers.¹¹⁰ We approach the task of capturing norm shifts in the Council by analyzing the content of these reports. Scholars have used content analysis across disciplines as a method that "allows researchers to analyze perceptual constructs that are difficult to study via traditional quantitative methods. At the same time, it allows researchers to gather large samples that may be difficult to employ in purely qualitative studies."¹¹¹ Content analysis thus helps them to cross quantitative and qualitative divides.

We employ a type of content analysis, "text analysis," or "text mining," which is a computer-aided form of analyzing large numbers of documents for depicting changes in key word use over time.¹¹² We produce a word count of the total number of certain word stems in each Security Council annual report. This provides an overall count of how many times each word is used in each annual report, which gives us a general measure of the relative importance of the underlying policy concepts that the words represent to the members of the Council, across time. Once we can pinpoint when in history certain word use was rising or declining, we can then dig into the circumstances of the change.

Here, a second technique, "discourse analysis," is helpful.¹¹³ This type of word analysis concerns the "exploration of how participants actively construct categories."¹¹⁴ While the words that powerful actors use reflect social reality, given these actors' power, their words function as well to create reality.¹¹⁵ In

110. The reports are available at <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/reports/>.

111. Vincent J. Duriau, Rhonda K. Reger, and Michael D. Pfarrer, "A Content Analysis of the Content Analysis Literature in Organization Studies: Research Themes, Data Sources, and Methodological Refinements," *Organization Research Methods*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (January 2007), pp. 5–34, doi:10.1177/1094428106289252.

112. Kimberly A. Neuendorf, *The Content Analysis Guidebook* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2004), p. 34.

113. Yoshiko M. Herrera and Bear F. Braumoeller, "Symposium: Discourse and Content Analysis—Introduction to the Symposium," *Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring 2004), p. 16.

114. Cynthia Hardy, Bill Harley, and Nelson Phillips, "Symposium: Discourse and Content Analysis—Discourse Analysis and Content Analysis: Two Solitudes," *Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Jan. 2004), pp. 19–22, at p. 21. See also Mlada Bukovansky, "The Hollowness of Anti-Corruption Discourse," *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (May 2006), pp. 181–209, doi:10.1080/09692290600625413.

115. Neta C. Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Civilizing the Enemy: German Reconstruction and the Invention of the West* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), chap. 2; and Ronald R. Krebs, *Narrative and the Making of U.S. National Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

such situations, discourse analysis is helpful for sorting through causal processes. When analyzing discourses, it is important to identify the context in which the word or concept was first employed, by whom, and then the process of institutionalization. Our aim is to describe the significance, and work toward a causal explanation about the effects, of some of the words most associated with our norms of interest.

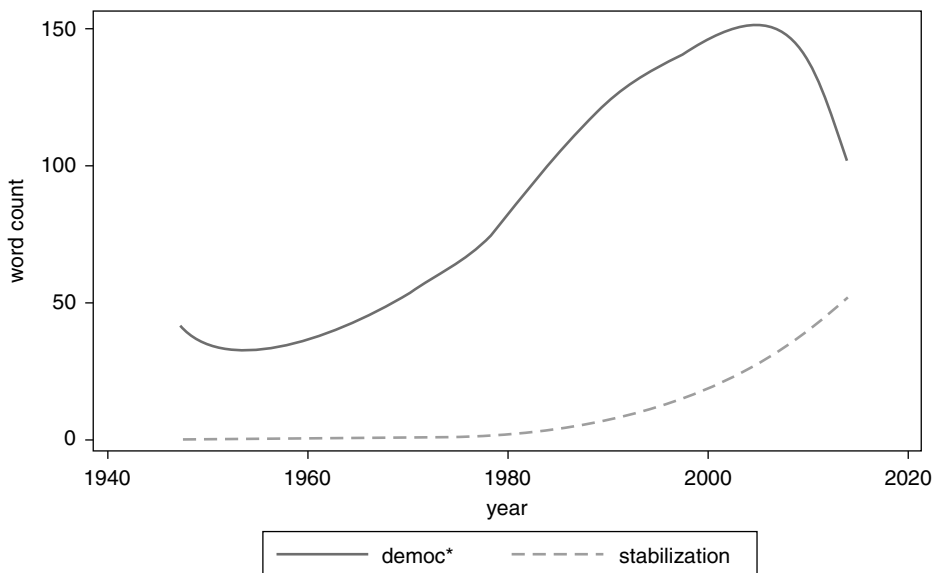
We count the number of instances of the word stems *democ** and *negotiat**, which reflect the norms of democratization and negotiated settlements that were ascendant during period 2, and the word stems *terror** and the word “stabilization,” reflecting the rise of norms of fighting terrorism, and the new concept of “stabilization,” that ascended in period 3. We show our results in figures 3 and 4, using locally weighted scatterplot smoothing (LOWESS).¹¹⁶ Figure 3 demonstrates the transition from the norm of ending civil wars through mediation and political settlements, to stabilizing conflicts without necessarily ending them. The figure tracks the number of times that the stem *democ** (*democratize*, *democratization*, *democracy*, etc.) and the word “stabilization” are used in each Security Council annual report. It shows that the use of the stem *democ** increases gradually from 1960 to 1980 and more sharply in the second time period, from about 1990 to a peak in around 2001, and then declines throughout the third time period. In 2001, around the same time that the stem *democ** begins to decline, use of the word “stabilization” begins to increase.

Likewise, figure 4 shows the transition from the norm of negotiation to a focus on fighting terrorism. The stem *negotiat** (*negotiations*, *negotiating*, *negotiator*, etc.) began to increase substantially in the mid-to-late 1980s, around the time that we locate the transition from time period 1 to time period 2 (in 1989/90). Unsurprisingly, the count of the word stem *terror** (e.g., *terror*, *terrorism*, *terrorist*) began to rise sharply in the late 1990s/early 2000s

These figures demonstrate that the Security Council often discussed democracy and negotiation as the Cold War ended, but that these considerations diminished significantly after the attacks of September 11. Thereafter, the Council’s talk and actions concerning terrorism and stabilization increased

116. LOWESS is a non-parametric regression curve that uses locally weighted regression to create a smoothed curve, aiding visualization of trends over time. See William S. Cleveland, “Robust Locally Weighted Regression and Smoothing Scatterplots,” *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, Vol. 74, No. 368 (1979), pp. 829–836.

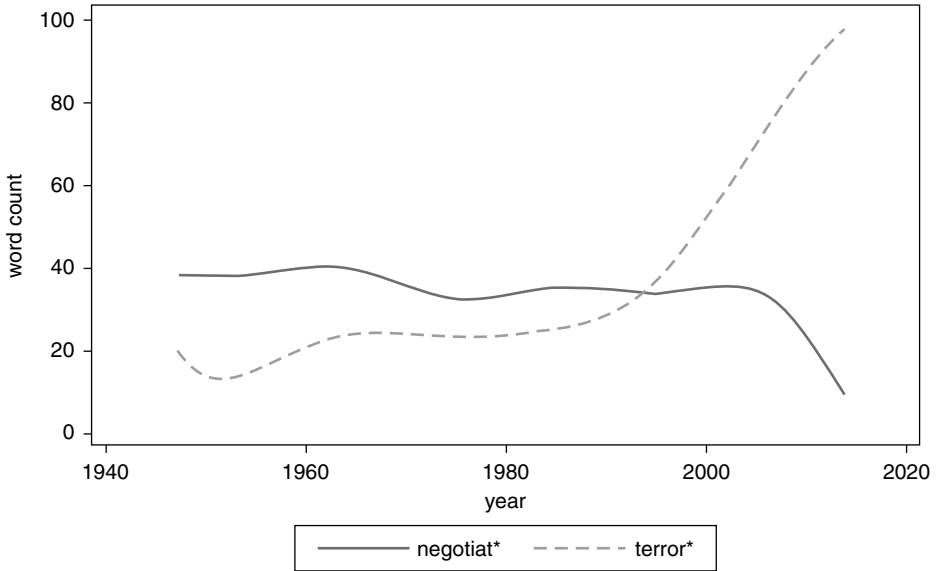
Figure 3. Democ* and Stabilization



dramatically. The word “stabilization” first appeared on the agenda of the Council in the mid-1990s. Many stabilization references were made in connection with Rwanda in 1994, where negotiation and peacekeeping efforts failed to transition the country to democratic governance. In the wake of genocide, stabilization became the new goal. After September 11, the use of the term increased dramatically. The first peacekeeping operation to use the word “stabilization” in the mission’s title occurred in Haiti in 2004, the same year that the United States created the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (explained further below), and eleven years after U.S. and UN democratization efforts in Haiti had not borne much fruit.¹¹⁷ Since then, the language of stability has become increasingly common in UN complex peacekeeping operations, which is reflected in the Security Council’s annual reports: of the four missions authorized since 2010, three (in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Mali) are titled “stabiliza-

117. The United States drafted the mandate for the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

Figure 4. Negotiat* and terror*



tion” operations. The fourth mission, in South Sudan, which was not initially one of stabilization, has adopted the stabilization mandate of the others, even though its title has not changed.¹¹⁸

The Security Council’s move from seeking to negotiate settlements in civil wars as a way to democratize to merely “stabilizing” conflict mirrors changes in U.S. policies. Shortly after September 11, President George W. Bush signaled a renewed acceptability of military victory: “We will not rest until terrorist groups of global reach have been found, have been stopped, and have been defeated.”¹¹⁹ Two year later, he used the scholarly language of norm creation when he famously proclaimed that he sought to “win the war of ideas . . . with our friends and allies, we aim to establish a new international norm re-

118. John Karlsrud, *UN Peace Operations in the 21st Century: The UN at War* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave, 2017).

119. President George W. Bush, November 6, 2001, quoted in “National Strategy for Combatting Terrorism” (Washington, D.C.: CIA, 2003), p. 4, https://www.cia.gov/news-information/cia-the-war-on-terrorism/Counter_Terrorism_Strategy.pdf.

garding terrorism requiring non-support, non-tolerance, and active opposition to terrorists.”¹²⁰

Since then, great powers have applied the new norm of anti-terrorism to civil wars in which Islamic groups were directly involved as fighting parties, such as in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen. In some of those conflicts, groups such as al-Qaida and ISIS are not directly involved, but governments would like to brand opponents with the terrorist label. Incumbent governments seek the support of the United States and others in defeating rebel groups by discursively situating opponents as “terrorists.” In civil wars from Syria beginning in 2011, to Turkey’s conflict with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, Sudan’s war with the Justice and Equality Movement, Ethiopia and the Ogaden National Liberation Front, and Russia’s involvement in Chechnya and Ukraine, governments have labeled insurgents “terrorists,” claiming that they are linked (explicitly or implicitly) to a larger ideological movement of terror and therefore deserve the attention of the United States and the UN as part of the “war on terror.” This discursive framing explicitly precludes the option of a negotiated settlement.¹²¹

In the mid-2000s, coupled with the rise of terrorism as a new, first-order international threat, the democratization efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan faltered.¹²² The United States began to shift its discourse and actions from democratization to stabilization. In 2004, the State Department established the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization—an official coordinator “to enhance our nation’s institutional capacity to respond to crises involving failing, failed, and post-conflict states.”¹²³ As President Bush described, this office would “help the world’s newest democracies make the transition to peace and freedom and a market economy.”¹²⁴ In other words, in 2004–05, we have evidence that for the U.S. president, stabilization and democratization

120. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

121. The norm of negotiated settlement has not disappeared entirely, however—civil wars that do not involve Islamic terrorist organizations (such as in those in Burundi, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, and Liberia) still tend to end in negotiated settlement (or low activity).

122. Downes and Monten, “Forced to Be Free?”

123. “Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State), <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/crs/>.

124. President G.W. Bush, International Republican Institute dinner, May 17, 2005, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2005/05/20050517-9.html>.

were bound together. But as the 2000s progressed, the goal of democracy receded, and stabilization ascended. For example, in the 2008 Congressional Supplemental Appropriations Act reauthorizing the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, the word “democracy” was replaced by the vaguer term “conflict transformation” as a way to offset instability: “Whole-of-Government Reconstruction and Stabilization planning is undertaken in support of achieving ‘conflict transformation’ in the specified country or region. The goal of conflict transformation is to reach the point where the country or region is on a sustainable positive trajectory and where it is able to address, on its own, the dynamics causing instability and conflict.”¹²⁵

In the U.S. government, especially during the administration of President Barack Obama, stabilization was to enable the United States’ exit from Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere.¹²⁶ As reported in Jeffrey Goldberg’s 2016 piece in the *Atlantic*, President Obama expressed regret that the Arab Spring had the opposite effect of democratizing the Middle East (other than in Tunisia), and that the problems in the Middle East “could not be fixed—not on his watch, and not for a generation to come.” Tellingly, the president joked: “All I need in the Middle East is a few smart autocrats.”¹²⁷ The language of, and material efforts for, democratization shifted to stabilization (and a tacit acceptance of autocracy). In other words, in period 3, the normative shift to stabilization reflected “real-world,” material changes, rather than the other way around.

In short, in period 3, stabilization has challenged democracy as the overall objective of external actors in civil wars. Moreover, negotiation is no longer the prevailing expectation of how wars ought to end. Thus far, in the post-September 11 period, civil wars are less likely to end in general. Although the norm of negotiated settlement has not died, it does not apply to wars that include groups designated as “terrorist” by the United States. For those, the

125. Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, “Frequently Asked Questions” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, July 15, 2008), <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/crs/66427.htm>.

126. Robert J. Lieber, *Retreat and Its Consequences: American Foreign Policy and the Problem of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

127. Quoted in Jeffrey Goldberg, “The Obama Doctrine,” *Atlantic*, April 2016, pp. 70–90, at pp. 81, 80.

wars continue; when they end, they tend to end in victory. We expect these trends to continue.

Conclusion

During the Cold War, civil wars most often ended in military victory for one side. After the Cold War, they ended mainly in negotiated settlement. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, wars that do not involve terrorists still generally end in negotiation or low activity, whereas those with terrorist groups tend to end in one-sided victory; civil wars are also ending less often in general. Most civil war terminations involve external intervention, but the literature on civil wars has not offered a theory of why international actors would intervene differently in different time periods.

For decades after World War II, the United States and its allies sought military victory for one preferred side in civil wars. After the Cold War, however, the material condition of unipolarity enabled the United States to seek to end civil wars as it chose. The United States decided, along with its allies, to end wars not in victory, but rather in negotiation, often using mediation as a tool to achieve settlements. There is nothing from the fact of material unipolarity that would necessitate such a choice, but the democratic character of the unipole compelled a shift toward negotiation. After the Cold War, the overarching international political environment was characterized by the United States' and its allies' quest for democratization. In this new environment, a norm of negotiated settlement arose, which in turn produced the material and social outcomes of negotiated settlements.

After the September 11 attacks, the international political environment changed again. The new threat of terrorism, along with the failures of democratization in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, spurred disillusionment with the quest for externally assisted democracy. As the 2000s progressed, many countries experienced democratic backsliding, and many democratization movements faltered. In place of the quest for democracy after war, stabilization has become the overarching normative impulse and policy goal.

The norm trajectories we trace are different from most theoretical accounts of normative change. Usually, "norm entrepreneurs" set out to change "bads" such as apartheid, slavery, or the use of weapons of mass destruction. Activists convince powerful people and states to change policies. Thus notions of ap-

propriateness create changes in outcomes. This standard causal chain fits to a certain extent with the processes of norm change after the Cold War, except rather than individual norm entrepreneurs, it was the great powers, led by the democratic unipole, that decided to change their methods for ending civil wars. In contrast, the normative shifts in the post-September 11 time period do not stem from the actions of one or a few powerful states, individuals, or social movements. They are more reactive than proactive. From the material facts of terrorist attacks, failures of democratization, and civil wars already ending in low activity, we see normative trends in the United States and the UN Security Council of the acceptance of the appropriateness of non-negotiation with terrorists, and the quest not for democracy but stabilization.

Thus our argument is basically structural: actors are bound in large part by the international political environment in which they operate. That does not mean, however, that innovation and agency are impossible. Structures are hard to change, but norms are easier. When it comes to policy recommendations, much of the scholarly literature on war termination advocates a certain type of ending to achieve lasting peace: partition, negotiated settlement, or rebel victory. Our article makes explicit the implicit assumption in these arguments that external actors have the power to influence how civil wars end. External actors, however, are under the influence of the prevailing international political environment. By highlighting the character and pressures of this environment in different time periods, and the role of accompanying conflict resolution norms, it may be easier for actors to come to novel policy decisions that buck the prevailing trend. Sometimes, better outcomes may result when outsiders do not push for a negotiated settlement, but rather allow one side to win. Other times, it may be necessary to negotiate with terrorists in order to conclude a devastating civil war, despite the pressures of the international political environment. Regardless, having a better understanding of how and why civil wars conclude could give policymakers some tools to help end such wars and eliminate their attendant economic and humanitarian costs.