

**Picking Your Friends:
Foreign-Imposed Regime Change and the Quality of Interstate Relations**

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How does foreign-imposed regime change (FIRC) influence relations between the intervening state and its target? Can a state use FIRC to turn a foe into a friend that will support its foreign policy agenda? Proponents of regime change argue that states can improve interstate relations by overthrowing hostile governments and installing friendly leaders, who will then promote their state's interests at home and abroad. Opponents of regime change claim that changing the behavior of another state is more difficult than simply changing that state's leadership because states have enduring geopolitical interests and leaders who appear to act at the behest of a foreign power often elicit a domestic backlash that compels them to distance themselves from their foreign patron. The two major quantitative studies of FIRC and interstate relations (Lo, Hashimoto and Reiter 2008; Downes and O'Rourke 2016) focus on militarized conflicts and come to conflicting conclusions regarding the effects of FIRCs. To further this debate, this paper evaluates the effects of overt FIRCs worldwide between 1816 and 2008, and covert FIRCs by the United States during the Cold War, on a measure of interstate cooperation short of conflict: UN voting behavior. We argue, and demonstrate empirically, that most FIRCs either do not increase—and, in some cases, significantly decrease—this measure of interstate relations, which suggests that the conciliatory benefits of FIRC on intervener-target relations have been overstated. To illustrate the theory's causal mechanism, the paper includes a case study of the United States' 2001 regime change in Afghanistan and Washington's subsequent relationship with Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

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Note to Readers: We are in the process of reframing the theoretical section of this paper. Consequently, our statistical analysis and results sections do not yet fully reflect the hypotheses outlined in the theoretical discussion. This draft is still quite rough. Please do not distribute.

Can states use foreign-imposed regime change (FIRC) to turn adversaries into allies? By installing leaders with similar policy preferences, can interveners create reliable clients who will implement their preferred policies at home and abroad? Describing his rationale for regime change in Mexico in the 1860s, for example, French Emperor Napoleon III wrote: “As for the prince who may mount the Mexican throne...he will always be forced to act in the interests of France, not only by gratitude but especially because those of this new country will be in accordance with ours and he will not be able to sustain himself without our influence.”¹ A few years later, Paraguay’s Brazilian occupiers selected Cirilo Antonio Rivarola as the Paraguayan most likely to “be their supine creature.”² Similarly, describing French behavior during their 1979 regime change in the Central African Empire, one scholar wrote: “Getting rid of the emperor was only part of the task; it was equally important to choose his successor carefully. Such a critical detail could not be left to chance—or to democracy. The French were going to hand-pick the president of the restored republic and install him in power. Moreover, they were determined to select someone who, above all else, would best serve their interests.”³ Most recently, debating the merits of attempting to covertly overthrow Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reasoned in a leaked email, “The resulting regime in Syria will see the United States as a friend, not an enemy.”⁴

History is rife with examples of policymakers attempting to transform their foes into friends via regime change. Indeed, as David Lake notes, any state with sufficiently strong

¹ Quoted in Alfred J. Hanna and Kathryn A. Hanna, *Napoleon III and Mexico: American Triumph over Monarchy*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 78.

² Harris Warren, *Paraguay and the Triple Alliance: The Postwar Decade, 1869-1878*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 57.

³ That man turned out to be David Dacko. Brian Titley, *Dark Age: The Political Odyssey of Emperor Bokassa*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 126.

⁴ Hillary Clinton, “UNCLASSIFIED U.S. Department of State Case No. F-2014-20439 Doc No. C05794498 Date: 11/30/2015.” <https://wikileaks.org/clinton-emails/emailid/18328>

interests at stake to intervene and engage in state-building in another state will also have “incentive to install a loyal leader who is sympathetic to those interests and will protect them.”⁵ Yet, despite the frequency with which states engage in this behavior, we lack empirical evidence regarding whether and how FIRC affects the quality or closeness of relations between interveners and targets afterwards. Do interveners get what they want out of regime change? Are they able to induce their protégés to cooperate?

Existing studies, with few exceptions, have focused on conflict recurrence as their measure of the effectiveness of FIRC on interstate relations—and have come to conflicting results. On the optimistic side, Nigel Lo, Barry Hashimoto, and Dan Reiter find that when winners impose regime change on losers at the end of interstate wars, peace lasts longer than after wars that do not end in FIRC.⁶ More pessimistically, Alexander Downes and Lindsey O’Rourke find that neither covert regime changes by the United States during the Cold War, nor overt regime changes by all countries worldwide over the last two centuries reduce the likelihood of subsequent militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) between patrons and protégés—in fact, some types of FIRCs increase the probability of another fight.⁷ In one of the only exceptions that examines the quality of post-intervention relations rather than violent conflict, Lake argues that installing loyal leaders can backfire if the intervener’s preferred policies differ significantly from those of the target population.⁸

Regime change optimists have outlined four potential pathways that FIRC can lead to improved relations between the intervening and target states. First, states could install foreign

⁵ David Lake, *The Statebuilder’s Dilemma: On the Limits of Foreign Intervention*. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2016), 69.

⁶ Nigel Lo, Barry Hashimoto, and Dan Reiter, “Ensuring Peace: Foreign-Imposed Regime Change and Post-War Peace Duration, 1914-2001,” *International Organization* 62, no. 4 (2008): 717-36.

⁷ Alexander B. Downes and Lindsey A. O’Rourke, “You Can’t Always Get What You Want: Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Seldom Improves Interstate Relations.” *International Security* 41, no. 2 (2016): 43-89.

⁸ Lake, *The Statebuilder’s Dilemma*, 71-77.

leaders with similar policy preferences to their own, thereby transforming the two states' relationship from one marred by conflicting interests to one characterized by congruent interests. Second, democratic interveners could democratize their targets so that the two states could then enjoy the special political affinity that democracies are said to have for one another. Third, hegemonic states could use regime change to install leaders in subordinate states who accept the legitimacy of the two states' hierarchical relationship. Fourth, imposed leaders who are highly dependent on their patron to remain in power may feel compelled to act in their patron's interests in order to maintain their continued assistance.

Regime change pessimists, by contrast, are skeptical that FIRC can improve intervener-target relations for several reasons. To begin, structural realists maintain that the structure of the international system compels states to pursue their state's strategic interests in predictable ways regardless of which particular political leader holds power. Moreover, pessimists note that some level of interest asymmetry will always exist between intervening and target states. In many cases, protégé leaders face domestic audiences that have preferences that are starkly at odds with those of the intervener. When imposed leaders execute interveners' policies that are unpopular with the public, it generates domestic opposition. This domestic pushback may persuade protégé elites that carrying out the intervener's wishes is not such a good idea after all for their political survival and take steps to distance themselves from their patron.

To assess these competing logics of regime change, this study examines the effects of covert and overt regime changes on the political affinity of the intervening and target state in the years following intervention. Our analysis supports the pessimistic account of regime change. We find no evidence that regime change improves political relations through any of the causal mechanisms espoused by regime change optimists.

We test our argument using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitatively, we assess the impact of covert and overt FIRC on the similarity of dyads' voting records in the United Nations General Assembly using fixed and random effects models as well as matching methods. If regime change works as policymakers predict, we should see an increase in this measure of political affinity between the intervening and target states following an intervention. However, we find no evidence of a conciliatory effect. Neither covert nor overt FIRC have a significant effect on subsequent UN voting behavior.

Qualitatively, we perform a case study of Afghanistan following the U.S. regime change in 2001 to further test our argument that FIRC fails to improve intervener-target relations below the level of armed conflict. Specifically, we use evidence from the U.S.-led regime change that brought Hamid Karzai to power to assess our causal mechanism that imposed leaders' desire to survive politically and domestic preferences that differ from those of the intervener combine to pull them away from implementing the intervener's agenda. These competing priorities lead to disagreements and clashes between patrons and their protégés. In the end, patrons—despite having hand-picked their protégés and placed them in power—face considerable resistance from protégés and are unable to get their way on important issues.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. First, we lay out the existing literature on the effects of FIRC (and other forms of intervention) on interstate relations. Next, we discuss our data and research design. Third, we present our quantitative analysis. Fourth, we further probe the effects of FIRC on intervener-target relations with a case study of the 2001 U.S.-led regime change in Afghanistan. Finally, we recapitulate our findings and explore their relevance for current US foreign policy debates.

Existing Literature

This section reviews the literature on the effect of regime change and related forms of intervention on targets' compliance with interveners' wishes. We divide the literature into *regime change optimists*—who identify four causal mechanisms through which FIRC can improve intervener-target relations—and *regime change pessimists*, who maintain for a variety of reasons that regime change should either have no effect on the quality of patron-client relations or even make them worse.

INTERVENTION OPTIMISTS

Regime change optimists have outlined four causal mechanisms by which regime change can improve relations between the parties involved.

FIRC Changes Policy Preferences. The most common argument for how FIRC could improve intervener-target relations is by changing the policy preferences of the target state. If the intervening state can install a foreign leader whose policy preferences align with its own, then that leader's self-interested actions should benefit the intervening state as well. Proponents of this view note that FIRCs are almost always motivated by the desire of an intervening state to alter the foreign policy behavior of a target state. Typically, the leader of the target state cannot be trusted to adhere to the terms of an agreement and thus the intervening state seeks to remove that leader and replace her with a more agreeable one. In theory, this alignment of interests should eliminate the commitment problem, resolve disputes between the two states, and enhance cooperation. In the best-case scenario, the newly installed regime becomes a reliable client state that promotes the intervener's interests at home and abroad.⁹

⁹ Other studies that articulate a version of this logic include Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and George W. Downs, "Intervention and Democracy." *International Organization* 60 (2006): 627-49; Lo, Hashimoto, and Reiter,

According to Lo, Hashimoto, and Reiter, interveners can promote closer relations by “executing, imprisoning, or exiling militarist leaders and their supporters...and/or empowering or importing leaders with more compliant and/or peaceful foreign policy preferences.”¹⁰ Bueno de Mesquita and Downs similarly argue that interveners are best able to achieve their goals by installing an “autocracy or a rigged election democracy in the target state with a small winning coalition.”¹¹ “A puppet government,” they reason, “solves the commitment problem by eliminating the incentive to pursue revisionist demands by defusing them in the domestic politics of the defeated state.”¹² In other words, the newly installed leader can act in the interests of the intervening state since they need not cater to the preferences of the median voter to remain in power. Likewise, James Morrow hypothesizes that regime changes may compel states to shift their political alliances to reflect the interests of the intervener.¹³

Optimists have found some empirical support for the idea that changing a state’s leadership can impact its foreign policy behavior. Randolph Siverson and Harvey Starr, for instance, analyzed all regime changes in Europe between 1816 and 1965 and determined that externally-imposed regime changes had a statistically significant effect on the composition of alliance portfolios of targeted states, although their model did not assess whether the alliance shifts that occurred following a regime change reflected the interests of the intervening state.¹⁴

“Ensuring Peace,” Dan Reiter, *How Wars End*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009); and Lindsey A. O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change: America’s Secret Cold War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2018).

¹⁰ Lo, Hashimoto, and Reiter “Ensuring Peace,” 719.

¹¹ Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, “Intervention and Democracy,” 632.

¹² James D. Morrow, Bruce Bueno De Mesquita, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith, “Selection Institutions and War Aims,” *Economics of Governance* 7, no. 1 (2006): 32.

¹³ James D. Morrow, “Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances,” *American Journal of Political Science* (1991): 904-933.

¹⁴ Randolph M. Siverson and Harvey Starr, “Regime Change and the Restructuring of Alliances,” *American Journal of Political Science* (1994): 145-161.

Lo, Hashimoto and Reiter found that the duration of peace following interstate wars lasted significantly longer if the intervening state replaced the regime of its defeated adversary.¹⁵

Other academic studies indirectly support the contention that FIRC improves intervener-target relations by showing that states with similar preferences or interests are more likely to cooperate and ally.¹⁶ Siverson and Starr, for example, argue that “it is reasonable to look at alliances as positions of policy preference. In this regard two (or n) nations forming an alliance are indicating, to some degree, that they share preferences.”¹⁷ Similarly, Alastair Smith finds that “offensive alliances form between friends, those nations that have common preferences across international issues.”¹⁸ Eric Gartzke argues that states’ shared political affinity is a strong explanation for when democracies go to war.¹⁹

Taken together, the argument that installing foreign leaders with similar policy preferences should improve intervener-target relations suggests Hypothesis 1:

Hypothesis 1: Replacing foreign leaders increases political affinity between intervening and target states.

Democratization. A second mechanism for achieving a congruence of interests between two states is for an intervener to “transform the political institutions of the target,” such as by installing democratic institutions or otherwise transforming its laws or constitution.²⁰ Lo,

¹⁵ Lo, Hashimoto, and Reiter, “Ensuring Peace.”

¹⁶ David H. Bearce, Kristen M. Flanagan, and Katharine M. Floros, “Alliances, Internal Information, and Military Conflict among Member-States,” *International Organization* 60, no. 3 (2006): 595-625.

¹⁷ Harvey Starr and Randolph M. Siverson, “Alliances and geopolitics,” *Political Geography Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (1990): 232-248.

¹⁸ Alastair Smith, “Alliance formation and war,” *International Studies Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (1995): 416.

¹⁹ Erik Gartzke, “Kant We All Just Get Along? Opportunity, Willingness, and the Origins of the Democratic Peace,” *American Journal of Political Science* 42 (1998): 1-27

²⁰ Lo, Hashimoto, and Reiter “Ensuring Peace,” 719.

Hashimoto, and Reiter, for example, argue that “democratization may be an institutional means of more permanently empowering actors with pacific preferences over actors with militarist preferences.”²¹ Interveners may further transform targets by forcing them to “hardwire pacifism into their constitutions or laws.”²² This mechanism relies on the broader shared interest of democracies in avoiding conflict with one another, and assumes that by empowering democracy abroad, a democratic intervener can foster peaceful relations with former adversaries in which disputes will be resolved by negotiation and compromise rather than force of arms.²³

Lo, Hashimoto and Reiter’s claim about the conciliatory effects of democratization on interstate relations aligns with a large body of IR literature associated with Democratic Peace Theory (DPT). Proponents of DPT have provided several rationales for why democratic states have yet to engage in a major military confrontation with one another. Some claim that democratic institutions—such as regular elections, transparent policymaking processes, and clearly articulated laws—constrain democratic leaders from starting wars with other democracies.²⁴ Others argue that democracies avoid wars with one another because they share common norms, liberal values, and respect for the law.²⁵ Still other maintain that democracies

²¹ Ibid., 720.

²² Ibid., 719.

²³ An element of patron-client relations can persist, however, as the intervener may make continued support for the new regime contingent on the target providing certain concessions, such as basing rights, alliance contributions, or other forms of security cooperation.

²⁴ Institutional variants of DPT are too numerous to summarize here. For a summary see: Dan Reiter, “Democratic Peace Theory,” in *Oxford Bibliographies in Political Science*, ed. Richard Vaelely (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁵ Michael W. Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs, Part 1” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1983): 205-235; John M. Owen, “How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace,” *International Security* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 87-125; Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); Kurt Taylor Gaubatz, “Democratic States and Commitment in International Relations,” *International Organization* 50, no. 1 (1996): 109-139; Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russett, “Normative and Structural Causes of the Democratic Peace,” *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (1993): 624-628; Gregory A. Raymond, “Democracies, Disputes and Third-party Intermediaries,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 38, no. 1 (1994): 24-42; and Vesna Danilovic and Joe Clare, “The Kantian Liberal Peace (Revisited),” *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 2 (2007): 397-414.

are more accustomed to political negotiation and thus more likely to resolve their disputes through political compromises.²⁶ The cumulative result of these effects, according to Charles Lipson, is that “Because established constitutional democracies are better able to govern their relationships and settle conflicts by reliable agreements, they should perform better toward each other than do nondemocracies at every level of interstate conflict.”²⁷

Taken together, these arguments for the pacifying effect of joint democratic relations suggest Hypothesis 2:

*Hypothesis 2: FIRC that promote democracy increase political affinity between intervening and target states.*²⁸

Dependency. A third pathway through which regime change could improve interstate relations is by installing a foreign government that is highly dependent on the intervening state to remain in power.²⁹ In these types of patron-client relationships, the subordinate state pursues the stronger state’s interests in exchange for foreign aid. Two sorts of arguments contend that states that depend on other states for foreign aid are likely to be subject to influence wielded by their benefactors.

²⁶ William J. Dixon and Paul D. Senese, “Democracy, Disputes and Negotiated Settlements,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 4 (2002): 547-551; Paul K. Huth and Todd L. Allee, *The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Spencer R. Weart, *Never at War: Why Democracies Will Not Fight One Another*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

²⁷ Charles Lipson, *Reliable Partners: How Democracies Have Made a Separate Peace*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 10.

²⁸ In our current statistical analysis, democratizing FIRCs are coded as “Institutional FIRCs.” One potential avenue for future research is to see whether the same dynamics hold true for joint-autocratic regimes.

²⁹ James C. Scott, “Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia,” *American Political Science Review* 66, no. 1 (1972): 91-113; Mark J. Gasiorowski, *US foreign policy and the Shah: Building a client state in Iran* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

The first such argument follows Robert Keohane's observation in a 1966 study of the UN General Assembly that the "more dependent a state is on a great power for trade, aid, or protection, the more responsive it is likely to be to pressure."³⁰ This perspective treats foreign aid as a tool in bargaining between powerful and weak states that the former may use strategically to reward behavior they like and punish behavior they dislike.³¹ Unfortunately, the first wave of literature testing Keohane's "bargaining model" of foreign aid produced mixed results.³²

This empirical stalemate was broken, however, when T.Y. Wang introduced two innovations in how to assess the connection between U.S. aid and voting in the UN. First, as opposed to prior studies that had included all votes in the UN General Assembly, Wang made the case that only votes on important issues should be used. He contended that it was simply not credible for Washington to make aid to a country contingent on how it voted on most issues that came before the General Assembly. "If there is any effect from receiving U.S. foreign aid on political outcomes in the UN," Wang argued, "it is most likely to emerge in voting coincidence rates on important issues."³³ Second, Wang maintained that only changes in the amount of U.S. foreign aid ought to affect recipient voting behavior, not the absolute level of aid or the proportion of a country's overall aid that comes from the United States. Using these revised measures of the independent and dependent variables, Wang found that increases in U.S. aid increased the similarity of a recipient's voting coincidence with the United States.³⁴

³⁰ Robert O. Keohane, 1966, "Political Influence in the General Assembly," *International Conciliation* no. 557 (1966): 19.

³¹ This perspective was known as the "bargaining model" a decade before Fearon's 1995 article popularized the bargaining metaphor in IR. Bruce E. Moon, 1983. The Foreign Policy of the Dependent State. *International Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (1983): 315-340.

³² For a summary, see T.Y. Wang, "U.S. Foreign Aid and UN Voting: An Analysis of Important Issues," *International Studies Quarterly* 43 (1999): 200-201.

³³ Wang "U.S. Foreign Aid and UN Voting," 201.

³⁴ Wang "U.S. Foreign Aid and UN Voting," 207-08. The proportion of total economic or military aid received by a country accounted for by aid from the United States was insignificant.

Brian Lai and Daniel Morey introduced an important qualification to Wang’s findings when they argued—and demonstrated empirically—that the positive effect of U.S. military and economic aid on UN voting similarity was restricted to non-democracies.³⁵ In fact, increasing dependence on U.S. aid reduced the UN voting similarity among democracies. The reason is that foreign aid provides leaders in autocracies with another source of “pork” that they can distribute to members of the selectorate to guarantee their loyalty. Autocratic leaders are thus quite willing to trade UN votes for aid. Because the selectorate in democracies is so large, however, foreign aid dollars are not useful for securing the political survival of democratic leaders. U.S. aid thus reduces the tendency to vote with the United States in the UN among democracies.

The second dependency argument understands the term in the structural sense used by Marxist dependency theorists: not as a bargaining tool employed by one actor to influence another by manipulating the costs and benefits of cooperation, but rather as a condition whereby elites in the dependent state are socialized to the worldview of a more powerful state.³⁶ This socialization process includes both rational assessments of the economic benefits of cooperating with the benefactor state and a gradual acceptance of its norms and values. The result of this process, observes Bruce Moon, “produces decisionmakers [in the dependent state] who...produce policy virtually indistinguishable from that which would be generated by American elites.” “By systematically affecting interests, perceptions and goals of an elite,” he continues, “the existence of a dependency situation renders bargaining unnecessary.”³⁷

³⁵ Brian Lai and Daniel S. Morey, “Impact of Regime Type on the Influence of U.S. Foreign Aid,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 2 (2006): 385-404.

³⁶ For classic articulations of dependency theory see: Johan Galtung, “A Structural Theory of Imperialism,” *Journal of Peace Research* 8, no. 2 (1971): 81-117; James A. Caporaso, “Dependence, Dependency, and Power in the Global System: A Structural and Behavioral Analysis,” *International Organization* 32, no. 1 (1978): 13-43; Raymond D. Duvall, “Dependence and Dependencia Theory: Notes Toward Precision of Concept and Argument,” *International Organization* 32, no. 1 (1978): 51-78.

³⁷ Moon, “The Foreign Policy of the Dependent State, 321.

Hypothesis 3a applies the dependency mechanism to all states, while Hypothesis 3b, following Lai and Morey, limits the analysis to autocratic regimes:

Hypothesis 3a: *FIRCs that install dependent leaders increase political affinity between intervening and target states.*

Hypothesis 3b: *FIRCs that install dependent leaders in authoritarian states increase political affinity between intervening and target states*

Hegemony and the U.S.-Led Order. A final, and related, way that FIRC could improve interstate relations is by creating a hegemonic relationship between the intervening and target state. Lindsey O'Rourke, for instance, argues that powerful states pursue regime change in pursuit of the goal of regional hegemony and identified eighteen examples of U.S.-backed hegemonic regime change attempts during the Cold War.³⁸ She notes that “the defining feature of a hegemonic regime change is the desire to maintain a hierarchical relationship between the intervener and the target state as part of the former’s effort to establish regional hegemony.”³⁹ Aspiring hegemons hope to acquire the political, military and economic benefits of the position by installing foreign leaders in subordinate states, who acquiesce to their dominant position—or, in the words of one 1953 U.S. National Security Council directive, “hemisphere solidarity in support of our world policies, particularly in the UN and other international organizations.”⁴⁰

Hierarchical systems should be thought of as a type of social contract wherein dominant states provide public goods, such as military protection or economic integration, to minor powers

³⁸ O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change*, 39-41.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 40, note 110.

to promote the hegemon's interests. In exchange for these public goods, minor powers acquiesce to the hegemon's rule, thereby creating a hierarchical interstate system.⁴¹ According to David Lake, "Relational authority is premised on an exchange between ruler and ruled in which A provides a political order of value to B sufficient to offset the loss of freedom incurred in his subordination to A to exert the restraints on his behavior necessary to provide that order."⁴² G. John Ikenberry provides a similar explanation for how mature liberal democracies lock in favorable postwar positions of power by using international institutions and the openness of their domestic democratic institutions to demonstrate their state's strategic restraint as a means to gain the acquiescence of minor powers to their rule.⁴³

If a hegemonic FIRC is successful, studies have suggested several ways that intervener-target state relations may improve. To begin, subordinate states may further bolster the security interests of hegemons by following them into war and providing them with material resources that bolster their military strength.⁴⁴ Moreover, hegemons can set the economic policy of subordinate states, which in turn, translates into a variety of economic benefits for themselves, including increased bilateral trade, wider foreign use of hegemon's currency, and the expansion of economic international institutions whose rules benefit the hegemon.⁴⁵ In addition, hegemons can gain legitimacy for their international actions from the support of subordinate states in

⁴¹ David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2009). See Chapter 1 for a summary of supporting arguments.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 28-29.

⁴³ G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁴⁴ Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 12; David A. Lake, "Escape from the State of Nature: Authority and Hierarchy in World Politics," *International Security* 32, no. 1 (2007): 47-79.

⁴⁵ Stephen D. Krasner, "State Power and the Structure of International Trade," *World Politics* 28, no. 3 (1976): 317-47; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-34; Robert Gilpin and Jean M. Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987); Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*.

international institutions.⁴⁶ Finally, John Ikenberry and Charles Kupchan argue that in hegemonic systems, “a process of socialization [can occur] in which the norms and value orientations of leaders in secondary states change more closely to reflect those of the dominant state... socialization leads to the legitimation of hegemonic power in a way that allows international order to be maintained without the constant threat of coercion.”⁴⁷

Hypothesis 4 [Hegemony]: *Hegemonic FIRC*s increase political affinity between intervening and target states.

In sum, the existing literature suggests four pathways through which FIRC

s may improve intervener-target relations. Whether regime change is achieved by installing friendly leaders in target states, by democratizing the political institutions of authoritarian states, by creating client-patron relationships, or constructing a hierarchical interstate order, regime change is supposed to result in stable, reliable allies disposed to protecting interveners’ interests.

INTERVENTION PESSIMISTS

Skepticism regarding the ability of FIRC or any other type of intervention to generate cooperation can be derived from several sources. To begin, structural realists maintain that the structure of the international system compels states to pursue their state’s geostrategic interests regardless of which particular political leader holds power. Other scholars argue that when

⁴⁶ David A. Lake, “Regional Hierarchy: Authority and Local International Order,” *Review of International Studies* 35, Supplement S1 (February 2009): 35-58.

⁴⁷ G. John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan, “Socialization and Hegemonic Power,” *International Organization* 44, no. 3 (1990): 283-315; See also Alexander Wendt and Daniel Friedheim, “Hierarchy under Anarchy: Informal Empire and the East German State,” *International Organization* 49, no. 4 (1995): 689-721.

interveners become embroiled in the domestic politics of another state for the purposes of counterinsurgency or statebuilding, they often find themselves starkly at odds with their protégés. In many cases, newly installed leaders find themselves caught in a Catch-22 position between satisfying their domestic audiences and foreign backers. This domestic pushback may persuade protégé elites that carrying out the intervener's wishes will hurt their political survival and take steps to distance themselves from their patron.

Structural Realism. Realism emphasizes the effect of external factors—such as the anarchic nature of the international system, relative power, and (in the case of defensive realism) the security dilemma and the offense-defense balance of military technology—on state behavior.⁴⁸ Realists thus do not expect that changes in leadership or regime type—whether masterminded from outside or resulting from internal processes—should have much of an effect on how a state behaves because no matter who is in charge, that leader will have to respond to the same structural pressures and incentives that affected his predecessor. Because realism weights these factors more heavily than it does unit level factors, although there may be some changes on the margins, states will follow the same path regardless of who wields power.⁴⁹ According to John Mearsheimer, “Realists believe that the behavior of the great powers is influenced mainly by their external environment, not by their internal characteristics. The structure of the international system, which all states must deal with, largely shapes their foreign

⁴⁸ Canonical works include Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30 no. 2 (1978): 167-214; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979); Charles L. Glaser, “Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help,” *International Security* 19 no. 3 (1994/95): 50-90; and John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001). For an extension that technically moves beyond the bounds of (structural) realism, see Charles L. Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011). Obviously, Waltz focuses on the effect of structure on broad systemic outcomes rather than the policies of particular states.

⁴⁹ A number of studies report results consistent with realism, that is, aid or intervention has no effect on cooperation. See Karl Derouen Jr. and UK HEO, “Reward, Punishment or Inducement? U.S. Economic and Military Aid, 1946-1996,” *Defence and Peace Economics* 15, no. 5 (2004): 453-70.

policies. Realists tend not to draw distinctions between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ states, because all great powers act according to the same logic regardless of their culture, political system, or who runs the government.”⁵⁰

Domestic Interest Asymmetries

While Realism highlights the external sources of intervener-target interest disagreements, recent studies of security force assistance and statebuilding highlight a second reason why different forms of aid and intervention may not improve cooperation between states: the principal-agent problem, specifically interest asymmetries between principals (aid providers) and agents (aid recipients).⁵¹ The principal-agent (PA) framework applies to any situation in which one actor delegates a task, function, or authority to another. PA relationships are prone to a variety of problems, one of the most pervasive of which is interest asymmetry: although the interests of principals and agents may overlap, they are far from congruent.⁵² Walter Ladwig, for instance, finds that interest asymmetries are endemic to foreign military assistance to states waging counterinsurgency. While the patron and client both want the client to prevail in the conflict, for the client, “Retaining power is a competing priority...which puts a premium on continuing the domestic social and economic arrangements that benefit its core supporters, even if these same measures are driving support for the insurgency.”⁵³

⁵⁰ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

⁵¹ For an argument that comes to a similar conclusion but without the PA framework, see Patricia L. Sullivan, Brock F. Tesson, and Xiaojun Li, “U.S. Military Aid and Recipient State Cooperation,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 7 (2011): 280.

⁵² Others include adverse selection, information asymmetry, and moral hazard. In fact, the structure of the PA relationship guarantees that they diverge to some extent. This is easiest to see in the realm of economic transactions. A homeowner, for example, would prefer that a contractor repair his roof skillfully, cheaply, and quickly (preferably before the next rain storm!), whereas the contractor has an interest in getting paid for doing the least amount of work.

⁵³ Walter C. Ladwig III, *The Forgotten Front: Patron-Client Relationships in Counterinsurgency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 102-103.

Stephen Biddle, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker argue that similar dynamics apply to security force assistance (SFA) more broadly. Recipients of American SFA often face internal threats to their rule that are more daunting than the external threats prioritized by Washington. “In fact,” they note, “the kind of powerful, politically independent, technically proficient, noncorrupt military the US seeks is often seen by the partner state as a far greater threat to their self-interest than foreign invasion or terrorist infiltration.”⁵⁴ This powerful divergence of interests means that foreign political elites often undercut training missions to keep their soldiers ineffective in an attempt to secure their own political survival.⁵⁵

David Lake identifies similar dynamics during statebuilding operations. Lake posits that states will take on this onerous task only when they have strong interests at stake. For that reason, they will seek to install a loyal leader willing to implement policies that benefit their interests. Lake argues that this strategy goes awry when the statebuilder’s ideal point—its preferred policy on any given issue—is far from the ideal point of the target population. When these preferences are similar, statebuilders can install a loyal leader without generating a backlash in the target state because the policies that the statebuilder asks its protégé to carry out are not much different from what she would have done anyway.⁵⁶ By contrast, when the preferences of the median voter in the target are far removed from those of the statebuilder, empowering a loyal leader is sure to lead to trouble. Leaders in this situation will have no choice

⁵⁴ Stephen Biddle, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker, “Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41 nos. 1-2 (2018): 100.

⁵⁵ These accounts differ regarding the ability of conditionality to overcome the PA problems they identify. Biddle and colleagues argue that the patron’s ability to leverage conditionality to obtain compliance is limited because threats to punish clients for shirking undermine promises to reward working, whereas threats to reward the client for working undercut threats to pull aid in the event of shirking. Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker “Small Footprint, Small Payoff,” 102-03. Ladwig, by contrast, maintains that patrons can elicit compliance by attaching strict conditions to their aid. Walter C. Ladwig III, “Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency: U.S. Involvement in El Salvador’s Civil War, 1979-92,” *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 109, 138-144.

⁵⁶ Convergent intervener-target preferences are also consistent with democracy in the target. Lake, *The Statebuilder’s Dilemma*, 73.

but to rule non-democratically because their ideal point is so far from their constituents' preferences. Such leaders will also direct aid from the statebuilder to their key supporters rather than to the population at large. Moreover, the statebuilder has little choice but to accept a corrupt, undemocratic ruler because the pool of individuals with preferences close to its own is so small that there are few alternatives. In sum, according to Lake, "the more loyal are the leaders, the less support they will receive at home, the more precarious their political positions will be, and the more often they will be challenged by domestic opponents. By emphasizing loyalty, the statebuilder increases the likelihood of getting favorable policies, but this comes at the cost of greater political instability and the risk that it will have to intervene again in the future."⁵⁷

Owing to the external or domestic sources of interest divergences discussed above, Downes and O'Rourke argue that leaders placed in office by foreign powers tend to face a Catch-22 situation driven by an incompatibility between the intervener's preferences and those of the new leader's domestic constituents.⁵⁸ The key problem arises from the simple reality that no two states have identical interests. Interveners view regime change as a means to solve this problem, to remove leaders whose policies endanger the intervener's security or threaten its interests and replace those leaders with new ones who will implement policies that are more congruent with those of the intervener. The intervener—the "principal" in the language of principal-agent theory—tries to bring the interests of the two states into line by selecting a leader (an "agent") with compatible beliefs or policy priorities to its own, but the structure of the situation works against this alignment and generates a mismatch of interests.

⁵⁷ Lake, *The Statebuilder's Dilemma*, 78.

⁵⁸ Downes and O'Rourke, "You Can't Always Get What You Want."

Even if the principal was completely informed and was able to select an agent whose ideals were perfectly consistent with its own—which is rarely the case—differences between states would nevertheless give rise to divergent preferences. Externally imposed leaders must in effect answer to two masters. On the one hand, the intervener pressures the leader to follow through on his promises to carry out policies preferred by the intervener—and can threaten his political survival if he refuses. On the other hand, an imposed leader’s domestic audience expects him to implement policies favorable to internal constituencies—and can also threaten his political survival in case of noncompliance. This situation creates a new commitment problem by giving imposed leaders incentives to renege on their promises.

Hypothesis 5 [Regime Change Skeptics]: *FIRCs have no effect on the political affinity between intervening and target states.*

Reverse Leverage. A final group of scholars provides a similar but even more pessimistic perspective on the efficacy of aid provision to produce cooperation than do the domestic interest asymmetry and lonely superpower theses. According to this view, the amount of foreign aid a country receives from its patron depends on its importance for the patron’s security. Because the recipient knows that the aid provider relies heavily on the recipient for security reasons—even more than the recipient relies on the patron’s aid—increases in aid will not result in increased cooperation and indeed should produce less cooperation. Worse still, uncooperative aid recipients will not be punished for their misbehavior with a cut or withdrawal of aid because the patron cannot take the risk that punishing its protégé will cause it to cut ties with the patron and seek assistance elsewhere (either from another state or by buying arms on the open market). In

short, as Sullivan, Tessman, and Li write, “Materially weak states can exploit the fact that a much stronger donor relies on them to provide some vital good—and the threat of defection to an alternative supplier—to exert influence over the donor.”⁵⁹ In effect, the “tail” (the weak state recipient of aid) wags the “dog” (the powerful aid provider). Sullivan, Tessman, and Li find support for the reverse leverage argument in a quantitative study of U.S. military aid and recipient cooperation with the United States from 1990 to 2004. “Realizing their leverage,” the authors surmise, “states that receive high amounts of aid are actually more able to engage in uncooperative behavior than are states that the United States does not depend so heavily upon.”⁶⁰

Hypothesis 6 [Reverse Leverage]: *FIRCs reduce the political affinity between intervening and target states.*

Research Design

This section describes our dataset, defines our independent, dependent, and control variables, and explains our choice of methodology.

DATASET

To estimate the effects of overt FIRCs by all countries in the world and covert FIRCs by the United States during the Cold War, we use a directed-dyad-year dataset that includes all politically-relevant dyads in the world from 1945 to 2000. Assessing the effects of overt FIRCs requires a directed-dyad-year dataset. The reason is that the intervener (“State A”) and the target (“State B”) in these regime changes can each be any country in the world, and thus the data must

⁵⁹ Sullivan, Tessman, and Li, “U.S. Military Aid and Recipient State Cooperation,” 281.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 290.

be structured such that both the intervener and the target can vary. Each pair of states appears in the dataset twice in each year: once as State A-State B and once as State B-State A. Because so many pairs of states (e.g., Bolivia-Botswana) have almost a zero percent change of experiencing a regime change, we limit the dataset to politically-relevant dyads—those that contain contiguous states or at least one great power.⁶¹ Over the time period covered by our study, this procedure results in an *N* of roughly 93,000 cases.

For covert FIRCs, because we have data on such operations carried out exclusively by the United States—and thus the United States is present in every dyad—it is possible to use a country-year dataset instead of a directed-dyad dataset.⁶² For ease of comparison, however, and to be able to include exactly the same control variables in both analyses, we opt here to perform our covert FIRC analysis using the directed-dyad setup. Before carrying out our analysis, we drop all dyads in which the United States is not State A from the dataset. Thus, rather than comparing the effects of covert FIRCs by the United States to UN voting patterns among all global dyads, our comparison is limited to dyads in which the United States carried out a covert FIRC versus dyads in which it did not.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

To operationalize our dependent variable of political affinity between the intervening and target state, we use the similarity of two countries' voting records in the UN General Assembly. More specifically, following Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten, we use the “dyadic affinity score” (*S* score) calculated using two category vote data, with yes votes (approval of a measure) assigned a

⁶¹ This results in the loss of only a handful of FIRCs, such as Nigeria's participation in the 1998 operation that restored Tejan Kabbah to office in Sierra Leone.

⁶² Indeed, one of us has used the country-year as the unit of analysis in a previous study. See O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change*, Chapter 4.

value of 1 and no votes (disapproval) coded as 2.⁶³ Although an imperfect measure of political affinity, “Votes in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) have become the standard data source for constructing measures of state preferences, as they are comparable and observable actions taken by many countries at set points in time.”⁶⁴ Indeed, Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten find that “Scholars have used UN votes to measure foreign policy preferences virtually since the institution was established... We found seventy-five articles published between 1998 and 2012 that used UN votes to construct measures of national preferences.”⁶⁵

For covert FIRCs, this measure represents a country’s record of voting with or against the United States in the UNGA. For overt FIRCs, it captures the similarity of State A and State B’s voting records. This variable ranges from -1 (least similar voting records) to +1 (most similar). Of course, voting yes or no on resolutions is not the only option in the UN: member states may abstain rather than cast an affirmative or negative vote. Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten follow previous practice by coding abstentions as taking a value in between yes and no. For the three-value affinity score, yes is coded as 1, abstain as 2, and no as 3. We check for robustness using this version of the dependent variable.⁶⁶

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

In this study, we follow the definition of foreign-imposed regime change put forward by Downes and Monten: “the forcible or coerced removal of the effective leader of one state—which

⁶³ The dyadic affinity score is calculated using Signorino and Ritter’s (1999) *S* indicator. Curtis S. Signorino and Jeffrey M. Ritter, “Tau-b or Not Tau-b: Measuring the Similarity of Foreign Policy Positions,” *International Studies Quarterly* 43 (1999): 115-44.

⁶⁴ Michael A. Bailey, Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten, “Estimating Dynamic State Preferences from United Nations Voting Data,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61 no. 2 (2017): 431.

⁶⁵ Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten “Estimating Dynamic State Preferences from United Nations Voting Data,” 432.

⁶⁶ We also create a third dependent variable, change in affinity score, which measures the difference in UN voting similarity from year to year by subtracting the score in the year of observation from the score in the prior year. For the two-vote affinity score, this variable ranges from -1.73 to +2.

remains formally sovereign afterward—by the government of another state.”⁶⁷ We divide FIRC into overt and covert types. In overt FIRCs, the intervener makes little or no attempt to hide its involvement. Data on overt FIRCs come from Downes and include all overt FIRCs carried out by any country from 1816 to 2000 that succeeded in toppling the targeted government ($N = 99$) as well as a sample of such operations that were unsuccessful ($N = 33$).⁶⁸ Because the UN has only existed since the end of World War II and the first data on UN voting is from 1946, there are obviously fewer overt FIRCs included in our analysis. Thirty-seven such operations were initiated successfully between 1945 and 2000, but owing to our ten year treatment window our analysis captures the effects of some FIRCs that occurred immediately before or during the war, such as the overthrow of Reza Shah Pahlavi by Britain and the Soviet Union in 1941 or the restoration of democratic governments in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, and Denmark in 1944 and 1945.⁶⁹ Fourteen overt FIRCs were attempted but failed in the time period (after 1936) when their effects could appear in our analysis.

Covert foreign-imposed regime change, following O’Rourke, our source of data for covert FIRCs, consists of “an operation to replace the political leadership of another state where the intervening state does not acknowledge its role publicly. These actions include successful and failed attempts to covertly assassinate foreign leaders, sponsor coups d’état, influence foreign democratic elections, incite popular revolutions, and support armed dissident groups in their bids

⁶⁷ Alexander B. Downes and Jonathan Monten, “Forced to Be Free: Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization,” *International Security* 37, no. 4 (2013): 109.

⁶⁸ Alexander B. Downes, “Catastrophic Success: Assessing the Consequences of Foreign-Imposed Regime Change,” book ms. in progress, 2019.

⁶⁹ The effects of German FIRCs from 1939 to 1945 do not extend into our sample because in our dataset “Germany” ceased to exist in 1945 (it did not reappear until 1990). Because Germany itself suffered a FIRC in 1945 and was broken into two different successor states with totally different governments than the previous Nazi regime, we consider the effects of Nazi wartime FIRCs to end with the extinction of Nazi Germany. Thus, we do not code the effects of the German FIRC in Belgium in 1941, for example, to apply to the West Germany-Belgium or East Germany-Belgium dyads.

to topple a foreign government.”⁷⁰ In this study, we include sixty-four covert FIRC by the United States during the Cold War, twenty-five of which succeeded in overthrowing the targeted government and thirty-nine that failed.

A couple of additional details on the coding of the independent variables deserve elaboration. First, how long should the effect of FIRC be considered to last? Some previous studies have treated regime change as a permanent attribute of a dyad whereas others have assessed its effects over shorter intervals, such as five to ten years.⁷¹ In this study, our primary test uses a treatment duration of ten years, but we shorten this and lengthen it in robustness tests. Second, when should the effect of FIRC be considered to start? For successful regime changes, we code the ten-year treatment as starting in the year after FIRC occurs. For failed FIRC operations, we code the effect as starting in the year after the operation ends.

In order to test Hypotheses 1 and 2, we divide such operations into three types. The first, leadership FIRC, involves overthrowing a leader while refraining from any concerted effort to build political institutions or hold (somewhat free and fair) elections in the target state.⁷² This type of FIRC corresponds to the kind described in Hypothesis 1, where interveners align targets’ preferences by empowering different leaders. Institutional FIRC, by contrast, occurs when interveners overthrow the leader *and* construct institutions around him to structure governance in the country. This variable tests Hypothesis 2 about interest alignment via democratization.⁷³ The

⁷⁰ O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change*, 15.

⁷¹ For an example of the former procedure, see Lo, Hashimoto, and Reiter, “Ensuring Peace.” Examples of the latter include Goran Peic and Dan Reiter, “Foreign-Imposed Regime Change, State Power and Civil War Onset, 1920-2004,” *British Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 3 (2011): 453-75; Downes and Monten, “Forced to Be Free;” Downes and O’Rourke, “You Can’t Always Get What You Want;” and O’Rourke, *Covert Regime Change*.

⁷² This can be because institutions already exist and the intervener is simply swapping out one leader for another in the same institutional context, or because few institutions exist and the intervener consciously eschews constructing them.

⁷³ For covert FIRC, “institutional” regime change is synonymous with “pro-democratic.” Examples include Poland, Nicaragua, Chile, and the Philippines in the 1980s. For overt FIRC, “institutional” currently refers not only to efforts at post-FIRC democratization (e.g., West, Germany, Japan, Afghanistan 2001, and Iraq 2003) but also the

third type, restoration FIRC, entails returning the previous leader and/or institutions of a country back to power within five years of their ouster. Successful overt and covert FIRCs are coded as belonging to one of these categories (although there are no covert restoration FIRCs); these designations obviously do not apply to failed operations.

CONTROL VARIABLES

For our analyses of both overt and covert FIRC, given that we have repeated measures of our dependent variable over time, one of the most important variables to control for is the value of the dependent variable in the previous year. We thus include the lagged value of the dyadic affinity score as an independent variable. Second, it is likely that states that are located at a great distance from each other have less in common and thus should be less likely to vote in similar ways in the UNGA. To capture this potential effect, we include the log of the distance between the two countries. Third, states with the same regime type may be more likely to have similar interests, which could be reflected in similar vote patterns in the UNGA. In the covert analysis, since the United States is always a democracy, regime similarity is captured by coding whether the target state is a democracy (it exceeded +6 on the combined Polity2 index). In the dyadic analysis of overt FIRC, we include dummy variables coded 1 if Side A, Side B, or Sides A and B are democratic. Fourth, an alliance between two states is probably a good indicator of similar interests; we thus include a dummy variable for whether the two states were members of the same formal alliance as coded by the Correlates of War alliance data. Fifth, it is possible that states at similar levels of economic development could have similar interests and thus be likely

transformation of countries into single-party communist regimes, such as East Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia after World War II. Future drafts will restrict overt institutional FIRCs to pro-democracy FIRCs.

to vote in similar ways in the UNGA.⁷⁴ We test this intuition by including a variable that records the log of the absolute value of the difference between State A and State B's energy consumption. Dyads with scores close to zero possess similar levels of development whereas in those with higher scores, State A or State B is more developed than its partner in the dyad. Finally, one might expect that states with highly asymmetric military capabilities might have similar voting records because of the influence that the powerful wield over the weak. Similarly, states that are more powerful might be more defiant and less willing to go along with the preferences of others.⁷⁵ We test for this potential effect by including the log of the absolute value of the difference between State A and State B's number of military personnel.⁷⁶

METHOD

Because our dependent variable is continuous and our data take the form of a panel, we use a linear regression model with panel-corrected standard errors and a lagged dependent variable to account for autocorrelation. Since we are more interested in the longitudinal effects of regime change within countries that experience it than the differences between targets of regime change and other countries that do not experience FIRC, we primarily employ fixed effects models and check for robustness with random effects models. The fixed effects models also help account for unmeasured characteristics of countries that do not vary.

⁷⁴ Lai and Morey, "Impact of Regime Type on the Influence of U.S. Foreign Aid," 393, cite studies which argue that wealthy states have similar underlying preferences.

⁷⁵ Lai and Morey, "Impact of Regime Type on the Influence of U.S. Foreign Aid," 393; and Wang, "U.S. Foreign Aid and UN Voting," 206.

⁷⁶ In the dyadic analysis, energy parity and military parity are correlated at 0.66. However, the VIF statistics for these variables are only 3.66 and 3.19, respectively, indicating that multicollinearity is not a problem.

CHALLENGES TO ESTIMATION

The biggest challenge to estimating the effect of regime change on dyadic affinity is non-random selection. It is plausible, for example, that interveners select only the hardest targets for FIRC—states with diametrically opposed interests. Simply put, states don't usually overthrow their friends. Transforming the interests of these hard targets will be difficult, and thus a naïve analysis might underestimate the effect of regime change on the target's behavior. The traditional way of correcting for selection bias—instrumental variables—is complicated in this instance by the improbability of finding a variable that is correlated with the decision to undertake regime change but not correlated with post-FIRC relations.⁷⁷ Therefore, we opt for a different method for dealing with selection bias—matching. Matching adjusts the sample by pairing treated cases with non-treated cases in such a way as to minimize the differences between treated and non-treated across as many independent variables as the analyst can measure. The result is a set of control cases that (on average) is statistically indistinguishable from the treated cases, reducing the likelihood that the latter are systematically different from the former. T-tests or regression models can then check whether a significant effect of regime change on dyadic affinity emerges or persists.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Daniel Ho, Kosuke Imai, Gary King, and Elizabeth Stuart, "Matching as Nonparametric Preprocessing for Reducing Model Dependence in Parametric Causal Inference," *Political Analysis* 15 (2007): 199-236.

⁷⁸ To be clear, matching does not eliminate selection bias. Matching makes the same assumption of no omitted (or unobserved) variables that traditional regression models make. One must thus use appropriate caution in concluding that selection bias is not present. Michael K. Miller, "The Uses and Abuses of Matching in Political Science," undated working paper, George Washington University. Analysts, however, can assess the robustness of their results to unobserved omitted variables using Rosenbaum sensitivity analysis. Luke Keele, "An Overview of rbounds: An R Package for Rosenbaum Bounds Sensitivity Analysis with Matched Data," unpublished paper, 2010.

Statistical Results

This section presents the results of our statistical analysis of the effect of overt and covert regime change on voting similarity in the UN General Assembly. We begin with the results for overt FIRCs and proceed to those for covert FIRCs.

OVERT REGIME CHANGE

Table 1 displays the results of three fixed effects models. The dependent variable is the dyadic affinity score calculated using only yes and no votes. The model is run three times: first with the combined indicator of all types of FIRCs; a second time with successful FIRCs and failed FIRCs coded separately; and a third time with successful FIRCs split into leadership, institutional, and restoration types. Treatment effects in all cases are ten years.

[Table 1 about here]

The models in Table 1 support the conclusion that neither FIRC in general—successful or unsuccessful—nor any type of FIRC exerts an appreciable effect on the similarity of how interveners and targets vote in the UN. These results contradict Hypotheses 1 and 2 regarding the effects of leadership and democratizing FIRCs on intervener-target affinity and support Hypothesis 5 that FIRC should have no effect on the two states' political affinity.⁷⁹ The coefficient in model 1 shows that attempted and successful FIRCs increase the correspondence between the two countries' voting patterns by 0.004 on a 2-point scale. Over a ten-year period, this would amount to a paltry 2 percent increase in dyadic affinity. The standard error, however, is larger than the point estimate, indicating an insignificant effect ($p = 0.692$).⁸⁰ Regime change

⁷⁹ We have not yet run models testing Hypotheses 3 and 4.

⁸⁰ The substantive effect of FIRC using the version of the dependent variable calculated using yes votes, no votes, and abstentions is larger (0.008) but is also insignificant ($p = 0.350$).

at this level of aggregation—successes and failures, and leadership, institutional, and restoration types combined into a single indicator—thus exerts little effect on dyadic affinity as proxied by similarity in UNGA voting.

It is possible, however, that successful and failed FIRC^s have opposite effects—the former increasing dyadic affinity and the latter reducing it. Model 2 therefore differentiates successful overt regime changes from failures. The direction of the effects supports this intuition—with successful FIRC^s increasing dyadic similarity and failed FIRC^s lowering it—but neither coefficient approaches significance ($p = 0.383$ for successful FIRC^s, $p = 0.362$ for failures). The substantive effect of successful FIRC^s is again quite small: the coefficient of 0.011 would bring states 5.5 percent closer on the dyadic affinity scale. Successful regime change thus does not appear to have much of an effect on UN voting similarity. Overt regime change attempts that fail—such as Britain, France, and Israel’s attempt to oust Egyptian President Gamel Abdel Nasser during the Suez War in 1956—have a larger, negative effect on dyadic affinity, reducing it nearly 12 percent over ten years. The uncertainty around this estimate, however, precludes us from being able to conclude that failed overt FIRC^s worsen dyadic affinity.⁸¹

Model 3 shows that any positive effect that successful FIRC^s might have on dyadic affinity comes from restorations. Given that many of these cases involve democracies returning democratic governments to power after World War II, one might expect this type of regime change to increase the affinity of the two nations involved. Even here, however, the result does not attain significance ($p = 0.285$).⁸² Neither leadership nor institutional FIRC^s come anywhere close to statistical significance. The effect of the former is essentially zero whereas the latter is

⁸¹ Moreover, using the three-vote version of the dependent variable, failed overt FIRC^s have a slightly positive (but insignificant) effect.

⁸² This relationship comes closer to significance using the alternative dependent variable ($p = 0.114$).

negatively signed with a larger estimated effect when affinity scores are calculated with yes vs. no votes than with yes vs. abstain vs. no votes.⁸³

It is possible that these lackluster results for overt FIRC stem from selection bias. States may opt for regime change only when they have a serious conflict of interest with another state and lesser means of solving the problem have failed. Targets of regime change are thus unlikely to be predisposed to agree with the intervener's interests and will require major changes of personnel and outlook. The entire premise of regime change, of course, is that this is possible and can result in reliable allies who share the intervener's interests. Nevertheless, to reduce the chance that this kind of selection process is negatively biasing our results, we implemented matching to produce a set of control case that is on average indistinguishable from the treated cases.

To do this, because we have a panel dataset, we first eliminated all years in a dyad that experienced a FIRC other than the year in which the FIRC occurred such that FIRC dyads cannot be matched to themselves in other years. For example, Tanzania overthrew Ugandan dictator Idi Amin in 1979. To ensure that Tanzania-Uganda-1979 cannot be matched to Tanzania-Uganda-1978 or 1981, we dropped the other years for that dyad so that the only time Tanzania-Uganda appears in the dataset is in 1979. We then used genetic matching in *MatchIt* with FIRC and each

⁸³ Results for regime change using random effects are similarly insignificant, if slightly more negative, than the fixed effects results. The results for some of the control variables appear confusing until one recalls that the coefficients represent the effect of these variables on change over time within countries rather than differences between countries. For example, distance has no effect in the fixed effects specifications shown in Table 1, but countries hardly ever move so this variable is fairly constant. By contrast, in random effects models (not shown) distance has a highly significant negative effect: countries farther away from each other, as one would expect, exhibit less similarity in their UN voting patterns. Similarly, the fixed effects results show that dyadic affinity increases as countries move away from economic parity, a result that contradicts the expectations of previous studies. This result, moreover, does not change much when random effects are used. And dyads that are more militarily asymmetric tend to vote less alike, not more as alike as earlier studies hypothesized—a result that also persists with random effects. Other results are more in line with expectations, however: countries that become jointly democratic or allied with State B in the dyad exhibit significantly greater affinity as measured by UN votes.

type of FIRC as treatment variables, creating four matched datasets.⁸⁴ The dependent variable is the difference between a dyad's affinity score in a given year and its score ten years later.

Finally, we compared the mean change in affinity score of the treated pairs to the untreated pairs using t-tests.⁸⁵

The results are summarized in Figure 1.⁸⁶ Again, we find no evidence for Hypotheses 1 and 2 describing the conciliatory effects of FIRCs. To the contrary, our results support Hypothesis 5 that FIRCs have no significant effect on the subsequent political affinity of interveners and targets. For each type of FIRC, the dot on the left represents the mean change in dyadic affinity score ten years later for dyads that did not experience FIRC. The dot on the right shows the same effect for dyads ten years after a FIRC occurred. The capped lines running through each dot signify the 95 percent confidence interval for each estimate. The first pair of dots in the figure shows that dyadic affinity scores for dyads without FIRCs increase on average about 0.05 points over ten years. Successful regime change, however, reduces a dyad's affinity score 0.04 points a decade later, for a combined difference of nearly 0.10. Failed regime changes similarly worsen UN voting similarity by about 0.04 points. Leadership and restoration regime change also each reduce dyadic affinity by 0.05 and 0.09, respectively, whereas dyads' affinity scores after institutional regime change are virtually the same as those where no regime change occurred. None of these effects is significant, but there is certainly no trace of the positive effect

⁸⁴ Matching uniformly resulted in major improvements in balance between treated and control cases (greater than 99 percent for overall propensity score, and above 90 percent in almost all cases for individual variables).

⁸⁵ It would be preferable to use regression analysis including the control variables since matching does not eliminate all differences between treated and control cases. This was possible for successful FIRC and leadership FIRC, and these two variables were negative and significant at the 95 and 90 percent levels of significance, respectively, indicated that all FIRCs together and leadership FIRCs specifically do actually worsen dyadic affinity. There were very low numbers of overt institutional and restoration FIRCs in our data, so regression analysis was not possible for these types of FIRC.

⁸⁶ For space reasons we have omitted the combined indicator for successful and failed overt FIRCs. It shows a positive (or rather less negative) effect on dyadic affinity, but not significant.

that regime change enthusiasts posit should be present. While acknowledging that matching has its limitations, it does not appear that selection bias is masking a beneficial effect of regime change on dyadic affinity.

[Figure 1 about here]

COVERT REGIME CHANGE

Table 2 displays our fixed effects results for covert regime changes by the United States during the Cold War and dyadic affinity scores over the ensuing ten years. Model 4 shows the effects of all covert regime change attempts together, both successes and failures. Model 5 estimates the effect of covert FIRC that succeed in toppling the target government and those that fail separately. Model 6, finally, shows the effects of successful covert leadership FIRC versus successful institutional FIRC.

[Table 2 about here]

When successful and failed covert regime changes are considered together, model 4 in Table 2 demonstrates that they exert the slightest of (insignificant) negative effects on UN voting similarity between the United States and its target. Assessing the effects of successful and failed covert FIRC separately in model 5 shows that—contrary to our expectations—they have opposite effects, with the former significantly increasing dyadic affinity and the latter significantly worsening it. Indeed, these effects are sizable. Over the course of a decade, successful covert FIRC are estimated to enhance dyadic affinity 25 percent; the corresponding effect for failed covert FIRC is to reduce dyadic affinity 26 percent. Finally, model 6 demonstrates that among successful FIRC, both the leadership and institutional varieties increase dyadic affinity. The latter is significant at the 95 percent level of confidence with a

larger substantive effect whereas the former attains significance at the 90 percent level with an effect roughly half the size. Each of these effects is contrary to our expectations.

What is going on here? A look at the data provides some answers. The United States achieved success in only five covert institutional FIRC's during the Cold War: the Dominican Republic (1965-68), Nicaragua (1979-89), Chile (1984-89), Poland (1981-89), and the Philippines (1984-86). The first thing that is worth noting—other than that the result is based on a small number of cases—is that four out of five of these cases (Nicaragua being the exception) entailed non-forceful U.S. aid to pro-democracy parties or factions. U.S. responsibility for “success” in these cases is thus more tenuous than in others where Washington provided direct military aid. Second, even though the estimated effect of these successful institutional regime changes is positive, in only the Dominican and Polish cases did the improvement result in affinity scores greater than zero, meaning that these countries voted with the United States more often than not. In the remaining three cases, although there was marginal improvement in voting similarity, the affinity score remained negative. These cases thus hardly represent resounding successes for regime change.

With regard to successful covert leadership FIRC's, with only a couple of exceptions, all such cases ($N = 19$) that improved the target's UN voting similarity with the United States or maintained it at a high level occurred in strong, democratic U.S. allies, including France (1947-52), Italy (1947-1968 and 1972-73), and Japan (1952-68). As with successful institutional FIRC's, these operations consisted of election assistance to pro-U.S. democratic parties and opposition to communist parties, which are the types of operation where U.S. responsibility for the successful outcome is most questionable.⁸⁷ The record of successful covert leadership FIRC's

⁸⁷ O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change*, 109-10.

in the Third World, however, is much less impressive. For example, the Dominican Republic's dyadic affinity score with the United States dropped from 0.875 the year after the covert assassination of Dominican strongman Rafael Trujillo in 1961 to 0.286 by the late 1960s. Similarly, Brazil's proclivity to vote with Washington in the UN slipped from 0.913 immediately after the 1964 U.S.-backed coup to 0.118 a decade later. Even in Chile, where the overthrow of Salvador Allende produced a right-wing dictatorship under Augusto Pinochet that was strongly pro-American, Chile's propensity to support the United States in the UN dropped a full 50 percent by the early 1980s. Although Iran and Guatemala lined up fairly predictably behind their American patrons in the UN General Assembly, it appears that U.S. covert leadership FIRCs in the Third World paid remarkably few dividends in terms of improved relations.

Given the differences in where covert leadership FIRCs increased dyadic affinity, matching may show that this divergence is accounted for more by the characteristics of targets than by FIRC itself. We followed the same matching procedure outlined above for overt FIRC. The results are summarized in Figure 2. Once we cull the observations that are highly unlike the cases where various types of covert FIRCs occur, all significant effects disappear. In the original analysis successful covert FIRCs, leadership FIRCs, and institutional FIRCs significantly increased dyadic affinity. In our matched analysis, by contrast, none of these FIRC types increases dyadic affinity to a significant degree. Similarly, failed covert FIRCs no longer have much of a negative effect on UN voting similarity.⁸⁸ The only type of covert FIRC that even comes close to increasing dyadic affinity is successful institutional regime change, which boosts

⁸⁸ Other analyses using different types of matching have found similar null effects for successful covert FIRCs but found that a significant negative of failed covert FIRCs persisted after matching. See O'Rourke, *Covert Regime Change*, 88.

affinity 16 percent. This effect fails to attain significance, however ($p = 0.167$), and it is difficult to draw strong conclusions given that there are only five cases.

[Figure 2 about here]

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

In sum, our statistical analysis of the relationship between overt and covert regime change and dyadic affinity between nations based on UN voting data suggests that regime change optimists are wrong. There is little evidence supporting Hypotheses 1 and 2 that regime change of any kind improves intervener-target relations, at least as proxied by how countries vote in the UN General Assembly. The only types of FIRC that appeared to have salutary effects were successful covert leadership and institutional FIRCs, but matching rendered these effects insignificant. Moreover, an examination of the cases underlying the findings revealed that most targets of covert institutional FIRCs still voted against the United States most of the time, and successful leadership FIRCs tended to occur mostly in advanced states that already had good relations with Washington. Overall, our findings are most consistent with Hypothesis 5 that FIRC has no effect on the subsequent political affinity and intervening and target states.

Case Study: U.S. Support for Afghan President Hamid Karzai

The remainder of this paper is devoted to analyzing whether our theory's causal mechanisms were at play following the 2001 U.S.-backed FIRC in Afghanistan. This case is a good test for our theory for two reasons. To begin, Washington's relationship with Hamid Karzai began far more positively than its relationship with many other U.S.-backed leaders. Bush administration officials enthusiastically embraced Karzai as an admirable leader with similar policy preferences

and U.S.-Afghan relations remained friendly for several years. Consequently, it would be more surprising to see Washington's relationship with Karzai deteriorate—as our theory would predict—compared to other U.S.-installed leaders. Second, U.S. officials did not make the initial decision to topple the Taliban under duress. States sometimes reluctantly pursue FIRC after another state has attacked them or because they see no better alternatives. However, this was not the case in Afghanistan. Contrary to popular belief, the Bush administration first approved overthrowing the Taliban before September 11th, suggesting that U.S. officials genuinely believed the country was a good candidate for regime change. We propose that if a FIRC—like Afghanistan—that is launched with high expectations for success cannot succeed, operations launched under less optimistic circumstances are even less likely to be effective.

ORIGINS OF REGIME CHANGE

Washington first contemplated overthrowing the Taliban government of Afghanistan in 1999 for providing sanctuary and support Osama Bin Laden and other members of Al Qaeda.⁸⁹ While policymakers within the Clinton Administration split on the wisdom of such an action, the idea gained more traction after George W. Bush entered office in 2001. Bush Administration officials met on numerous occasions in the spring and summer of 2001 to develop their Afghan policy.⁹⁰ Interestingly, according to the 9/11 Commission Report, the National Security Council authorized a three-stage plan to oust the Taliban regime on September 10, 2001. First, Washington would give Taliban leaders an ultimatum to hand over Osama Bin Laden. If they refused, the United States would begin “a planned covert action program including significant

⁸⁹ 9/11 Commission. "Diplomacy, Staff Statement No. 5." 14.
http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/staff_statements/staff_statement_5.pdf,

⁹⁰ Ibid., 15.

additional funding and more support for Pashtun opponents of the regime.”⁹¹ If those groups failed to topple the regime, U.S. policymakers agreed that the United States would seek “to overthrow the Taliban regime through more direct action.”⁹²

Following the next day’s terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, the White House quickly adopted an accelerated version of this plan. On September 20, President Bush issued an ultimatum, which included the demands that the Taliban hand over Al Qaeda’s leaders, shut down terrorist training camps, and grant the U.S. access to all training camps on Afghan soil.⁹³ Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar faced a dilemma. If he handed Bin Laden over and granted the U.S. access to Afghan territory, he would alienate his regime’s conservative supporters and potentially pave the way for further U.S. incursions into his country. If he failed to hand Bin Laden over, however, the Taliban faced almost certain defeat. Confronted with these unpleasant options, Taliban leaders proposed a deal: If the U.S. could provide strong evidence that Bin Laden was behind the attacks, they would hand him over to another Muslim country.⁹⁴ Bush rejected the offer immediately.⁹⁵

CHOOSING A LEADER

U.S. strategy during Operation Enduring Freedom involved small numbers of U.S. Special Forces, Marines, and CIA operatives working with the Northern Alliance and other indigenous groups to direct heavy airstrikes against Taliban positions.⁹⁶ Although this strategy meant that the U.S. worked closely with multiple Afghan opposition leaders, Washington did not have a

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Bush, George. "Text: President Bush Address the Nation." *The Washington Post*. Sept. 20, 2001.

⁹⁴ CBS News. "Taliban Won't Turn Over Bin Laden." *CBS News*, Sept. 21, 2001.

⁹⁵ Woodward, Bob. *Bush At War*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002.

⁹⁶ Biddle, Stephen. "Allies, Airpower, and Modern Warfare: The Afghan Model in Afghanistan and Iraq." *International Security*, 2005/06: 161-176.

definitive replacement for Mullah Omar in mind when the operation began.⁹⁷ One likely candidate, an influential anti-Taliban military leader named Ahmad Shah Massoud, had been assassinated in a suicide bombing on September 9—an attack that terrorism analysts suspect may have been a preemptive move by Al Qaeda in anticipation of a U.S. invasion.⁹⁸ Another potential candidate, veteran resistance leader Abdul Haq, was captured and killed by the Taliban in late October. As the Taliban regime collapsed in November, U.S. policymakers worked to identify an Afghan political figure with the credentials, political acumen, and popular appeal to run the country. Hamid Karzai, a well-connected Pashtun leader working with U.S. Special Forces in Kandahar province, stood out as a potential option.

Karzai appealed to U.S. policymakers for several reasons. For one, his ties to the U.S. date back to the 1980s, when he served as a go-between for the CIA, Pakistani ISI, and Afghan mujahedin fighters during the covert effort to expel Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Yet, unlike most Afghan leaders, “he had no blood on his hands.”⁹⁹ Second, Karzai had strong ties to the United States. He spoke English fluently, and six of his eight siblings lived in the United States.¹⁰⁰ Third, Karzai had strong political credentials. He was a relative of the former Afghan King; his father was the head of the powerful Popalzai clan; and he had served as Deputy Foreign Minister before the Taliban came to power.¹⁰¹ Fourth, Karzai was Pashtun, which is the country’s largest ethnic group comprising 42 percent of the population.¹⁰² Since most Taliban

⁹⁷ Perlez, Jane. "A Nation Challenged: The Opposition; Without U.S. Support, Pashtun Leader is Finding Few Allies." *The New York Times*, 11 03, 2001.

⁹⁸ Baker, Aryn. "Ahmed Shah Massoud: A decade After His Murder, Would Afghanistan Be Different Were He Alive?" *Time*, Sept. 09, 2011.

⁹⁹ Gall, Carlotta. 2014. *The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001-2014*, (New York: Mariner Books), 202.

¹⁰⁰ Onishi, Norimitsu. "A Nation Challenged; Man in the News; Clan Leader Turned Stateman: Hamid Karzai." *The New York Times*, Dec. 6, 2001.

¹⁰¹ Ibid; Erlanger, Steven. "A Nation Challenged: Negotiations; Talks in Bonn End With Deal on Leadership for Afghans." *The New York Times*, 12 05, 2001.

¹⁰² Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook: Afghanistan*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> (accessed 2 11, 2015).

supporters were also Pashtun, U.S. planners hoped that Karzai could co-opt Taliban support. Most importantly, from the U.S. perspective, Karzai shared a vision of Afghanistan's future that meshed with Washington's preferences: He promised to introduce democratic elections, protect human rights, educate women, fight terrorism, strengthen civic institutions, and develop his country's private sector.

In early December, the United Nations organized a conference of the leading opposition groups to create an interim government to rule the country until a *loya jirga*, or grand council, could select a President the following summer. With the strong backing of U.S. diplomats, Afghan delegates selected Karzai to be Chairman of the six-month interim regime. UN Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi explained, "Everybody had a list of people, but the only name that you found on (every) list was Hamid Karzai."¹⁰³

The White House applauded Karzai's selection, and the Washington quickly approved a \$16 billion aid package to support his new government.¹⁰⁴ During Karzai's first official visit, Bush declared, "Chairman Karzai is a determined leader, and his Government reflects the hopes of all Afghans for a new and better future, a future free from terror, free from war, and free from want. The United States strongly supports Chairman Karzai's interim Government."¹⁰⁵ Karzai also appeared optimistic. He replied, "Afghanistan is a good partner. It will stay a good partner. And I'm sure that the future of the two countries will be good."¹⁰⁶ The two leaders issued a joint statement outlining their goals:

"President Bush and Chairman Karzai commit to build a lasting partnership for the 21st century, determined to fight terrorism, and ensure security, stability and reconstruction for Afghanistan, and foster representative and accountable

¹⁰³ MacKenzie, Jean. "Karzai's Fall." *The New Republic*, Dec. 1, 2009.

¹⁰⁴ Rohde, David. "Afghan Leader is Sworn In, Asking for Help to Rebuild." *New York Times*, Dec. 22, 2001.

¹⁰⁵ White House. *The President's News Conference with Chairman Hamid Karzai of the Afghan Interim Authority*. Washington DC: White House, 2002.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

government for all Afghan women and men... [W]e affirm our shared determination to support the Bonn agreement for a political transition process in Afghanistan over the next two years.”¹⁰⁷

Other U.S. officials listed a variety of other goals for Karzai’s regime, including promoting human rights, introducing market reforms, decreasing heroin/opium production, allowing Afghan refugees to return to their homes, and defusing Indo-Pakistani regional tensions.¹⁰⁸

KARZAI’S CHALLENGES

Karzai faced the challenge of ruling a country where every modern leader had been ousted or executed.¹⁰⁹ While the Taliban derided Karzai as “America’s chief puppet”, anti-Taliban warlords fought amongst themselves for control of the provinces. Outside of Kabul, where 5,000 foreign troops were stationed, Karzai’s regime was unable to provide even basic security for Afghan civilians.¹¹⁰ Threats loomed on all fronts: In the south and east, Taliban forces led by Mohammad Omar regrouped across the Pakistani border. In the north, Uzbek, Turkmen, and Tajik warlords clashed for control. In Central Afghanistan, Hazara Shiite tribes fought for autonomy. East of Kabul, rival factions of Hezb-e-Islami launched attacks on Afghan and Coalition forces. South of Kabul, the Haqqani network—a group believed to have aided Bin Laden’s escape into Pakistan—targeted coalition forces. In northern and western Afghanistan, Iran funneled arms and money to its preferred groups. Meanwhile, the remnants of Al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups, like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Lashkar-e-Taiba, carved out strongholds throughout the country and in neighboring Pakistan.

¹⁰⁷ Bush, George & Hamid Karzai. *Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and Chairman Hamid Karzai on a New Partnership Between the United States and Afghanistan*. Washington DC: The White House, 2002.

¹⁰⁸ See for example: *Future of Afghanistan*. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001.

¹⁰⁹ Rubin, Alissa. "Karzai Bets on Vilifying U.S. to Shed His Image as a Lackey." *New York Times*, Mar. 12, 2013.

¹¹⁰ Filkins, Dexter. "Charm and the West Keep Afghan in Power, for Now." *New York Times*, Mar. 25, 2002 .

Faced with this multitude of challenges, Karzai set out to defeat or co-opt potential political rivals. Toward this end, he tried to incorporate some members of the Taliban—including former cabinet members, the minister of defense, and other top commanders—into his central government. However, U.S. policymakers quickly forced Karzai to abandon these deals.¹¹¹ Bette Dam explains, “Though Karzai was Washington’s preferred candidate, the Bush administration’s lack of knowledge about Karzai’s political deal-making in the complex Afghan political and tribal dynamics prevented it from appreciating his early efforts to win the war by negotiation.” Instead, Dam continues, “with the support of the United States, many in Karzai’s government marginalized opposing groups and rival tribes, often convincing their ignorant U.S. counterparts that their enemies were Taliban in order to discredit them.”¹¹² Despite this, Karzai remained quite popular, and in June 2002, the *loya jirga* elected him to serve as interim President until national elections could be organized in 2004. Accepting the position, Karzai outlined an ambitious agenda for national reform, and proclaimed, “I don’t want a banana republic. I want a real country.”¹¹³

On May 1, 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced the end of “major combat activity to a period of stability and stabilization and reconstruction and activities.”¹¹⁴ From the U.S. perspective, the change of regime appeared wildly successful. Washington had installed a popular leader with similar policy preferences at a cost of fewer than 100 military fatalities.¹¹⁵ In January 2004, an assembly of Afghan delegates approved a constitution, and in

¹¹¹ A precursor of Washington’s interference came during the war when Karzai cut a deal with Mullah Omar that would have allowed the Taliban to return to their villages in return for an end to the fighting. U.S. officials vetoed the agreement.

¹¹² Dam, Bette. “The Misunderstanding of Hamid Krazai.” *Foreign Policy*, Oct. 3, 2014.

¹¹³ Dao, James. “Pledge of Afghan Leader: No ‘Banana Republic’ Here.” *The New York Times*, June 15, 2002.

¹¹⁴ Department of Defense. *Secretary Rumsfeld Joint Media Availabilty with President Karzai*. Kabul: Department of Defense, 2003.

¹¹⁵ iCauslaties.org. *Operation Enduring Freedom*. <http://icasualties.org/oef/> (Accessed Mar. 2, 2015).

October, Karzai became the first democratically elected head of Afghanistan with 55 percent of the vote.¹¹⁶ Karzai was even more popular in Washington. During a state visit in 2004, he received a standing ovation from the U.S. Congress.¹¹⁷ For the time being, according to Steve Coll, “Karzai’s greatest asset in Washington was his relationship with George W. Bush... Bush’s mentorship succeeded and Karzai stretched himself to cooperate with the United States.”¹¹⁸

CLOUDS ON THE HORIZON

Despite this auspicious beginning, Washington’s relationship with Karzai soured over the next decade. Although Karzai seemed to share many U.S. policy preferences, he struggled to make them a reality. Changing the regime in charge had done nothing to change the underlying political order in Afghanistan. Consequently, Karzai faced the multitude of challenges associated with governing a poor and illiterate population divided along tribal and ethnic cleavages, in a political system fueled by corruption and patronage, via a weak or non-existent state apparatus. At the time of his inauguration, U.S. planners had predicted that the full political transition would last two years.¹¹⁹ By 2005, however, the White House was eager to redirect resources to combat the growing insurgency in Iraq and cut aid to Afghanistan by 38 percent.¹²⁰ This soon proved premature. In 2006, the Taliban launched its largest offensive since 2001. Over the next year, suicide attacks increased fivefold, remotely detonated bombings doubled, and coalition fatalities increased 20 percent.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Council on Foreign Relations, 2014.

¹¹⁷ Gall, *The Wrong Enemy*, 202.

¹¹⁸ Coll, Steve. *Directorate S: the CIA and America's secret wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan*. Penguin Books, 2019, 132.

¹¹⁹ Bush & Karzai, 2002.

¹²⁰ Rohde & Sanger, 2007.

¹²¹ Ibid; Council on Foreign Relations, 2014.

Wary of rising violence and lawlessness, U.S. policymakers pressured Karzai to improve governance and crack down on corruption within his administration. According to some estimates, up to 90 percent of foreign aid was being lost to fraud.¹²² From his perspective, however, Karzai understood that some form of patronage was necessary to stay in power. Carlotta Gall explained Karzai's rationale: "He wanted to represent all Afghans, including the Taliban and he wanted to bring them inside the tent... It was as much about his own survival as that of the country. Karzai parceled out cabinet posts, governorships, and security positions in Afghanistan's provinces."¹²³ Stephen Biddle described the result:

"Afghan governance is now shaped by a series of powerful patron-client networks designed to provide political top cover for corruption that enriches the network at the citizenry's expense. President Hamid Karzai depends on the networks' leadership to deliver political support; in exchange, he empowers them with critical appointments, protects them from prosecution, and allows them to prey on the public."¹²⁴

While this Karzai's politicking proved successful at keeping him in power, American policymakers complained that it hindered their counterinsurgency efforts. U.S. officials were particularly frustrated with Kabul's inability to develop an effective national army, police force, or counter-drug policy. One 2006 Defense and State Department report found that despite having spent more than \$1.1 billion on police training, Afghan officials could not say how many officers were on duty and most units had less than half of their authorized equipment.¹²⁵ Consequently, violence and drug trafficking exploded. By 2004, opium production reached higher levels than it ever had during Taliban rule; in 2006, UN officials estimated that Afghanistan produced 92

¹²² Van Auken, Bill. "The CIA's 'Brown Bags' Full of Cash: Millions of Dollars for Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai." *Global Research*, May 1, 2013.

¹²³ Gall, *The Wrong Enemy*, 208.

¹²⁴ Biddle, Stephen. "Salvaging Governance Reform in Afghanistan." *Council on Foreign Relations, Policy Innovation Memorandum* 16 (2012).

¹²⁵ Glanz, James & David Rohde. "U.S. Report Finds Fault in Training of Afghan Police." *New York Times*, Dec. 3, 2006.

percent of the world's supply.¹²⁶ Many in Washington held Karzai responsible. One 2005 State Department cable complained, "President Karzai... has been unwilling to assert strong leadership, even in his own province of Kandahar."¹²⁷ Regional geopolitical concerns further complicated relations. In particular, U.S. officials objected to Iran's growing influence in Kabul and accused Iran of smuggling weapons into the country.¹²⁸

As the insurgency grew, many Afghans began to protest Karzai's relationship with Washington. Afghan Human Rights proponent Jandad Spinghar explained, "Three years on, the people are still hoping that things are going to work out, but they have become suspicious about why the Americans came, and why the Americans are treating the local people badly."¹²⁹ Support for Karzai plummeted. After a runaway U.S. truck killed three Afghans in May 2006, for example, rioters in Kabul chanted "Death to Karzai" and "Death to America." One protestor complained, "These Americans came to our country and they are doing this kind of thing in my country, and our government is also their servant and a puppet of the Americans."¹³⁰

As domestic opposition to his regime grew, Karzai first began to take steps to distance himself from Washington. At first, he limited his protests to admonitions for the U.S. to be more careful to avoid civilian casualties. Over time, however, his attacks grew harsher. In the words of one Afghan Minister, Karzai went "from 'an Afghan Mandela' in 2002 to 'an Afghan Mugabe' in 2007."¹³¹ At a 2007 press conference, he declared, "We do not want any more military operations without coordinating them with the Afghan government. From now onwards,

¹²⁶ Gall, Carlotta, "Opium Harvest at Record Level in Afghanistan." *The New York Times*, Sept. 3, 2006.

¹²⁷ Cloud, David & Carlotta Gall. "U.S. Memo Faults Afghan Leader on Heroin Fight." *The New York Times*, May 22, 2005.

¹²⁸ Stolberg, Sheryl Gay. "Bush and Afghan President Differ Over Iran's Role." *New York Times*, Aug. 6, 2007.

¹²⁹ Gall, Carlotta. "Mood of Anxiety Engulfs Afghans as Violence Rises." *The New York Times*, June 30, 2005.

¹³⁰ Gall, Carlotta. "Afghans Riot After Deadly Crash by U.S. Military Truck." *The New York Times*, May 29, 2006.

¹³¹ Quoted in Coll, *Directorate S*, 373.

they have to work the way we ask them to work in here.”¹³² In 2009, he announced, “Our demands are clear – to stop the civilian casualties, the searching of Afghan homes and the arresting of Afghans... Afghanistan and its president are not going to retreat.”¹³³

In an effort to improve relations, the C.I.A. secretly funneled tens of millions of dollars to Karzai’s regime.¹³⁴ Off-the-books cash and other incentives were used for a variety of goals: bribing lawmakers, funding informal negotiations, espionage, and buying off warlords. One CIA agent explained, “Whatever it takes to make friends and influence people—whether it’s building a school or handing out Viagra.”¹³⁵ Yet, there is little evidence that these payments bought the influence that Washington sought. As government support declined, some Afghans turned to the opposition. In fact, one 2009 survey found that 56 percent of Afghans expressed sympathy “for why armed opposition groups have been fighting during the past year.”¹³⁶ Instead, the cash seems to have fueled corruption, terrorism, and the opium trade. In one egregious example, the Afghan government gave \$5 million in U.S. cash directly to Al Qaeda to secure the release of an Afghan hostage.¹³⁷ The result, as one American official complained, was that “The biggest source of corruption in Afghanistan was the United States.”¹³⁸

RELATIONS GO SOUTH

While strained, U.S.-Afghan relations nevertheless remained cordial under Bush. The Obama White House, by contrast, was unsympathetic to Karzai from the start. In February 2008, then-

¹³² MacKenzie, 2009.

¹³³ Filkins, Dexter. "Leader of Afghanistan Finds Himself Hero No More." *New York Times*, Feb. 8, 2009.

¹³⁴ Rosenberg, 2013.

¹³⁵ Warrick, Joby. "Little Blue Pills Among the Ways CIA Wins Friends in Afghanistan." *Washington Post*, Dec. 26, 2008.

¹³⁶ The Asia Foundation. *Afghanistan in 2009*. San Francisco: The Asia Foundation, 2009.

¹³⁷ Rosenberg, Matthew, "C.I.A. Cash Ended Up in Coffer of Al Qaeda," *The New York Times*, Mar. 14, 2014.

¹³⁸ Rosenberg, 2013.

Senator Joe Biden walked out of a dinner with Karzai after he refused to acknowledge corruption in his government. Soon after, Hillary Clinton said Karzai ruled a “narco state.”¹³⁹ In 2009, U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry complained in a leaked cable, “his inability to grasp the most rudimentary principles of state-building and his deep seated insecurity as a leader combine to make any admission of fault unlikely, in turn confounding our best efforts to find in Karzai a responsible partner.”¹⁴⁰

Karzai began to suspect in the lead up to the August 2009 Presidential election that Richard Holbrooke, Obama’s Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, was working behind the scenes to ensure that he would not win reelection. Rumors circulated throughout Kabul that Holbrooke was encouraging rival candidates to run against him.¹⁴¹ According to Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, “Holbrooke was doing his best to bring about the defeat of Karzai. What he really wanted was to have enough credible candidates running to deny Karzai a majority in the election, thus forcing a runoff in which he could be defeated.”¹⁴² Although Karzai managed to stay in office after his opponents dropped out of the runoff, the episode hurt U.S.-Afghan relations. Karzai later reflected, “My role in view of our experience in the 2009 election is to stop foreign intervention in our elections, and to make sure that no foreigner intervenes in Afghan elections and then blames me or the Afghan government and gets away with it.”¹⁴³

While Karzai may have been upset with U.S. policymakers for secretly trying to oust him, he continued to work with the U.S. when he perceived it to suit his interests. For instance, Karzai applauded Obama’s 2009 surge of 33,000 U.S. troops. At the same time, however, he

¹³⁹ Filkins, 2009.

¹⁴⁰ Boone, Jon. "WikiLeaks Cables Portray Hamid Karzai as Corrupt and Erratic." *The Guardian*, Dec. 2, 2010.

¹⁴¹ Rashid, Ahmed. "How Obama Lost Karzai." *Foreign Policy*, Feb. 21, 2011.

¹⁴² Dreazen, Yochi. "Gates: U.S. Tried to Oust Karzai in 'Failed Putsch'" *Foreign Policy*, Jan. 9, 2014.

¹⁴³ The Washington Post, “Hamid Karzai says U.S.-Afghan Relationship has been at a low point for a long time” *The Washington Post*, Mar. 2, 2014.

continued to criticize the U.S. to maintain domestic support. After a February 2012 incident where U.S. soldiers inadvertently burnt Korans, Karzai called the Americans “demons” and called their actions, “Satanic acts that will never be forgiven by apologies.”¹⁴⁴ Following the massacre of 16 Afghan children by a U.S. soldier, he declared that it “was not the first incident, indeed it was the 100th, the 200th, and 500th incident.”¹⁴⁵ In 2013, Karzai even insinuated that the U.S. was working with the insurgents to destabilize his regime.¹⁴⁶ One U.S. diplomat in Kabul explained, “He knows his future depends on Afghan power brokers and not the Americans... He is playing domestic policy, not international, now.”¹⁴⁷ To further distance himself from the U.S., Karzai also began to seek alternative sources of support, including Iran and China.¹⁴⁸

Many in Afghanistan viewed Karzai’s efforts to vilify the U.S. skeptically. For instance, Hajji-Abdul Majeed Khan, a tribal elder in Kandahar, remarked, “Now Karzai is trying to deceive people that he sympathizes with the Afghan people, and also he is trying to show the Taliban that ‘now I am independent of the Americans.’ I don’t think that Karzai and Americans have disputes at all—they are both playing a double game to throw dust in people’s eyes and bring another stooge government to Afghanistan.”¹⁴⁹ Likewise, the Taliban warned, “The Afghan nation is one of the nations of the world that knows its puppets and heroes.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ Nordland, Rod, Alissa J. Rubin, and Matthew Rosenberg. "Gulf Widens Between U.S. and a More Volatile Karzai." *The New York Times*, Mar. 17, 2012.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Sieff, Kevin. "Karzai Suspects U.S. is Behind Insurgent-Style Attacks, Afghan Officials Say." *The Washington Post*, Jan. 27, 2014.

¹⁴⁷ Graham-Harrison, Emma. "Relationship Between Hamid Karzai and US Grows Even More Poisonous." *The Guardian*, Jan. 28, 2014.

¹⁴⁸ Filkins, 2009.

¹⁴⁹ Rubin, 2013.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

FAREWELL KARZAI

After 13 years in office, Karzai announced that he would—in accordance with Afghanistan’s constitution—step down following 2014 Presidential elections. Reviewing Karzai’s time in office, it is clear that the regime change did not achieve the goals that U.S. policymakers set out for it. Although U.S.-Afghan relations began on a high note, Washington’s relationship with Karzai steadily deteriorated over the course of his administration. As our theory would predict, Karzai struggled to balance the demands of pacifying his external patrons and maintaining the allegiance of his internal supporters. Beginning in 2005 as domestic support for his regime waned, Karzai turned to publicly vilifying his American backers. U.S. efforts to foster cooperative relations with Karzai’s government through off-the-books payments did little to improve relations, especially after Karzai began to suspect that the U.S. was trying to remove him from power. As one European diplomat recounted, “Never in history has any superpower spent so much money, sent so many troops to a country, and had so little influence over what its president says and does.”¹⁵¹ Indeed, by March 2014, U.S.-Afghan relations had reached the point that Karzai told the *Washington Post*: “To the American people, give them my best wishes and my gratitude. To the U.S. government, give them my anger, my extreme anger.”¹⁵²

Conclusion

Hamid Karzai’s relationship with his “former best friend,” George W. Bush, soured for the same reasons that interveners’ relationships with their protégés usually do: conflicting interests.¹⁵³

Proponents of regime change argue that interveners can transform their relationships with

¹⁵¹ Nordland, Rubin, & Rosenberg, 2012.

¹⁵² Sieff, Kevin, “Interview: Karzai says 12-year Afghanistan war has left him angry at U.S. Government,” *The Washington Post*, Mar. 2, 2014.

¹⁵³ Coll, *Directorate S*, 364.

another state by replacing that country's leadership, democratizing its institutions, or creating a puppet regime. Our analysis suggests that these hopes are unwarranted. Overthrowing foreign governments does not reliably increase the target's political affinity with the intervener because states have enduring geostrategic interests and because imposed leaders often have strong domestic incentives to distance themselves from their foreign backers.

Table 1. Overt Foreign-Imposed Regime Change and Voting Similarity in the United Nations General Assembly, 1946-2000 (Fixed Effects)

	DV: Dyadic Affinity Score, Yes/No		
	1	2	3
All FIRC	0.004 (0.011)	-	-
Successful FIRC	-	0.011 (0.012)	-
Failed FIRC	-	-0.024 (0.026)	-
Leadership FIRC	-	-	0.000 (0.022)
Institutional FIRC	-	-	-0.019 (0.035)
Restoration FIRC	-	-	0.017 (0.016)
Distance	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)
Economic Parity	0.010*** (0.001)	0.010*** (0.001)	0.010*** (0.001)
Military Parity	-0.007*** (0.001)	-0.007*** (0.001)	-0.007*** (0.001)
Democracy, State A	0.009* (0.003)	0.009* (0.003)	0.009* (0.003)
Democracy, State B	0.009* (0.003)	0.009* (0.003)	0.009* (0.003)
Joint Democracy	0.011** (0.004)	0.011** (0.004)	0.011** (0.004)
Joint Alliance	0.030*** (0.004)	0.030*** (0.004)	0.030*** (0.004)
Lagged DV	0.718*** (0.002)	0.718*** (0.002)	0.718*** (0.002)
Constant	0.064*** (0.018)	0.064*** (0.018)	0.064*** (0.018)
N	92310	92310	92310
F	11785.78***	10607.40***	9642.96***
R2 within	0.545	0.545	0.545
R2 between	0.978	0.978	0.978
R2 overall	0.839	0.839	0.839

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** = $p < 0.001$; ** = $p < 0.01$; * = $p < 0.05$.

Table 2. Covert Foreign-Imposed Regime Change by the United States and Voting Similarity in the United Nations General Assembly, 1946-1989 (Fixed Effects)

	DV: Dyadic Affinity Score, Yes/No		
	4	5	6
All Covert FIRC	-0.002 (0.013)	-	-
Successful Covert FIRC	-	0.050** (0.018)	-
Failed Covert FIRC	-	-0.051** (0.018)	-
Successful Covert Leadership FIRC	-	-	0.038 (0.021)
Successful Covert Institutional FIRC	-	-	0.074* (0.036)
Distance	0.005 (0.009)	0.004 (0.009)	0.005 (0.009)
Economic Parity	-0.191*** (0.012)	-0.195*** (0.012)	-0.193*** (0.012)
Military Parity	-0.047** (0.014)	-0.050*** (0.014)	-0.049*** (0.014)
Democracy, State B	0.024* (0.011)	0.022* (0.011)	0.022* (0.011)
Joint Alliance	0.088*** (0.019)	0.087*** (0.019)	0.086*** (0.019)
Lagged DV	0.742*** (0.009)	0.738*** (0.009)	0.741*** (0.009)
Constant	3.082*** (0.250)	3.165*** (0.251)	3.129*** (0.251)
N	6320	6320	6320
F	2237.95***	1964.43***	1961.11***
R2 within	0.719	0.720	0.719
R2 between	0.930	0.929	0.928
R2 overall	0.821	0.821	0.821

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** = $p < 0.001$; ** = $p < 0.01$; * = $p < 0.05$.

Figure 1. Mean Change in Dyadic Affinity Scores Ten Years after Overt Foreign-Imposed Regime Change (Genetic Matching)

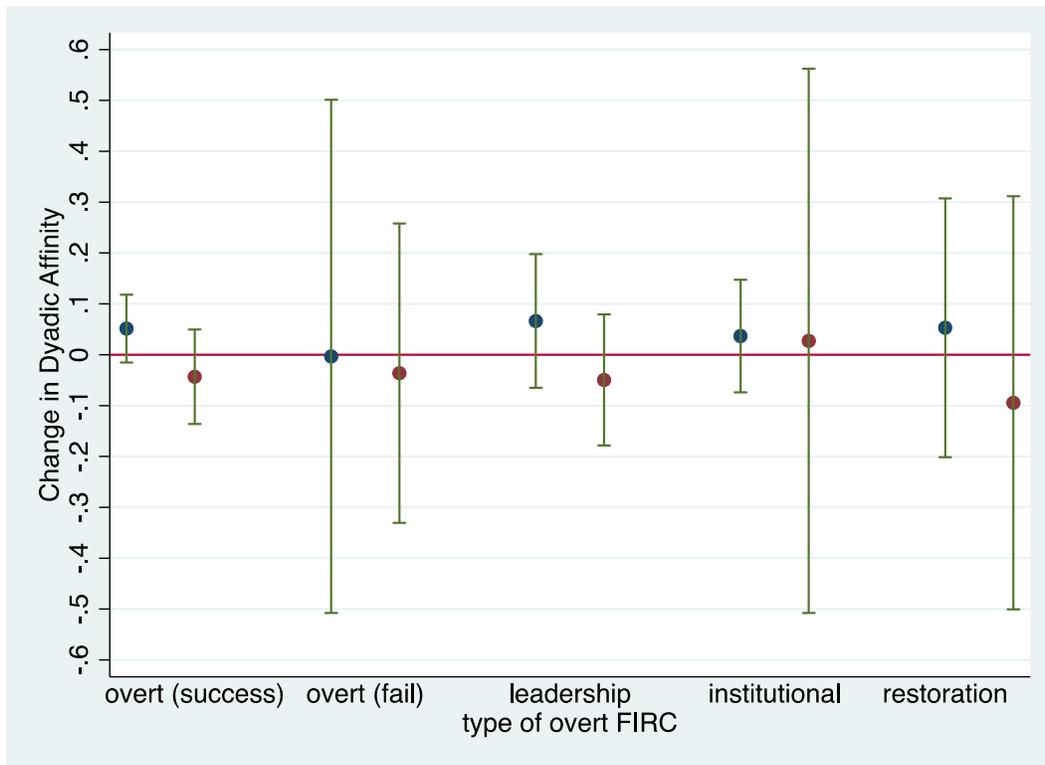


Figure 2. Mean Change in Dyadic Affinity Scores Ten Years after Covert Foreign-Imposed Regime Change (Genetic Matching)

