JULY 2016

Smart Conditions

A Strategic Framework for Leveraging Security Assistance

AUTHOR
Melissa G. Dalton

Smart Conditions

A Strategic Framework for Leveraging Security Assistance

AUTHOR
Melissa G. Dalton

A Report of the
CSIS INTERNATIONAL SECURITY PROGRAM

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC &
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

About CSIS

For over 50 years, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has worked to develop solutions to the world's greatest policy challenges. Today, CSIS scholars are providing strategic insights and bipartisan policy solutions to help decision-makers chart a course toward a better world.

CSIS is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. The Center's 220 fulltime staff and large network of affiliated scholars conduct research and analysis and develop policy initiatives that look into the future and anticipate change.

Founded at the height of the Cold War by David M. Abshire and Admiral Arleigh Burke, CSIS was dedicated to finding ways to sustain American prominence and prosperity as a force for good in the world. Since 1962, CSIS has become one of the world's preeminent international institutions focused on defense and security; regional stability; and transnational challenges ranging from energy and climate to global health and economic integration.

Thomas J. Pritzker was named chairman of the CSIS Board of Trustees in November 2015. Former U.S. deputy secretary of defense John J. Hamre has served as the Center's president and chief executive officer since 2000.

CSIS does not take specific policy positions. Accordingly, all views, positions, and conclusions expressed in this publication should be understood to be solely those of the author.

Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction

The United States provides security assistance to international partners as a means to achieve its foreign policy and supporting defense objectives. These objectives include developing partner nations' military capabilities to enable them to control territory, building interoperability with U.S. forces, and securing peacetime and contingency access to critical air, land, and sea nodes.[1] Security assistance also aims to deepen political and military relationships that can advance the U.S. foreign policy agenda. The outcomes and second-order effects of security assistance cannot be easily separated from policy or politics, because they influence the partner country's monopoly on the use of violence and thus its cohesion as a state.[2]

As a result, when the policies of countries receiving U.S. security assistance fundamentally diverge from U.S. interests, the United States faces a dilemma. If it cuts off assistance to demonstrate American displeasure, it may risk losing leverage in working with the partner on other security objectives or broader foreign policy priorities, although that leverage may be ill-defined or overstated. On the other hand, if the United States ignores the policy divergence, it may lose credibility with the partner, as it then becomes difficult to reasonably press for reform while continuing assistance flows. It may also diminish perceptions of U.S. moral leadership, thereby also putting wider U.S. foreign policy objectives at risk in that country as well as internationally. Security services are often the tool of authoritarian governments, and U.S. support for those security services can enable them to continue repressive tactics and reinforce perceptions that the United States is willing to choose a security relationship over the well-being and rights of a country's citizens.

Conditioning security assistance may provide a middle ground with associated benefits, costs, and implementation challenges. Conditionality aims to leverage partners' reliance on U.S. aid to incentivize them to take certain steps to reform their behavior and better align their policies with U.S. interests and objectives. Conditioning assistance might also provide positive demonstration effects to curb bad behavior among other foreign partners that are observing Washington's response as an indication of how far U.S. tolerance may stretch.

---

[1] For the purposes of this paper, security assistance is defined as primarily foreign military financing (FMF). The Arms Export Control Act authorizes the president to finance procurement of defense articles and services for foreign countries and international organizations. FMF enables eligible partner nations to purchase U.S. defense articles, services, and training either through foreign military sales or, for some countries, through direct commercial contracts channels. The secretary of state determines which countries will have FMF programs. The secretary of defense executes the programs. FMF may be provided to a partner nation on either a grant (nonrepayable) or direct loan basis. FMF is the most commonly conditioned security assistance tool, as it is thought to provide the United States with more leverage over the partner country.
Security assistance should be distinguished from the broader category of security cooperation. Security cooperation can take the form of delivering training and equipment, conducting joint exercises and exchanges, and advising ministries of defense. In terms of scale, it can range from building a military from scratch to providing niche capabilities to advising partners engaged in a war.

[2] Max Weber and Carl Von Clausewitz provide the modern theoretical framework for understanding power dynamics within a state (Weber asserted that a state is a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory) and the relationship between war and policy (Clausewitz contended that war is a continuation of policy or politics by other means).

Interestingly, some empirical research shows that unconditional military aid recipients are *less* likely than other states to align policies with U.S. preferences.[3]

The threat to curtail aid may be useful in putting pressure on a foreign partner, but the threat is only as good as the intent to enforce it and is contingent on the partner's dependence on the United States. Indeed, once aid is reduced, it may become a less effective point of leverage down the road. In some cases, security assistance may not provide the United States much leverage at all, particularly if the partner views the assistance as an entitlement because of history and commitments with the United States, and thus the threat to condition assistance is not credible, or if there is another donor prepared to provide assistance with no strings attached. Moreover, threats to cut off assistance unless specific benchmarks are achieved could produce a nationalist backlash in the partner country and sour the very relations with the partner military that provide the United States a degree of access and influence in the first place. It may also be difficult to determine whether conditioning assistance directly causes a change in a foreign partner's behavior, or if several other independent factors are involved. In fact, domestic policy and politics also influence a partner's (and U.S.) decisionmaking on its security relationships. Lastly, the United States may have difficulty monitoring and validating the degree to which a partner has reformed; a partner may make only cosmetic changes in order to encourage resumption of U.S. aid.

All grant security assistance to U.S. foreign partners carry conditions to ensure that the partner implements the assistance according to an agreed upon schedule and plan, such that the partner can absorb the assistance and sustainment needs are met. However, when a significant divergence emerges between the United States and an important security partner, U.S. leaders typically convene multiple national security interagency and congressional meetings to attempt to answer fundamental questions about the utility of providing aid to the foreign partner and whether to peg assistance levels to particular U.S. demands—at the risk of reinventing the wheel each time. Of course, there are legal guidelines for curtailing assistance in the event of a coup and legislative restrictions to prevent support for foreign militaries that conduct gross human rights violations.[4] However, as the 2011–2013 events in Egypt demonstrate, even apparently clear legal rules are open to wide interpretation. Beyond situations where existing law clearly applies, U.S. leaders may default to ad hoc and piecemeal decisions that do not address the fundamental bilateral policy divergence in the absence of a framework of policy principles to weigh the costs and benefits of sustaining security assistance to a foreign partner. Although each country is unique and each infraction in bilateral expectations merits serious policy consideration, U.S. officials could save considerable time and intellectual bandwidth and improve the consistency of U.S. foreign policy if they came equipped to these discussions with a set of policy principles to determine whether to condition assistance and how severe such conditionality should be.

---

[3] Patricia L. Sullivan, Brock Tessman, and Xiaojun Li, "US Military Aid and Recipient State Cooperation," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 7 (2011): 275–94.

[4] Title 22 U.S. Code § 2304 prohibits U.S. security assistance to a foreign government that engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights unless the president certifies that extraordinary circumstances warrant the provision of such aid. Although human rights practices are not the only criterion, and although legislation does permit certain limited waivers of this consideration, a foreign state's respect for human rights often determines whether security cooperation exchanges will occur.

This study proposes a framework for evaluating why conditionality has worked in some cases but not in others. It analyzes the interplay between donor vulnerability and recipient vulnerability and assesses how the balance of these two informs the wider balance of leverage between the donor and the recipient. Donor vulnerability is dependent on the countervailing strategic interests in the partner country. Recipient vulnerability hinges on the degree to which the recipient country is dependent on the donor's assistance, because of its high value relative to the recipient's needs, the recipient's lack of other options for security assistance, or both. This study qualitatively assesses how these variables have affected the outcome of conditionality in four case vignettes:

- High donor vulnerability and low recipient vulnerability: the United States and Egypt, 2011–2013

- High donor vulnerability and high recipient vulnerability: the United States and El Salvador, 1980–1992

- Low donor vulnerability and high recipient vulnerability: the United Kingdom and Sierra Leone, 2007

- Low donor vulnerability and low recipient vulnerability: the United States and Rwanda, 2012

The study also defines a taxonomy of different types of conditionality that the United States might use going forward, including red-line conditions, calibrated conditions, and incentive-based conditions. Finally, it proposes a set of guidelines to inform future policymaking on security assistance conditionality. By employing common principles to guide decisionmaking on conditioning security assistance, U.S. leaders could improve the credibility and consistency of U.S. foreign policy.

The study proceeded in three phases. The first phase involved research and analysis on existing policy and legal guidelines on security assistance conditionality, lessons learned on how donor countries have applied conditionality to economic development assistance for comparative purposes, despite fundamental differences (and because there is scant literature on security assistance conditionality), as well as a qualitative survey of country case vignettes where conditionality has been used. The second phase reinforced and validated the research findings of the first phase through over 50 interviews with experts in the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government, foreign government officials, industry representatives, human rights advocates, and regional and functional security scholars. The final phase included the writing, review, and release of this paper.

This report comprises four parts: examining assumptions and constraints operating behind conditionality policy decisions, qualitatively analyzing four country case vignettes, defining a taxonomy of conditionality, and proposing guidelines for future policy decisions on security assistance conditionality.

Poor Assumptions and Constraints: The Need for a Framework

Too often, judgments about the effectiveness of placing conditions on assistance are made without considering the various factors in play or using consistent variables to assess effectiveness. A common approach to framing the problem would help policymakers and security experts better evaluate whether conditions are achieving the desired outcomes.

Even before considering the usefulness of conditions, it is important to highlight that almost all donor-recipient relationships—including those relationships that the United States has with its security assistance partners—suffer from the principal-agent problem and differing interests. Donors and recipients often differ in their objectives and expectations for security assistance relationships. Donors may want to use the security assistance relationship to improve military access and political influence in a country or broader region. Recipients may view the assistance as donor acquiescence—even if tacit—to using security services for a broad range of activities, including repressive internal security tactics, under the guise protecting regime stability.[5] These differing interests can not only generate frustration but also create policy disagreements. This has led donor countries to consider placing conditions on assistance, seeking to bring donor and recipient objectives into alignment. However, punitive conditions do not address the fundamental differences in expectations and desired outcomes of the security assistance relationship. In other words, because donors and recipients are not on equal footing and often lack common expectations and desired outcomes, security assistance relationships are inherently troubled and bound to cause policy disagreements. Poorly designed conditions may only further provoke these disagreements.

Lessons from Placing Conditions on Development Assistance

Multinational lending institutions (e.g., the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) and bilateral donor experience with applying conditionality to economic assistance provide useful lessons for placing conditions security assistance. The link between human rights and development aid stretches back to 1975, when the U.S. Congress passed legislation requiring U.S. administrations to refrain from granting most-favored-nation status, extending credits or credit guarantees and investments, and concluding commercial agreements with states that place restrictions on their citizens' ability to emigrate.[6] The Netherlands included human rights provisions in its foreign policy in 1979, and other countries took similar steps in the 1980s.[7] However, from the Cold War to the present,

---

[5] See Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill et al., *What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and under What Circumstances?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/MG1200/MG1253z1/RAND_MG1253z1.sum.pdf.
[6] U.S. Trade Act of 1974 (Public Law, 88 Stat. 1978, enacted January 3, 1975, codified at 19 U.S.C.ch. 12), http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-88/pdf/STATUTE-88-Pg1978-2.pdf.
[7] George Sorenson, ed., *Political Conditionality* (London: Frank Cass/European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes, 1993), 2.

American policymakers have lacked agreement about the appropriate weight to assign to human rights and democracy promotion as they relate to security and economic interests.[8]

The IMF has always used policy conditions on most of its credits, but in the 1980s to 1990s, it considerably increased the use of donor conditionality. In addition, the breadth of policy requirements increased during this period, to include not only requirements to improve standard macroeconomic variables, but also an array of supply-side and institutional issues as well as requirements that are not purely economic, such as a reduced military spending and enhanced human development.[9] Outside of the IMF and World Bank multilateral lending system but influencing it, bilateral donors increasingly applied conditionality in political negotiations, including requirements for observing human rights and rule of law and progress toward multiparty democracy. Major shareholders in the IMF and World Bank that advocated for these conditions in their own bilateral relations with donors inevitably resulted in similar conditions being used by the IMF and the World Bank.[10]

Of course, economic assistance differs fundamentally from security assistance. Economic assistance is intended to reduce poverty, while security assistance strengthens the state's monopoly on the use of force. While economic assistance may alter the political economy power dynamics among the state, the private sector, and other interest groups, it may arguably be more benign that security assistance in how it can change the balance of power in a given country. In addition, the more reliance a state has on foreign donors to fund, train, equip, and maintain its security services, the greater leverage those donors may have on the state. Still, there are broad observations from conditionality experiences in development assistance that should inform the use of conditionality on security assistance.

The use of donor financial leverage cannot substitute for a recipient's lack of political will or weak domestic institutions.[11] Bretton Woods institutions and other donors' main contribution to policy reform in developing countries has been through influence on the "contemporary intellectual climate" and regular diplomatic contact.[12] Conditionality can be used in combination with other foreign policy tools in specific situations where leaders abuse human rights, provided the country in question is susceptible to donor pressure and donors are willing to apply pressure in a consistent manner. However, conditionality will never be a silver bullet to improving human rights conditions in developing countries.[13]

Several factors can hinder a donor's ability to impose conditions on a development aid recipient. Conditionality's effectiveness often depends on what proportion of a recipient country's budget comes from development aid. Development aid is often the backbone of economies of sub-Saharan African countries; it is less so in East Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America,[14] suggesting that conditions may yield greater results in sub-Saharan African countries; however, donors may be more reluctant to use conditions because of the devastating effects on the health, livelihood, and well-being of citizens in sub-Saharan African countries if donors withhold aid. In addition, if the human rights objectives of development aid conflict with other foreign policy objectives—economic or strategic— then donor states will often prioritize the latter. The lack of coherent, established strategy for applying conditionality and measuring its effects will limit individual donor impact and coordination of goals and policies among multiple donors.[15]

---

[8] Larry Diamond, "Promoting Democracy," *Foreign Policy*, 87 (Summer 1992): 44.
[9] Tony Killick, "Principals, Agents, and the Failings of Conditionality," *Journal of International Development* 9, no. 4 (June 1997): 484.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., 483.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Sorenson, *Political Conditionality*, 5.
[14] Peter Uvin, "Do as I Say, Not as I Do: The Limits of Political Conditionality," in *Political Conditionality*, ed. George Sorenson (London: Frank Cass/EADI, 1993), 69.
[15] Ibid., 70.

Variables influencing the aid recipient can constrain the effectiveness of conditionality. Strong, nationalist resistance movements may resist any perceived attempt to impose reform from abroad.[16] Governments that have no sincere intention of reforming their policies can evade conditionality. They can act as if they are democratizing by implementing cosmetic or token reforms (e.g., freeing some political prisoners, co-opting opposition politicians), but without any change in their political system in favor of power-sharing. A recipient may also satisfy demands from donors while sustaining the degree of repression it deems necessary to retain power.[17] Unwilling recipients can turn to other donors and appeal to the international market (e.g., China following the Tiananmen massacre).[18] Dispersion of power in a recipient country (even if, ironically, more federal and democratic) can make conditionality difficult to target and implement. For example, in the 1990s in India, Amnesty International reported a significant number of human rights violations committed by local police forces, which, per the Indian constitution, fall under the jurisdiction of the states. However, Indian federal authorities received and managed development assistance. Finally, efforts by the central government to monitor human rights violations met with stiff resistance from chief ministers of the various states who do not want central government intrusion in their constitutionally defined jurisdiction.[19]

Given these significant constraints, multilateral institutions and bilateral donors in the 1990s increasingly moved away from employing *hard-core conditionality,* whereby recipient policy changes were required as a prerequisite to the approval of or continued access to a grant, loan, or subsequent assistance.[20] Instead, donors established *pro forma conditionality* with recipients, mutually agreed or formal provisions that both the donor and recipient find it useful to write into a program, such as in cases of supporting reformers in the recipient government, defining and timetabling actions with precision and accountability that would not otherwise have, and in meeting the expectation of shareholders or authorities influencing the multilateral institutional donor and recipient.[21] Because similar constraints exist in the security assistance world, the United States might consider employing analogous methods to timetable and define provisions for conditionality in coordination with its security assistance partners.

Even with perfectly constructed conditions that maximize a donor's leverage over a recipient, impediments in the security assistance system can hinder the ability to determine whether conditions have the intended effects. For example, whereas the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has a robust monitoring and evaluation program for development assistance, the U.S. Departments of State and Defense currently lack monitoring and evaluation frameworks for determining the relative return on investment for security assistance. Beyond anecdotal reporting, the departments do not track systematically if security assistance meets foreign policy objectives. In addition, although national security leaders and military planners may understand political and military objectives for security assistance, the United States rarely articulates the outcomes it seeks to achieve with its security assistance investments. Compounding the problem, as noted earlier, U.S. security assistance objectives do not always align with those of the partner.

---

[16] Ibid., 71.
[17] Ibid., 72.
[18] Ibid., 73.
[19] Jorgen Dige Pedersen, "The Complexities of Conditionality, the Case of India," in *Political Conditionality*, ed. George Sorenson (London: Frank Cass/EADI, 1993), 105.
[20] Killick, "Principals, Agents, and the Failings of Conditionality," 487.
[21] Ibid.

Further complicating a donor's ability to place conditions on security assistance is the number of variables in play in a security assistance relationship, including the type of aid provided and the scale of the effort. First, the nature and duration of security assistance may have an influence on the donor's degree of leverage and influence with a partner. Sustained training and advising and regular exercises may build greater confidence and commitment to common values between militaries. Defense institution building may inculcate respect for civilian control over the military and emphasize the importance of linking strategy to resources in partner militaries. On the other hand, ad hoc exercises and short-term train and equip efforts may meet discrete operational objectives but may provide limited influence over the behavior of the partner. Second, the scale of the security assistance effort may also affect the degree of influence of a donor. U.S. efforts to rapidly train vetted Syrian Arab Sunnis over a few months to fight the Islamic State evaporated in 2015 without sustained and substantial commitment of trainers and advisers (and a mismatch of U.S. and Syrian oppositionist objectives). On the other hand, U.S. efforts to help build Colombian security forces under Plan Colombia involved a multiyear, sustained commitment that helped bring an end to conflict and the challenge of the FARC guerrilla movement. The Colombian government's strong political will and ownership of the initiative also drove up the scale of the U.S. commitment.

Figure 1: Variables Inhibiting Effectiveness of Conditionality on Security Assistance

Variables Affecting Donor	Variables Affecting Recipient	Variables Affecting Both Donor and Recipient
Over- or underestimating degree of leverage over recipient	Strong nationalist resistance opposing reform imposed from abroad	Donor and recipient objectives do not match
Lack of strategy for applying and measuring effectiveness of conditions	Lack of commitment to reform	Type of security assistance limited to tactical or operational level
Unclear outcomes or objectives for security assistance and/or conditions	Dispersion of power at the state and sub-state levels	Lack of sustained commitment to and small scale of security assistance
Countervailing strategic interests	**Other donor options available**	Limited duration of security assistance

Most Critical Variables

Given the complexity and number of variables at play in security assistance relationships, policymakers and planners should focus on two major variables at work: donor vulnerability and recipient vulnerability. As defined above, donor vulnerability is the degree to which the donor country has countervailing strategic interests in the partner country—such as countering terrorism. Recipient vulnerability is the degree to which the recipient country is dependent on the donor's funding and whether it lacks other options for security assistance

(i.e., can the recipient go to China, Russia, or others for security assistance?). Elevating these variables does not diminish the importance of other factors involved but helps maintain focus on two of the most critical ones and enables an illustration of how they interact across multiple country case vignettes. This study examines in particular four country case vignettes from Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East, highlighting differences in donor and recipient vulnerability and how those differences resulted in varying policy outcomes when donors applied conditions on security assistance to recipients.

Figure 2: Donor and Recipient Vulnerability Matrix

	Donor Vulnerability	
Recipient Vulnerability	High	Low
High	**Mixed Results** **Behavior Change Only After Abrupt Donor Intervention** Ex: U.S. in El Salvador (1980s)	**Best Case** **Significant Behavior Change** Ex: UK in Sierra Leone (2007)
Low	**Worst Case** **Little Behavior Change** **Policy Incoherence** Ex: U.S. in Egypt (2011-2013)	**Marginal Behavior Change;** **Effective Messaging** **Demonstration Effects** Ex: U.S. in Rwanda (2012)

Donor Vulnerability = donor has countervailing interests in recipient country
Recipient Vulnerability = recipient is dependent on donor assistance because of its high value, lacks other options, or both

Country Case Vignettes

High Donor Vulnerability and Low Recipient Vulnerability: The United States and Egypt, 2011–2013

The U.S. experiment with conditionality in Egypt in 2011–2013 provides a compelling case for the need for a conditionality policy framework. The United States sought to balance competing security and governance objectives, but its choices on applying conditions narrowed its policy options and resulted in an incoherent message to the Egyptians. The United States wanted to preserve its security relationship with Egypt to afford it a degree of leverage and insight into the tumultuous change in Egyptian politics and to counter ongoing concerns in the region, while, on the other hand, marking its disapproval of the Egyptian government's harsh crackdown on dissidents. In reality, countervailing U.S. strategic interests in counterterrorism and regional stability created a dilemma for U.S. policymakers seeking to strike a balance in objectives. Egypt compounded this dilemma further by portraying U.S. assistance as an entitlement for keeping regional peace and order, especially with respect to Israel, and used the threat of going to other donors as leverage to continue the flow of U.S. assistance.

The U.S.-Egyptian security relationship dates back to the 1978 Camp David Peace Accords. Although the 1979 Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty does not legally require the United States to provide security assistance to Egypt, historically, there has been close political linkage between the FMF program for Egypt and Egypt's peace with Israel. The provision of FMF is subject to the administration's request and congressional approval each year. Over the past 35 years, the United States has provided more than $40 billion worth of defense aid to Egypt, second only to the amount for Israel.[22] With this investment, the United States sought to ensure an anchor of stability in a conflict-prone Middle East. U.S. security assistance buttressed the Egyptian military's power and prestige in the Egyptian state, funding investments in high-profile platforms such as M1 Abrams tanks and F-16 aircraft. The Bush administration decremented economic aid to Egypt over human rights concerns, but U.S. support for Egypt's military remained steadfast. From the 1950s to 2011, Egypt was not a military dictatorship, but a military-dominated state. Military officers and civilian allies built political systems with the appearance of pluralism but with strong mechanisms for oversight and control to guarantee maintenance of political order that benefited them.[23]

Following with the Tahrir Square uprising in 2011 that unseated President Hosni Mubarak, the United States faced policy dilemmas regarding its relationship with Egypt. Putting a premium on the security relationship, the United States attempted to navigate Egypt's tumultuous politics from 2011 to 2013 with early support for the popular uprising and the overriding strategic imperatives to have a partner to address counterterrorism challenges in the region

---

[22] Amy Hawthorne, "What's Happening with US Military Aid to Egypt? Part II: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Egypt," Atlantic Council, November 19, 2014, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/Hawthorne_Whats_Happening_with_FMF_for_Egypt_Nov19.pdf.

[23] Steven A. Cook, *Ruling But Not Governing: The Military and Political Development in Egypt, Turkey, and Algeria* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 15.

and to honor Egypt's peace treaty with Israel. However, the overthrow of President Mohammad Morsi in 2013 led to complete military takeover of Egypt. The "deep state" dominated by the military and security establishment that had evolved in the Mubarak era—occupying large components of the state's civilian bureaucracy, local government, general intelligence and central security forces, and state-owned commercial companies—moved to the foreground and expanded further. President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi appointed senior officers to additional positions—such as speaker of parliament—and assigned sweeping new powers to the Egyptian Armed Forces in domestic security and law enforcement and drove underground all popular resistance to the regime from the Muslim Brotherhood and other factions and repressed public dissent, often violently.

Egyptian antigovernment demonstrators hold their national flag in front of a tank as tens of thousands gather at Cairo's Tahrir Square on February 10, 2011, on the 17th day of consecutive protests calling for the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak. AFP PHOTO/PEDRO UGARTE. (Photo credit: PEDRO UGARTE/AFP/Getty Images.) http://www.gettyimages.com/license/108970275.

Post-2011, the United States' goals for security assistance in Egypt centered on supporting Egypt's leadership role in promoting regional security in the Middle East and North Africa, supporting and enabling a modern Egyptian military that respected human rights, rule of law and civilian control of the military, and cooperating with Egypt in securing its borders and combating terrorism and violent extremism in the Middle East and North Africa.[24] The United States intended to contrast this approach with its pre-2011 stance, but the Egyptian

---

[24] U.S. Embassy in Cairo, Egypt, "Security Assistance and Cooperation for a New Egypt," Fact Sheet, 2011, http://egypt.usembassy.gov/security.html.

government did not acknowledge this shift, still viewing U.S. assistance through the lens of the 1979 peace dividend. The United States attempted to strike a middle ground among its objectives, sustaining critical security assistance with Egypt while disapproving of Morsi's ouster and the human rights violations that followed, as described below.[25]

As the United States sought to divide its policy across competing objectives, it found itself in a vulnerable position resulting in paradoxical policies that undermined its credibility and effectiveness. It feared that eroding the U.S. security relationship would undermine Egypt's support for the peace treaty with Israel, although Egypt has strong reasons to abide by the treaty for its own security interests. With instability rocking Libya, Syria, and Yemen, the U.S. administration was also gravely concerned about stable partners that could address violent extremist groups taking advantage of the instability to establish footholds and proliferate in the region; it needed Egypt to counter militant groups sprouting in the Sinai (which Egypt would address with or without U.S. aid). In addition, the administration and Congress faced significant pressure from defense industry and Egyptian advocacy groups to provide Egypt with unfettered security assistance. The administration did not want to be seen as having "lost" Egypt as instability shook the region and relations with Gulf partners grew increasingly fraught over perceived U.S. abandonment of Hosni Mubarak and nuclear negotiations with Iran.

On the other hand, Egypt experienced low vulnerability in this relationship phase with the United States, claiming its annual $1.3 billion in security assistance as an entitlement or promise for its upholding the peace treaty with Israel. Moreover, the Egyptian military's narrative asserts that it alone save Egypt from civil war, economic ruin, and Islamist takeover. Some Egyptian military members have deep-seated bitterness toward the United States, perceiving a lack of U.S. support for what the military, in its own view, did to save the country.[26] Egypt was also able to leverage its security relationships with U.S. security competitors, publicly highlighting senior defense engagements with Russia, for example, to make clear that it had other options for procuring military hardware if U.S. pressure went too far. In reality, Egypt may never have been serious about these threats, given decades-long investments in U.S. equipment, but it effectively brandished the threat.

These differences in relative vulnerability between the United States and Egypt resulted in the United States having little leverage in the aftermath of the Morsi ouster, even as the United States experimented with placing conditions on security assistance to Egypt for the first time in the history of the relationship. In October 2013, the Obama administration announced it was holding back four large-scale weapons systems purchased for Egypt, including 125 M1-A1 battle tank kits, 20 F-16 fighter jets, 20 Harpoon cruise missiles, and 10 Apache attack helicopters. It made their delivery contingent upon, "credible progress toward an inclusive, democratically elected civilian government through free and fair elections."[27] This move aimed to alter the bargain with Egypt from weapons in exchange for peace with Israel, to

---

[25] Jeremy M. Sharp, *Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, June 2014), 2, http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33003.pdf.
[26] Ibid., 1.
[27] U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Officials on U.S. Assistance to Egypt," Teleconference, October 10, 2013, http://uspolicy.be/headline/us-officials-us-assistance-egypt.

weapons in exchange for peace and democratic progress. In January 2014, Congress enacted the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014. Neither Congress nor the Obama administration wanted to halt military aid completely after Morsi's overthrow, as the "coup clause" in U.S. appropriations law seemed to require. Thus, the 2014 law included special language exempting Egypt (and only Egypt) from the provisions of this clause, which mandates the immediate suspension of nearly all assistance to a central government following a military coup d'état, until a democratically elected government is restored. The 2014 law allowed some FMF for Egypt—what Congress and the administration deemed most vital—to move forward regardless of whether such a government is in place (e.g., for counterterrorism, border security, and Sinai protection measures). But many lawmakers did not want to give the new military-backed government (or the U.S. administration) a blank check. For this reason, the law restricted the use of aid considered less urgent until the secretary of state certified that Egypt had met several democracy benchmarks.

Throughout this two-year period, there was little clarity on what the United States was trying to achieve in Egypt. Washington was ambivalent about how much a democratic Egypt really mattered to core U.S. interests. It did not have the imperative to take stronger measures that could provoke a backlash and lead Egypt to withdraw vital security cooperation. Moreover, although the 1979 Peace Treaty remained secure, because Egypt had more leverage in the relationship during this period, the United States was unable to advance its nonsecurity goals by conditioning security assistance, and its policy choices on conditionality made it difficult to extricate itself from a vulnerable position to find a more constructive pathway forward. Meanwhile, since 2013, Egypt has redoubled authoritarian rule, experiencing one of the worst periods of repression in its modern history.[28]

Mixed Results—High Donor Vulnerability and High Recipient Vulnerability: The United States and El Salvador, 1980–1992

Overriding U.S. strategic imperatives in El Salvador to resist the tide of communism spreading throughout Latin America compelled the United States to overlook reported abuses by Salvadoran security forces in the 1980s. However, the Salvadorans were particularly dependent on U.S. assistance. Thus, when a U.S. congressional investigation uncovered significant atrocities by Salvadoran forces, and on the verge of the Cold War ending (and countervailing pressures on the United States to ignore the atrocities subsiding), the United States was able to decisively cut off assistance and compel a diplomatic push for an end to the Salvadoran civil war.

In the 1980s, El Salvador was the largest recipient of U.S. military assistance in Latin America, reaching a peak of $196.6 million in 1986 dollars. The United States was engaged heavily in countering the influence of the Soviet Union globally, mostly through proxy and indirect pressure. Cuba and Honduras had fallen to leftist regimes. Washington feared that El Salvador was next, and it ramped up assistance to the Salvadoran military to prevent the left from

---

[28] Amy Hawthorne, "What's Happening with Suspended Military Aid for Egypt," Atlantic Council, October 16, 2014, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/egyptsource/what-s-happening-with-suspended-military-aid-for-egypt-part-i.

assuming power in El Salvador. However, in the midst of the civil war, high-profile crimes ignited concerns in the U.S. and international human rights community that the United States was supporting a regime that permitted such violence. In December 1980, four American nuns were raped and murdered. Washington responded by cutting off all aid to El Salvador but only for a few months, pending an investigation of the crime. In 1981, militants gunned down two American land reform advisers in the Sheraton Hotel in San Salvador. The U.S. Congress subsequently determined it would disburse aid only as improvements in the Salvadoran human rights situation became clear. Yet, the U.S. administration's overriding national security concern of the threat of communism spreading into El Salvador prompted continued support for the Salvadoran military. Strengthening the military inevitably gave it much more weight in the Salvadoran political system.[29]

July 1980: Young people, many of them students, being lined up against a wall and searched by members of the El Salvadorian Army during unrest in the capital San Salvador. (Photo by Keystone/Getty Images.) http://www.gettyimages.com/license/3333721.

The civil war raged on for several years, with the government harshly repressing dissent; at least 70,000 were killed in largely indiscriminate killings and bombing raids in the countryside. Then, in 1989, the murder of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her

---

[29] Thomas Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy: U.S. Policy Toward Latin America in the Reagan Years* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 40–46.

daughter at the University of Central America shocked the international community. Congress no longer accepted the U.S. administration's assurance that the situation was improving. At the same time, the Cold War was ending, and U.S. interests in stemming communist influence in Latin America began to recede. Speaker of the House Tom Foley initiated a special task force led by Congressman Joe Moakley to monitor El Salvador's investigation of the murders. Moakley encountered significant resistance from Salvadoran authorities and found some were complicit in the crimes, including the military, in the course of his investigation. He discovered that El Salvador's armed forces had been responsible for the murders of the Jesuits, with complicity at high levels of the command. He also learned that some segments of the U.S. administration had known about the situation before the congressional task force was created.[30] Moakley's report revealed the injustice of the U.S.-backed Salvadoran government, setting in motion an international process to end the war. Congress froze U.S. military assistance to El Salvador, and the administration made a diplomatic push for a political solution. Both sides of the conflict in El Salvador approached the United Nations for help in negotiating a settlement. The United Nations sponsored talks, which culminated in the January 1992 signing of the Peace Accords, ending 12 years of civil war.

The U.S.-El Salvador case represents a scenario of high donor vulnerability and high recipient vulnerability, yielding mixed results. The United States depended upon the Salvadoran security forces to turn back the communist tide in Latin America, at the United States' backdoor. The United States possessed little influence with civilian or judicial authorities in El Salvador to be able to advise or counteract the illiberal tendencies of the military. Strategic imperatives overrode the U.S. administration's awareness of human rights atrocities. On the other hand, Salvadoran security forces were reliant on U.S. aid. When Congress shut off the funds, El Salvador had to change its behavior, as its primary benefactor no longer supported it, and with economic pressures after years of war, it had no choice but to relent and join a peace process. The U.S. administration overlooked human rights atrocities due to overriding strategic imperatives in fight against communism. As the Cold War ended and U.S. concerns about communist influence subsided, congressional action and investigation shed light on what was happening and prompted a halt to security assistance to Salvadoran forces. This resulted in a change in the partner's behavior but only after significant atrocities against civilians had occurred.

Demonstration Effects—Low Donor Vulnerability and Low Recipient Vulnerability: The United States and Rwanda, 2012

Rwanda and the United States have a close partnership, but the United States does not have strong strategic interests in the country. Rwanda has other sources of foreign aid, including military assistance, besides the United States. As a result, when reports of Rwandan forces committing atrocities in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo came to light in 2012, the United States easily signaled its disapproval by freezing a portion of its security assistance to Rwanda. Given Rwanda's lack of vulnerability to the assistance squeeze, it alone

---

[30] "U.S. Aid to El Salvador Slashed, Restored," *CQ Almanac*, 46th ed. (Washington, DC: CQ, 1990), 779–86.

did not change the government's behavior, but other forms of pressure did. U.S. conditionality served as a demonstration effect to other countries not to pursue such tactics.

In the years following Rwanda's civil war, the United States increasingly began to rely on Rwanda's military for peacekeeping forces, which were arguably among the best in Africa. In addition, as instability in other areas of Africa deepened, such as in Uganda, the Department of Defense was considering Rwanda as a possible alternative location for rotating U.S. forces forward in the region. However, the United States did not have strong strategic interests in its security relationship with Rwanda. It did have growing concerns about Rwanda's growing autocratic tendencies, but personal relationships between Obama administration officials and President Kagame often led the U.S. government to believe that it could persuade Kagame to change his government's behavior, and in some cases, may have led some to resist taking a harder line against Kagame. On the other hand, while Rwanda valued its military relationship with the United States, it also had the option of procuring military hardware and training from China, with fewer human rights conditions (i.e., Leahy vetting) and bureaucratic obstacles to navigate.

In October 2012, a UN report disclosed that General James Kabarebe, the Rwandan defense minister, effectively directed a Congolese rebel militia accused of murder, rape, and other atrocities in the DRC. The rebel militia commanders received direct military orders from Rwanda Defense Force chief of defense staff General Charles Kayonga, who in turn acted on instructions from minister of defense General James Kabarebe.[31]

As details emerged on Rwanda's complicity, the United States was the first of Rwanda's international supporters to suspend aid in 2012—cutting $200,000 in military-to-military assistance. It did not include funds for peacekeeping operations under the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Program, given the importance of Rwanda's role in regional peacekeeping operations. This only represented a fraction of Rwanda's $80 million military expenditures in 2012 terms.[32] The United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands also later withheld assistance to Rwanda but also did so in an uncoordinated manner. There was little U.S. or international effort to persuade other African states to condemn Rwanda's actions.

Cuts to security assistance did not prompt Rwanda to change its behavior in the DRC, but two more effective points of leverage did. The United States pushed for a delay on IMF and African Bank adjustments to Rwanda's loans, which had been providing direct budgetary support to the country. In addition, international condemnation bothered Kagame, affecting his personal legitimacy and image, largely due to his own personality—other leaders would not necessarily be affected by public shame. In this case, cuts to security assistance served as demonstration effects, sending a signal to other countries that this behavior should not be tolerated.

---

[31] David Smith, "Rwandan minister is leader of Congo rebels, UN says" *The Guardian*, October 17, 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/17/rwanda-minister-leader-congo-rebels-kabarebe.
[32] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Military Expenditure Database, http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database.

Rwandan soldiers pass a sign welcoming drivers to the city of Gisenyi, on the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on August 30, 2013. Tensions on the border have risen after Rwanda accused Kinshasa's forces of firing multiple shells and rockets across the border into its territory, killing at least one woman. The United Nations has said it had "consistent and credible reports" of Rwandan troops entering Congo to support M23 rebels, but Rwandan foreign minister Louise Mushikiwabo has denied the reports. AFP PHOTO / Carl de Souza. (Photo credit: CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/Getty Images.) http://www.gettyimages.com/license/178667104.

Moreover, the United States did not clearly communicate the reasons for cutting military assistance, based on the assumption that Rwandans would draw the linkage themselves and thus know why the assistance was being revoked. Part of the reason for this was the concern that intelligence sources and methods would be disclosed if the United States were to divulge that it knew about the actions of certain military units. However, Rwanda's military felt betrayed by the assistance cut, as they viewed Eastern Congo as a threat to Rwanda. In addition, the military units affected by the cuts were not those units that had committed the crimes. However, the U.S. and international responses cumulatively may have had a demonstration effect for other countries, with little cost to the United States.

Behavior Change—Low Donor Vulnerability and High Recipient Vulnerability: The United Kingdom and Sierra Leone, 2007

The United Kingdom's leveraging of its security assistance in Sierra Leone represents a compelling case of where donor conditionality can work to change recipient behavior. The United Kingdom and Sierra Leone have had a long-standing security relationship, with Sierra Leone almost exclusively dependent on UK assistance. Besides colonial ties, the UK had few strategic interests in Sierra Leone in 2007. As such, when Sierra Leone's government threatened to dishonor election results, the UK was able to effectively freeze assistance until

the sitting Sierra Leone government agreed to transition power, thereby affecting behavior change.

Sierra Leone gained independence from the British in 1961, and experienced years of political turmoil and civil war, culminating in a peace accord in 1999 and a UN peacekeeping intervention. In 2000, the UK launched *Operation Palliser*, a military intervention to stabilize the UN peacekeeping mission from faltering and losing hold of Freetown to local militias. Besides its colonial legacy and the risk of conflict spilling over into the broader region, the UK had few strategic reasons to intervene and did so largely for humanitarian purposes. The British intervention helped bring an end to the civil war but not to Sierra Leone's political instability, which continued to roil the country in the following years.

In 2007, Sierra Leone's People's Party (SLPP) lost relatively free and fair presidential elections to the All People's Congress (APC). These were the first post-conflict elections in Africa in which an incumbent party was defeated. Through public statements and private channels, the SLPP signaled that it intended to ignore the elections and sustain its position in government despite its unpopularity after years of corruption.

A soldier stands guard in front of voting stations in Freetown September 2007.
http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/soldier-stands-guard-in-front-of-polliting-stations-in-news-photo/76594089.

During this period, Sierra Leone's government relied entirely on international donor support, including military assistance, especially from the UK. External donors funded 80 percent of

Sierra Leone's budget in 2007 terms, making it highly vulnerable to donor pressure.[33] The UK had also invested advising and training in a security sector reform program in Sierra Leone, enabling the Ministry of Defense and security services to strengthen their structures and capacity and improve delivery of regular pay to soldiers. The UK planned to spend 13 million pounds in 2007 terms on security sector reform and the International Military Advisory Training Team in Sierra Leone.[34]

As such, when the SLLP disputed the 2007 election results, the UK froze its budgetary support pending the ruling party's acceptance of the election results. Given the UK's few strategic interests in Sierra Leone, it was less vulnerable to severing its assistance to Sierra Leone. The SLPP had little choice but to accept the election results. In this instance, given the prevalence of high recipient vulnerability and low donor vulnerability, conditionality yielded an unambiguous success: the transition of executive power in Sierra Leone was a milestone achievement in the country's post-conflict evolution, and it likely would not have happened in the absence of donor conditionality.[35] It remains unclear whether the United Kingdom would have been able or willing to make similar threats if it had possessed strong strategic interests in Sierra Leone.[36]

Donor Vulnerability + Recipient Vulnerability = Leverage

Examining the dynamic of donor vulnerability and recipient vulnerability across these four vignettes, it is clear that the rough sum of the two variables creates some leverage that can alter regime behavior, result in a mixed policy outcome, or lead to lower-priority (but still important) policy outcomes, such as demonstration effects. Of course, other variables, such as time, scale of effort, and the type of security assistance involved, will also shape the degree of leverage a donor (or recipient) has in a given situation. However, donor vulnerability and recipient vulnerability provide two anchor points in often-complex foreign policy relationships that are relatively easy to assess qualitatively. Policymakers and planners should consider the interplay and weight of donor and recipient vulnerability in security assistance relationships *before* deciding to levy conditions on a partner military.

---

[33] Jimmy D. Kandeh, "Rogue Incumbents, Donor Assistance, and Sierra Leone's Second Post-Conflict Elections of 2007," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 46, no. 4 (2008).

[34] House of Commons Defense Committee, Ministry of Defence Main Estimates 2007–08: Twelfth Report of Sessions 2006-07 (London, UK: House of Commons, July 3, 2007), table 3, 9, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmdfence/835/835.pdf.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Stephen Watts, Jason H. Campbell, Patrick B. Johnston, Sameer Lalwani, Sarah H. Bana, *Countering Others' Insurgencies: Understanding U.S. Small-Footprint Interventions in Local Context* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014), 178–79, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR500/RR513/RAND_RR513.pdf.

Taxonomy of Conditionality

With more thoughtful front-end analysis of the leverage a donor may have in a security assistance relationship, policymakers should also apply more rigor to thinking about the type of conditionality that they want to employ. Developing a taxonomy of conditionality could help ensure that policymakers use the appropriate type in a given situation to maximize leverage and achieve the desired policy outcome. These categories could include red lines, calibrated conditions, and incentive-based conditions.

Red Lines

Policymakers could consider constructing conditions based on red lines, articulated through public messaging and/or through private channels. For example, a donor might state that protection of civilian security is a red line, and that if it receives evidence that a recipient violates this principle, the donor will cut off security assistance. The power and potential downside of red lines is the donor must have the political will and capabilities, and take the calculated risk, to enforce them. This means that the donor must have a firm understanding of its degree of leverage with the recipient before articulating the red line. Red lines may be most effective in cases where the donor has more leverage over the recipient than vice versa, resulting in a higher degree of vulnerability for the recipient than for the donor. If the recipient transgresses the red line, and the donor does not enforce consequences, then it diminishes the deterrent credibility of the red line in that relationship and provides negative demonstration effects for other security assistance relationships the donor might have. A positive and practical example of using red lines occurred in 2007–2008 in Iraq. U.S. ambassador Ryan Crocker and General David Petraeus successfully coordinated pressure and messaging with the Iraqi government to encourage then–Prime Minister Maliki to remove some sectarian Iraqi brigade commanders, or risk severing food, fuel, or ammunition deliveries from U.S. forces to those Iraq brigades. Unified U.S. military and diplomatic messaging (and a bit of "good cop–bad cop") also helped greatly.[37]

Calibrated Conditions

A second type of conditionality could involve selective and targeted placement of conditions or limits on security assistance. This may include targeting certain military units or groups rather than others. Indeed, the United States should take greater care in selecting the appropriate and affected units for conditions, as it has mistakenly targeted the wrong units in the past, such as in Bahrain in 2011 (see the Bahrain history below). Calibrated conditions could also focus on limiting specific military capabilities while allowing assistance to other capability areas to flow (e.g., limiting offensive versus defensive weapons, or freezing conventional military versus counterterrorism assistance, as in the case of Egypt in 2012–2013). In addition, a U.S. administration may have more discretion in ratcheting levels of

---

[37] Stephen Biddle, "Evaluating U.S. Options for Iraq," testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, July 29, 2014, https://elliott.gwu.edu/sites/elliott.gwu.edu/files/downloads/news/Biddle%20HASC%20testimony%20re%20Iraq%20and%20Syria%20-%20July%202014%20v2.pdf.

assistance up and down within existing authorities than is often presumed, without having to request legal changes. Calibrated conditions may be more effective in cases where donor leverage is less assured, but a donor should apply them against units or capabilities in cases where leverage can be maximized and effects realized and recognized.

A Case of Uncalibrated Conditions: Targeting the Wrong Units in Bahrain

Tear gas fired by Bahraini police explodes among the protestors gathered close to Pearl Square, the epicenter of antigovernment protests, the first time since demonstrators began an antiregime sit-in there last month on March 13, 2011, in Manama. Almost a month into protests calling for deep political change in Bahrain, antigovernment demonstrators and the Gulf kingdom's rulers appear to be at an impasse, with neither side backing down. AFP PHOTO/STR. (Photo credit: AFP/Getty Images.) http://www.gettyimages.com/license/112299602.

Following Bahrain's crackdown on Shi'a protestors in 2011, the United States attempted to condition military assistance to Bahrain, tying assistance to the Bahrain government's progress in implementing the reform recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). The U.S. conditionality effort failed for a number of reasons.[38] For one, Bahrain circumvented U.S. conditions by purchasing munitions and vehicles from Brazil, China, and Turkey. Moreover, the conditions were placed on assistance to the Bahrain Defense Forces, whereas the regime's internal security forces committed the vast majority of the abuses and killing of protesters. Considerable damage resulted to

---

[38] Frederic Wehrey, *The Precarious Ally: Bahrain's Impasse and U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 2013).

the U.S. relationship with the Bahrain Defense Forces. Although Bahrain subsequently took some steps to implement reforms in accordance with the BICI report, the timing of the U.S. release of arms in May 2012 was counterproductive. The administration intended to time the release to demonstrate support for the more moderate, pro-reform crown prince against hardliners, announcing the release during the crown prince's visit to Washington in May 2012. Yet, following Saudi Arabia's intervention in Bahrain to quell the uprising, Bahrain's crown prince had been steadily stripped of authority. The release also came at the same time that the regime was beginning a new round of media and judicial crackdown on dissent. Conservatives in Bahrain thus viewed the transfer as a "win" and a sign of normalcy in U.S.-Bahrain relations. The U.S. release undercut a legitimate Shi'a opposition from engaging the regime through dialogue and empowered more militant voices. A strong theme of anti-Americanism has since imbued the opposition movement's rhetoric and actions.

Incentive-Based Conditions

A third category of conditions, and one that perhaps holds the most promise for future use, is based on a donor's use of incentives to change recipient behavior. Much like the Millennium Challenge Corporation has spurred progress on political and economic reform among development aid recipients, incentive-based conditions could positively induce positive steps toward protection of civilians and even rules-based governance if clearly linked to security assistance. A donor might tie additional and/or more sophisticated levels of security assistance, including new military capabilities or specific weapons platforms, to reform milestones to incentivize behavioral changes. Negotiating a roadmap with the partner for how certain reform milestones may unlock new security assistance possibilities could yield the best results, as both the donor and recipient would be invested in the negotiating process and outcome, and as a result would have a clear understanding of expectations and desired outcomes. Of course, a healthy degree of leverage will enable the donor to press for changes, and, conversely, a lack of donor leverage will make it more difficult, but incentives may yield greater effects than punitive measures, and perhaps with fewer risks for experimentation. Few examples of incentive-based conditions exist for security assistance, but lessons from the development sector, discussed earlier, imply that an incentive-based approach may prove more fruitful. Incentive-based conditions may be the optimal route for cases where a donor has little leverage over the recipient, but the recipient may desire further donor engagement and investment.

Guidelines for Conditionality

It is critical that the United States create guidelines for using conditionality on security assistance—just as the United States has embraced "smart sanctions," it needs smart conditions.[39] The risks of losing return on investment for security assistance and foreign policy credibility will increase in the absence of a rule-set and the continued ad hoc use of conditions. Other countries will observe U.S. policy choices on conditionality and form perceptions of U.S. leadership, leverage, and policy coherence, affecting U.S. relationships with allies, partners, and adversaries. By employing common principles to guide decisionmaking on conditioning security assistance, the United States could improve the credibility and consistency of U.S. foreign policy.

Policymakers should consider the following guidelines before electing to use security assistance conditionality as a policy tool:

- **Determine what policy outcome conditions aim to achieve.** The United States should form realizable desired outcomes based on its own interests and level of commitment and an assessment of whether the partner will support them.

- **Conduct front-end robust intelligence and policy analysis:**

    o How will conditions play out in the recipient country? The causal pathway may not always be direct, but the United States must understand the political, economic, and military effects of using conditions.

    o Who will be empowered and disempowered? Is the United States putting conditions on the right assistance for the right actor? Is that helpful for other U.S. objectives?

    o Does the recipient have political will and capability to change behavior?

- **Consider criteria used in evaluating economic sanctions for assessing the appropriateness of applying conditions:[40]**

    o Impact: the sheer damage conditions inflict on a target.

    o Effectiveness: the extent to which conditions achieve their goals.

    o Utility: the extent to which conditions achieve their goals, minus the costs, politically and militarily, incurred in the process.

---

[39] Meghan L. O'Sullivan, *Shrewd Sanctions: Statecraft and State Sponsors of Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).
[40] Ibid.

- Comparative utility: how the utility of conditions (their effectiveness minus their costs) compares with that of other policy options; in other words, whether conditions are the best choice open to policymakers at the time.

- **Ask whether conditioning security assistance is the right tool.** Are there other tools that will achieve desired outcome or send a stronger message?

- **Consider what will happen if conditions are not used.** Can the United States afford not to employ conditions? What are the second- and third-order effects?

- **Decide what type of conditionality should be applied from the taxonomy** (e.g., red lines, calibrated conditions, incentive-based conditions). The goal should be to maximize leverage and achieve the desired policy outcome.

- **Determine if there are ways to redirect assistance to other needs.** If security assistance is cut off or frozen, can equipment in the pipeline be reconfigured/rerouted to other customers? Does it save or incur more costs?

- **Be wary of using conditions in a way that constrains future, more critical policy choices**. Understand what is a stake not only in the short term but also in the long term.

- **Develop a communications plan.** Consider how the recipient country and public will receive the news and ensure all arms and levels of government deliver a consistent message.

- **Ensure the recipient country knows why conditions are being applied.** Political decisions sometimes do not translate to the military operational level and may cause confusion or even blowback in the recipient country.

- **Conduct regular evaluation of the conditions' effectiveness.** Decisions on future conditionality should be informed by an assessment of whether previous cases have been effective.

Conclusion

The complexity of global challenges ranging from China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea to transnational terrorism, weapons of mass destruction proliferation, and cyber threats will require the United States to partner with countries around the world to achieve common security objectives. In support of this approach, partners will require assistance from the United States in building the capacity and capabilities of their security forces and to improve interoperability with U.S. forces. However, inevitably, policy disagreements and clashing interests will arise between the United States and its security partners, and the United States will have to find ways to reconcile its security objectives and its broader foreign policy goals. Smart and strategic use of conditions on security assistance, when the United States has leverage in a security relationship, may help close these policy gaps. Assessing donor and recipient vulnerability at the front end of U.S. policy deliberations can help calculate leverage and determine the right kind of conditions that should be applied. Smarter use of conditions will not completely resolve the tensions in U.S. foreign policy, particularly when it comes to dealing with authoritarian regimes that the United States relies upon to achieve its security objectives. Broader and deeper policy research and discussion is needed on navigating the nexus of U.S. security and human rights objectives. In the meantime, and to further that evolution, the United States should adopt a set of guiding principles for conditions on security assistance to improve the consistency and credibility of its foreign policy.

About the Author

Melissa Dalton is a senior fellow and chief of staff of the CSIS International Security Program (ISP). Her research focuses on U.S. defense policy in the Middle East, global U.S. defense strategy and policy, and security cooperation with U.S. allies and partners. As chief of staff, she advises the director of ISP on a broad range of strategic and management issues. Prior to CSIS, she served in a number of positions at the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 2007 to 2014. She most recently was a senior adviser for force planning, where she contributed to the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review and DoD's planning guidance. Previously, she served as special assistant to the under secretary of defense for policy, as policy adviser to the commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul, Afghanistan, and as country director for Lebanon and Syria. In 2012, she was a visiting fellow at the Center for a New American Security. Prior to her DoD service, she taught English to middle and high school students in Damascus, Syria, in 2006. From 2003 to 2005, she served as an intelligence analyst at the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Dalton's commentary and analysis have appeared in CNN, MSNBC, the *New York Times*, Bloomberg, *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, *Fortune*, *Defense News*, and the *National Interest*. She holds a B.A. in foreign affairs from the University of Virginia and an M.A. in international relations and international economics from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. She was a 2014–2015 Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellow and is a Council on Foreign Relations term member.

CSIS | CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES