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From Prerequisites to Prosperity: Determinants of Successful Security Force Assistance Within Recipient States Fighting Non-State Actors

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From Prerequisites to Prosperity:

Determinants of Successful Security Force Assistance

Within Recipient States Fighting Non-State Actors

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Department of Political Science — Honors Thesis

University of California, Los Angeles

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"Give a small boy a hammer, and he will find that everything he encounters has to be pounded."

— Abraham Kaplan; 1964, UCLA Professor of Philosophy

"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

— Unknown

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I.   Acknowledgments

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In more ways than one, I am grateful for their collective support and guidance. I truly stand on the shoulders of giants.

II.   Summary

Security cooperation programs are necessary for U.S. relations with regional partners worldwide. U.S. security force assistance is a core function of present-day U.S. foreign policy, providing regional allies with military training and resources against violent non-state actors. However, U.S. security force assistance has historically been confronted by more failures than successes in case studies such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Senegal. Therefore, this thesis employs a mixed methods approach to assess the predictive power of specific conditions on successful SFA outcomes. First, I outline the causal correlations between my variables and justify their operationalization for regression within my study. To do so, I trace these factors to two case studies, Afghanistan and Senegal, representing my failed and successful recipients, respectively.

I then surveyed the panel data for four variables per 30 SFA-recipient countries from 2010 to 2020. I aggregated this data before employing a binomial multivariable logistic regression model to test the relationships between my variables and SFA success outcomes. My results showed that higher institutional transparency was the only significant condition in determining successful SFA outcomes when accounting for other variables. However, despite preexisting proposals that these were attributable to operational success in SFA, a recipient country's military manpower and level of civil freedom did not have a statistically significant relationship with successful SFA outcomes. I then posit alternative explanations that could explain this lack of significant correlation before expanding on issues warranting further scholarly investigation on security assistance.

Key Words: security force assistance, counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, security cooperation, foreign military assistance, military effectiveness, U.S. foreign policy.

III. Introduction, Background, Implications

In the grand context of present-day international relations, it is hardly debatable that the United States wields enormous geopolitical influence worldwide via its military and economic might. Since the 9/11 attacks, an influx of extremist and violent non-state actors has captured the international community's attention, forcing state actors to respond to asymmetric, non-conventional threats. The United States embarked on major security aid programs in its subsequent War on Terror to supply regional allies with military training and equipment, especially within fragile states. This aid provision has since been defined as a pillar of U.S. security cooperation with international counterparts confronted by insurgencies, terrorist groups, or other violent non-state actors. For this study, I apply the U.S. Army's definition of SFA, which calls for "the unified action to generate, employ, and sustain local, host-nation, or regional security forces in support of a legitimate authority" (2009). The U.S. Army, which most frequently executes SFA functions abroad for the United States, considers successful SFA to be "based on solid, continuing assessment and including the organizing, training, equipping, rebuilding, and advising of the forces involved. It is critical to develop the institutional infrastructure to sustain SFA. The resulting [foreign security forces] must possess the *capability* to accomplish the variety of required missions, with *sufficient capacity* to be successful, and with the ability to *sustain themselves* as long as required" (Brady and Satchell 2016).

Alas, this provision of security force assistance, as it has been labeled in recent decades, has demonstrated a poor record of success within U.S. foreign policy. Between countries such as Senegal, which exhibited high levels of corruption and leadership complacency, and Afghanistan's domestic military, which lacked independent efficacy—the United States has spent tens of billions of dollars on failed SFA provisions. Despite significant funding and

supplementary training, many conflict-prone states receiving SFA frequently fail to gain military self-sufficiency against hostile forces, prompting additional resources from their U.S. military counterparts. This historical trend certainly undermines the viability of American SFA programs, where failures have registered more frequently than successes within recipient state militaries since 2000. Additionally, these failures are exacerbated by the necessity of SFA provisions to reduce U.S. troop commitments and reinforce regional allies in counterterrorism operations. Regional partners are more likely to succumb to insurgency groups without sustained support, leading to regional instability and the return of hostile non-state actors. Without regional partners, the United States would likely commit even more resources to dismantle the insurgency group or allow other adversarial state actors to seize ground in the subsequent vacuum.

The United States also has compelling long-term interests in protecting its national security by producing positive security outcomes. Since the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and ever-increasing friction with Russia and China, the Biden administration shifted away from decades of counterterrorism-centric policy, instead rallying against what has been dubbed as an "axis of autocrats" between China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea (Biden 2022; Daniels 2023). As these formal state actors hedge back against the United States, there have also been indications of Russian soldiers fighting alongside African conscripts within Ukraine, subtly hinting developing states today may become integral allies in future confrontations (Daniels 2023; Paravicini and Lebedev and Light 2023).

In light of these seemingly isolated developments, the significance of training independent and effective fighting forces within recipient governments becomes far more appealing to the long-term U.S. calculus for reasons beyond localized counterterrorism. The prospect of stronger regional partners abroad in low-developed regions promotes U.S. security

interests by curbing hostile non-state actors, reducing long-term U.S. costs, enhancing diplomatic relations with recipient states, and bolstering deterrence against adversaries such as China and Russia in potential proxy theaters. Therefore, the issue of SFA is not so simply a domestic concern with saving U.S. tax dollars—it is also a strategic concern with long-term implications for U.S. foreign policy and preserving operational efficacy with finite resources against evolving threats, whether they be formal state actors or not. If U.S. policymakers decided that SFA programs were not profitable, thereby eliminating them—the ramifications would certainly be costlier than if the United States had continued rendering SFA in the first place.

In this hypothetical scenario, the United States would inflict tremendous diplomatic harm on the recipient country, enabling an insurgency group to regain strength or, worse, allowing neighboring adversaries to seize the area for geopolitical buttressing. In this case, a core example is the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. The withdrawal subjected the Biden administration to severe ramifications via domestic audience costs, fierce criticism from U.S. policymakers concerning the duration of U.S. involvement, and a lack of military preparedness from the Afghan military against resurgent Taliban forces (Schaeffer 2022; Travis 2022; Honig and Käihkö 2022). The withdrawal of U.S. military support also carried severe consequences for the Afghan population, seeing sharp reductions in civil liberties and socioeconomic opportunities for women as the Taliban restored themselves to power (Ahmadi and Sultan, 2023). Such crises can damage domestic and international confidence within U.S. foreign policy agendas, further crippling future efforts to protect its security interests if crucial stakeholders and allies are skeptical of the U.S.'s ability to commit to its objectives. The case of Afghanistan was also one that daunted U.S. military officials amidst presidential administrations due to another core issue of American SFA operations: its lack of consensus on what constituted operational successes,

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therefore presenting clear criteria for withdrawal on victorious conditions. This becomes obvious in the Afghanistan example due to an infamous diagram presented to senior U.S. military officials in the summer of 2009.
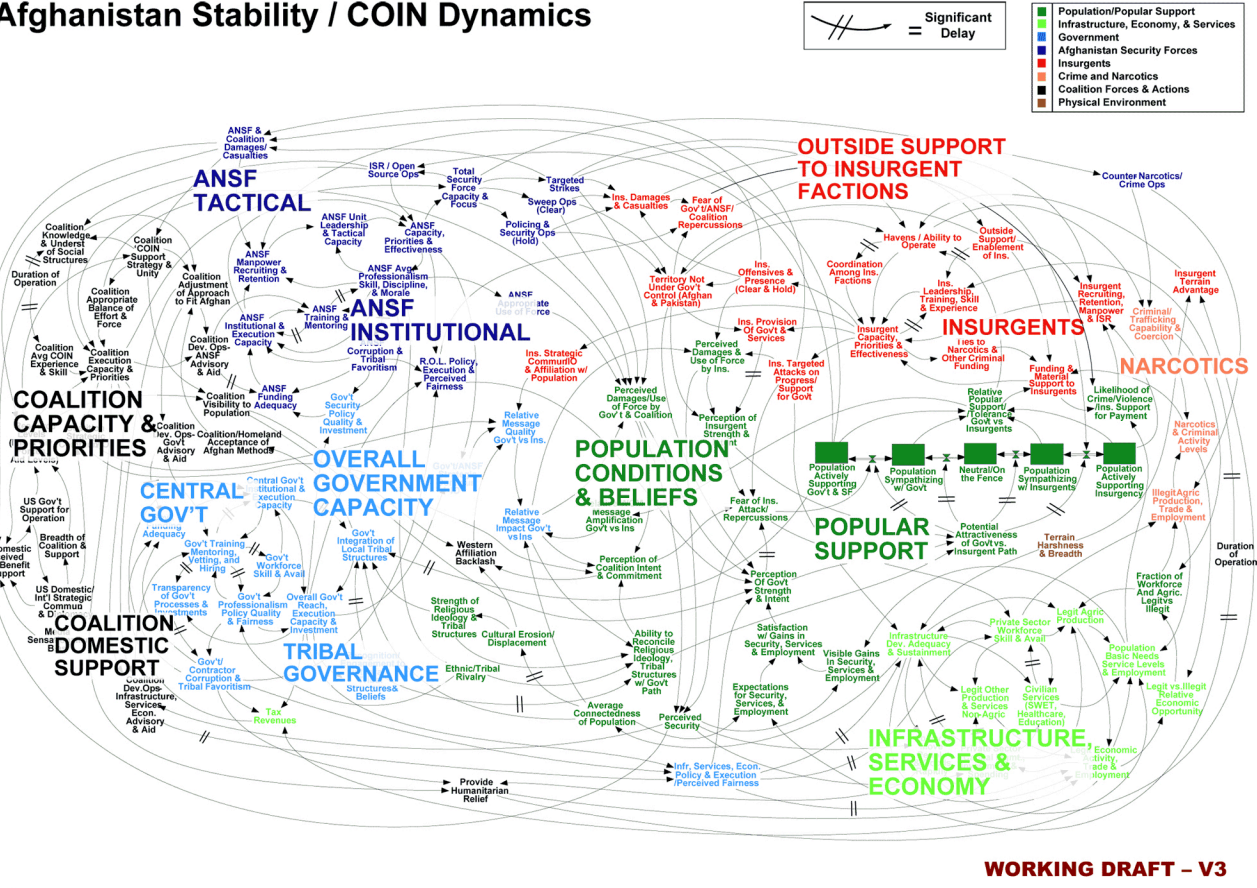
Figure 1. *Afghanistan Counter Insurgency Dynamics Diagram*, PA Consulting. 2010.

The extreme complexity of the diagram—more importantly, the strategic incoherence behind it—demonstrated that U.S. military commanders could not define clear objectives for the U.S. mission in Afghanistan midway through its eventual withdrawal in late 2021. Despite considerations for variables such as popular support and distinct differences in cultural norms, this was evident of a persistent U.S. attitude towards adjacent security operations abroad: an

inability to determine what objectives to pursue to obtain operational success. Although this thesis intends to investigate the nature of self-sufficiency within recipient states from U.S. support, it is critical to emphasize that scholars have consistently criticized the U.S. military apparatus for, historically, failing to precisely define the criteria for military victories in increasingly unconventional warfare against non-state actors.

IV.   Literature Review — U.S. Foreign Policy, Security Force Assistance (SFA)

Since the end of World War II, the United States has unofficially served as a "global policeman" as a hegemonic power. Through this ethos, a pillar of modern U.S. foreign policy has been its widespread use of security force assistance. Through this doctrine, the American government provides funding, military equipment, and training to *weak* and *conflict-prone* states, otherwise known as *fragile* or *vulnerable* states within international relations. In doing so, all case studies of SFA—primarily within Africa and the Middle East—share a common goal: to develop an independent and effective fighting force out of the recipient state's domestic military. In addition to developing self-sufficient military capabilities within their international partners, SFA provision supports recipients in conducting precise counterterrorism operations or suppressing entrenched insurgency threats in the region. Despite decreasing the costs of American commitment—in this case, troops—and increasing the military autonomy of recipient partner states, the policy of security force assistance receives strong criticism from policymakers, military experts, and scholars within international relations.

For instance, the extant security literature emphasizes that security force assistance has historically failed more frequently than it has succeeded in recipient partner states (Reno 2018; Knowles and Matisek 2019; Sullivan 2021; Joyce, Margulies, and Chase 2021). To add further

context, the scholarly community notes that despite its numerous failures, SFA is necessary for

U.S. commitments to foreign allies and recipient states to increase regime survival and regional

stability in strategic geographical theaters. In addition to diplomatic obligations, it is also a

strategic interest of the United States to decrease or, at the very least, contain regional instability

within specific theaters from threatening international security.

On a domestic level, security force assistance reduces casualty costs to the United States

while increasing the capabilities of recipient states to fight off threats independently, drawing in

potential allies, and deterring potential adversaries within fragile or failing states (Gates 2010;

Metz 2023). This strategic framework dominates the ethos behind security force assistance. By

training partner states with security assistance programs, they can also secure American interests

within remote geographical theaters abroad. Still, this strategy is scrutinized by the trend that

SFA has more often failed than succeeded. Thus, one critical controversy within the literature on

security force assistance is this: if American SFA is necessary to reduce long-term U.S. costs,

what are possible methods for improving its success rates? If most cases of SFA fail, why do

some cases succeed? In addition to benefitting U.S. foreign policy, improved systematic analysis

of SFA successes could increase interregional stability, regime survival within recipient states,

and U.S. national security (Chase 2021).

To address this, the literature fails to find consensus concerning factors behind why

security force assistance fails: the objectives of each SFA mission are typically unclear; the

willingness of a recipient state to cooperate with SFA is usually short-term; or recipient states

typically lack stable economies and infrastructure (Yarhi-Milo, Lanoszka, and Cooper 2016;

Tholens, 2021; Metz, 2023). Scholars offer differing opinions on why SFA is ineffective at

developing autonomous militaries and even posit that SFA may exacerbate military conflict

between states and insurgents instead of ending those conflicts. Concerning variables of failure, the literature also focuses heavily on regions within the Middle East and Africa—Iraq, Afghanistan, Senegal, Lebanon, and Mali—examples of recipient states that received massive levels of SFA but failed (Biddle 2006; Payne and Osburg 2013; Allen 2018; Wilén 2021; Tholens 2021; Marsh and Rolsandsen 2021).

It is essential to address the shortcomings of the current literature surrounding security force assistance. Within the preexisting literature, scholars have made a strong case for examining the shortfalls of security force assistance at a macroscopic and microscopic level, but only within recipient states within Africa and the Middle East. An issue with this narrow focus on African and Middle Eastern recipient states comes with the inherent fact that the United States provides security force assistance to regional actors such as Paraguay, Colombia, Indonesia, and the Philippines—state actors that have not been previously analyzed within SFA literature that exist in Latin America and Southeast Asia respectively. Although they face unique threats, they share commonalities with their African and Middle Eastern counterparts because they also face insurgencies or asymmetric forces that threaten regional stability. The security literature should incorporate international case studies that receive SFA and fight similar adversaries to develop an empirical test of the pre-conditionality theory to determine universal applicability.

Furthermore, another area for improvement within the security assistance literature is that while security scholars such as Biddle and Metz pose theoretical explanations to address why SFA fails, they lack empirical analyses to substantiate their claims. This flaw extends to many other authors in the literature, especially military experts who use their field observations to posit specific ideas for failure but simply lack the data to support their arguments, presenting

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conjecture and speculation rather than testable hypotheses. Although the literature establishes potential reasons why SFA fails throughout African and Middle Eastern recipient states—the literature does not offer empirical evidence that defines a universal cause for SFA outcomes. Moreover, the literature does not offer patterns of failure or success within a broader pool of case studies, reflecting that most security scholars cannot develop a confident consensus on what variables are supported determinants of positive security assistance outcomes.

In addition, the literature reviews elements of SFA within Senegal, Afghanistan, and Iraq, presenting case-specific explanatory conditions rather than a more comprehensive theory to encompass SFA outcome determination. This raises issues for the scholarly study of security cooperation programs: first, it does not consider the possibility that some conditions could be universally responsible for success or failure in every provision of SFA; and two, case studies of SFA are not collectively tested, reducing SFA literature to independent case studies. By excluding the prospect of a broader theoretical framework to analyze the shortfalls of SFA, scholars deny themselves the opportunity to falsify or reject their claims concerning SFA. Using multivariate logistic regression and process tracing, this study seeks to thoroughly test preexisting assumptions concerning SFA outcome determinants and offer informed arguments for why certain variables may or may not be statistically significant in the greater literature.

V.   Hypotheses

H_1: *If the recipient state's population has more civil rights and state-protected freedoms, the recipient state is more likely to gain popular support and successfully integrate SFA.*

Because most SFA recipients are classified as conflict-prone states, the issue of freedom is crucial to understanding possible effects on SFA outcomes. If recipient states are oppressive to

civilians, this may encourage higher recruitment rates for hostile insurgency groups opposing the government.

Another way of rationalizing this variable would be that a recipient state must maintain a certain standard of transparency in its government. I posit that a theoretical "red line" prevents SFA from being successful. Another aspect of explaining this could be the matter of the United States applying conditions on aid—if a government refuses to be transparent, military assistance can be withdrawn.

H₂: *If the recipient state receives more IMET funding for its military officers, the recipient state is more likely to enhance its military efficacy by integrating SFA doctrines.*

H₃: *If the recipient state has more active armed personnel at its disposal, the recipient state is more likely to succeed in military operations and increase military self-sufficiency.*

H₄: *The more transparent and accountable a recipient state's government and military leadership, the more effectively it can deploy SFA resources and investments to fulfill target objectives.*

H₅: *If the recipient state simultaneously protects civil freedoms, receives more IMET funding, has more active armed personnel, and is more transparent in its governing institutions, it is far more likely to be a successful SFA recipient and be militarily self-sufficient.*

I argue that these four distinct conditions cumulatively strengthen a country's likelihood of successful SFA and will exhibit that through empirical analysis. Specifically, these conditions must be present within the recipient country throughout any U.S. SFA program: a high number of active military personnel, high levels of professionalization funding via the International Military Education and Training program (IMET), a high degree of freedom and liberty within their civil society, and finally, a high degree of accountability and transparency within the

governing institutions. I also argue that if the recipient state fails to meet these preconditions, SFA will fail regardless of how much U.S. SFA is committed afterward. To rationalize this, I later conduct process tracing on Afghanistan to consider how issues of low political transparency, numerically weak military forces, and low measures of civil liberty bring their SFA outcomes on a path toward operational failure. I will also conduct a qualitative survey of Senegal's institutions and armed forces to establish a causal relationship with success.

The rationale behind Senegal and Afghanistan's process tracing is meant to support the universal applicability of my variables in determining success outcomes. For example, although Afghanistan received significant hardware and financial resources from the United States, it ultimately failed to present a coherent defense against Taliban forces. The calculus of interpreting Senegal's democratic values within this assessment is intended to present support for human rights cooperation and popular support in SFA recipient countries. I interpret these variables within a framework of intersectional cooperation between government entities and civilians. A recipient state's civil society is likely to be more supportive of its governing institutions if it can retain civil liberties and ensure accountability within policymakers. With high popular support, a recipient state can maintain legitimacy against would-be opposition in the form of hostile non-state actors. A recipient state could also be willing to integrate IMET education into the curriculum of its domestic military culture, enhancing its self-sufficiency for future operations. This variable will be determined by the level of financial commitment by the United States via the IMET Program to recipient states and their military officers.

The third precondition will be a recipient state's quantity of *active* armed personnel. Without a numerically strong force, accumulated casualty rates or insufficient response forces can expose the recipient country to military defeats against hostile non-state actors. This

operationalization also tests the country's ability to maintain its military strength over time. If a recipient country classified as a failure of SFA exhibits declining numbers of armed personnel throughout multiple years, this could be interpreted as a loss of morale, consistent military defeats against superior opposition, or a general loss of military capability to protect its population. Although no conclusive inference can be made from a simple decline in numbers, I will interpret declining numbers as a detriment to the recipient state's ability to carry out SFA operations or its progress for military efficacy.

Lastly, the fourth preexisting condition is the recipient state's mechanisms of transparency to contend with levels of institutional corruption—either in its political leadership or military forces. Such means may include independent civilian agents such as the free press or opposition parties, which can compel accountability within government authorities and military operations. This element of institutionalized accountability can apply to problems such as deploying funds where intended or the appropriate use of military equipment in strategically relevant situations instead of being sold for private profit. Naturally, because my study evaluates countries receiving SFA—thereby being conflict-prone, developing countries—I would not expect any of my case studies to present with high values in any category. Instead, this thesis intends to assess *increased levels of success* based on these factors and to present this as evidence of theoretical validation.

IX. Process Tracing: Assessment of Hypotheses and Justifications

To assess the viability of manpower, transparency, freedom, and IMET professionalization as predictors of SFA success, I will trace two countries within my population: Afghanistan, a well-known instance of SFA failure despite extensive military assistance, and

Senegal, a successful SFA recipient because of its strong measures of freedom and consistent manpower within its armed forces.
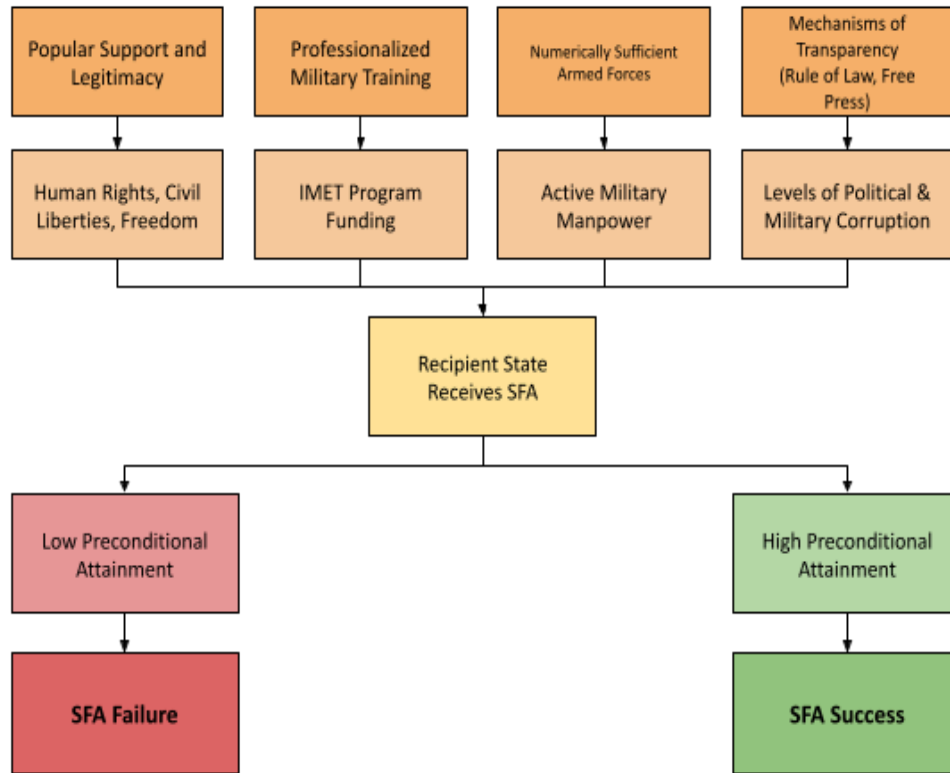
Figure 2. Model of Proposed Causal Correlation for SFA Success Outcome

1. **Supporting Evidence and Rationale for Proposed Predictors**

This proposed model builds on concepts found within preexisting literature, especially concerning a correlation between political instability, corruption, and failure outcomes within SFA (Payne and Osburg 2013; Knowles and Matisek 2019; Joyce and Margulies and Chase 2021; Sullivan 2021; Metz 2023). However, this paper expands on previous literature by introducing other elements that may be conducive to SFA success outcomes in recipient

countries, such as measures of manpower, aggregates of transparency, and the amount of funding for military professionalization.

Rationally, these metrics serve as a compelling method for analyzing SFA outcomes because they can directly represent necessary elements of SFA. For example, with a numerically strong force relative to its security demands, an SFA-trained force can quickly respond to asymmetric threats without relying on U.S. forces' direct support immediately. Another example would be the rationale behind military leadership education. Logically, the military leadership structure should bear a certain level of competency to execute SFA doctrines and incorporate them within their units effectively. In practice, the recipient state's domestic forces may not always be able to count on U.S. support amidst the heat of battle. Therefore, their ability to operate on IMET-supplemented training can allow them to exercise tactical superiority against encroaching insurgents in open combat situations.

This analytical perspective competes against preexisting scholarly assumptions concerning U.S. foreign policy and security force assistance. For example, security force assistance is a more recently coined conceptualization of a historical pillar of U.S. foreign policy—rendering military aid to foreign partners and allies. However, the broader literature fails to empirically test the factors behind SFA failures in recipient states and, more importantly, if these factors may *inversely* determine success. If these factors were offered more consideration and testing, a more comprehensive and tested theory of variables behind SFA success outcomes would be available for foreign policy application.

2. Afghanistan — The Spectre of U.S. Security Assistance Efforts

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the United States—if not the world—was left reeling from the consequences of a coordinated terrorist attack. The event demonstrated a shift in the

geopolitical sphere that the issue of hostile non-state actors was now a prevalent one that could threaten even powerful state actors such as the United States. Despite its formidable military capabilities and geographical isolation from threatening neighbors, the use of technology in asymmetric warfare dealt a sharp blow to previous assumptions about terrorist capabilities. Within a month of the attack, U.S. military forces undertook Operation: Enduring Freedom, initiating the invasion of Afghanistan. Despite tactical successes throughout the early stages of the war, such as the removal of the Taliban from state power, the United States would later find that its invasion of Afghanistan would soon become a bogging weight.

In the years that followed, Taliban forces mounted repeated offensives to reassert control over rural regions of Afghanistan, heightening the logistical challenge of fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan simultaneously. Although the United States could initially rely on its international allies, whether it be NATO or bilateral partnerships, it was later determined that a sustained commitment of international forces abroad was an impractical long-term solution against entrenched insurgencies within Afghanistan (Degen 2015). The United States embarked on a decades-long effort to build up the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) military capabilities and its supporting infrastructure to address this dilemma, spending billions of dollars to develop a self-sufficient force that would gradually allow for the reduction of U.S. commitments in Afghanistan. A quick leap to 2021, however, addresses a grim outcome that seems to contradict the decades of training and assistance from the world's most powerful country: why did Afghan forces disintegrate within a matter of weeks against Taliban forces? First, I will analyze the roles that manpower and institutional transparency factored into the failure of SFA doctrine. I will then expand to incorporating causal inferences for SFA failure

concerning IMET funding and civil freedoms to assert why these were also significant in the failure of SFA provision.

The issue of manpower is a critical element of any self-sufficient military force. Without sufficient numbers, depending on the operational demands of the time, military forces would not be able to achieve tactical or strategic objectives that may require certain numbers to carry out. In this case, for Afghanistan, I refer to the availability of troops that can quickly and effectively carry out a military response against insurgency threats. In the aftermath of the Taliban's victory over Afghan forces, subsequent investigations alleged "ghost soldiers" that manifested within the Afghan military's ranks. For example, U.S. officials were privately noted to have described Afghan military forces as being "incompetent, unmotivated, poorly trained, corrupt, and ridden with deserters and infiltrators" (Whitlock, 2019). The inadequate Afghan response was blamed, specifically, by the former Afghan finance minister Khalid Payenda, on the fact that "most of the 300,000 troops and police on the government's books did not exist …[and that] phantom personnel were added to official lists so that generals could pocket their wages" (BBC, 2021). Of the apparent 352,000 soldiers and security personnel recorded in official entries, only 254,000 were verified by government parties (Whitlock, 2019). Therefore, the issue of corruption was also linked to the issue of manpower. Without effective accountability and legal transparency systems within Afghanistan's government, there was a simultaneous deficiency in available manpower for military efficacy. One scholar noted,

> Attrition (in all forms) in the Afghan National Army typically ran at 24% annually [...] Factors related to pay, training, leadership, operational tempo, corruption, culture, [...] U.S. and allied advise-and-assist policies and practices, [...] all conspired to create a hollow and brittle Afghan Army unable and unwilling to fight for its country [...] Corruption is the system in Afghanistan. There seemed to be little practical consideration of the country's inability to absorb the sudden deluge of assistance money and programs (Shatzer, 2023).

Combined, these two factors played a critical role in undermining the operational capability of Afghan forces to fight off Taliban forces without depending on professional U.S. assistance.

The population's low level of social and civil freedom was also a decisive factor in the days leading up to the Taliban's victory. The Afghan government, despite legislative efforts to protect civil rights for specific demographics such as women, could not effectively enforce its own legal reforms. For example, legislative and political efforts to be more inclusive of women within government—representing an effort to curb gender discrimination—could not produce tangible efforts, likely due to other preexisting factors that could be tied to deficient freedom and civil rights, such as low levels of education. In fact, despite a UN Security Council Resolution that asserted the legal rights of female participation in the political decision-making process, the Afghan government could only "include two women among 47 government and international representatives" in ongoing peace negotiations (Human Rights Watch, 2018). In addition to pervasive gender inequality, an April 2019 report from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) indicated that young people tended to be more vulnerable to torture or ill-treatment under ANDSF custody, excessive or unwarranted levels of torture against conflict-related detainees, and lack of judicial due process for suspected crimes (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights). I infer that this issue of low civil freedom can be attributed to a failure in SFA because of a lack of popular support for the current government. If

civilians cannot trust their government or military forces for protection, I believe this would have a detrimental effect on the later outcome of security assistance. Inversely, if the Afghan government could enact and actively enforce its legislation concerning freedoms and human rights, the population would likely have been more supportive and integral to a successful SFA outcome.

The military professionalization of the ANSF is another integral variable that could explain Afghanistan's failed outcome. The United States, under its International Military and Education Training program, funds the training of foreign officers within U.S. military institutions. However, although Afghanistan still received IMET for its officers, I observed that a decline in IMET funding led to a stronger dependency on the U.S. armed forces and reduced the ANSF's self-sufficiency. Consequently, this resulted in the eventual outcome of SFA failure amidst the toppling of the government by Taliban forces.

Figure 2.   **U.S. Funding of IMET to Afghanistan: 2010 - 2020**
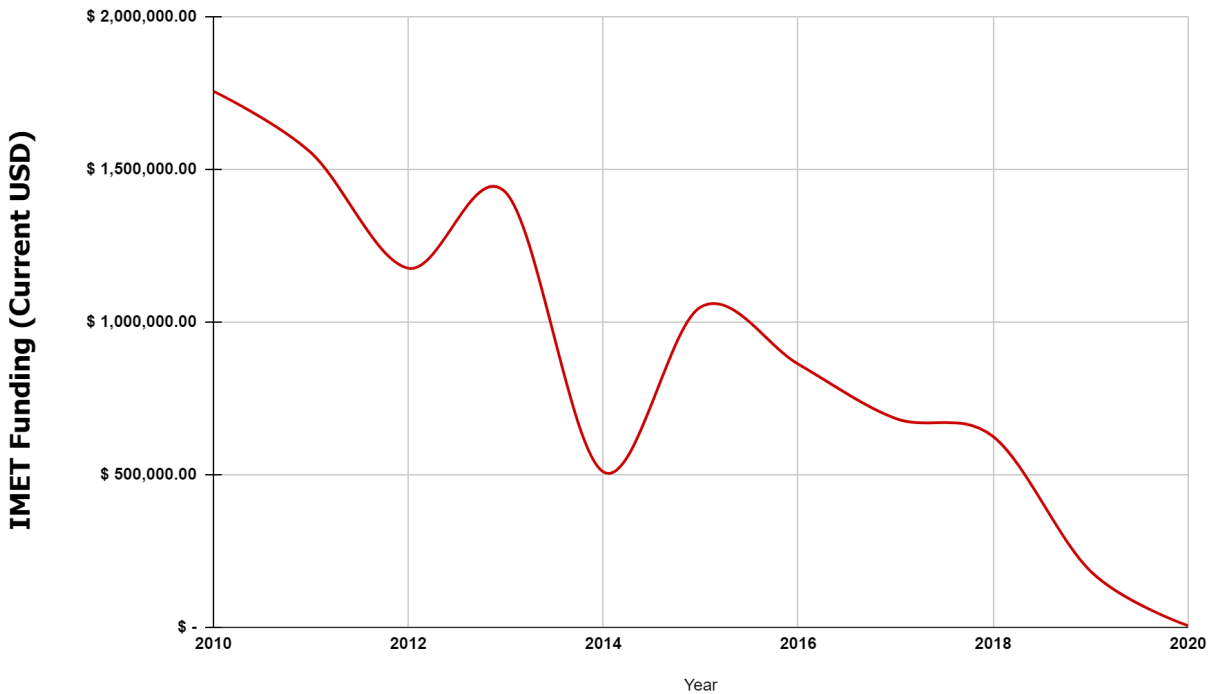
The implementation of IMET is significant for another compelling reason, too—it taught foreign militaries respect for civilian institutions by military actors, improved ethical behavior and lawful conduct amidst war, and enabled officers to become educators in their own domestic militaries once they finished their program (Taw, 1993). Therefore, I posit that the U.S. reduction in IMET funding for ANSF military personnel was detrimental to their long-term strategy of improving the ANSF's self-sufficiency. Instead, post-withdrawal assessments by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction cited that the ANSF was "[entirely] reliant on the U.S. military in part because [it] created a combined arms military structure that required a high degree of professional military sophistication and leadership" (2022). In short, this implies a linkage between IMET training and the ANSF's military performance because of how SFA shaped their doctrine. Without sustained IMET education and training, the integration of SFA principles would not have been proliferated as efficiently or effectively into the ANSF's ranks against the Taliban.

3. Senegal — A Success Story of U.S. Security Assistance

Senegal is a case study that strongly links with my hypotheses for a causal correlation with SFA success outcomes. Although it faced early disruption from insurgencies and separatist groups in the early 2010s, the country was able to prevent further conflict and engaged in diplomatic talks with its opposition. Furthermore, Senegal's selection as a case study is represented by its proximity and susceptibility to hostile non-state actors. Although it does not currently face as much active risk as other nations, such as Syria or Iraq, Senegal has remained persistent and effective in dismantling terrorist networks and activities within its borders (Arieff, 2019). As a recipient of SFA, Senegal is also

First, transparency plays a prominent role in my observation of Senegal. Compared to Afghanistan and other failed cases, Senegal's democratic policies have been attested for as being major advantages in its relationship with the United States. Corruption, though an issue in Senegal, is not nearly as pervasive as it is in other observations, and its detrimental effects on SFA success outcomes could be negated by its alignment with the other three characteristics of my proposed model: military professionalization, freedom, and manpower. Distinctly, I refer to the two primary advantages that Senegal wields: its measure of freedom within civil society and its consistent availability of trained soldiers to counteract any potential threat. Freedom House emphasizes its robust relationship with civil rights, highlighting Senegal as "one of Africa's most stable electoral democracies and has undergone peaceful transfers of power between rival parties since 2000 [...] The country is known for its relatively independent media, though restrictive laws and [some] intimidation continue to constrain press freedom" (2023). Even though the country, on its own standards compared to developed nations, may have low scores of freedom and transparency, I rationalize Senegal as an appropriate measure of a successful SFA outcome within this sample of states. The issue of its inability to satisfy every one of the four criteria adds a practical and logistical issue concerning the complexity of SFA. However, my theory was developed to predict cumulative effects on case outcomes rather than having every criterion be determined as an outright guarantor of success.

As mentioned earlier, Senegal's proximity to the Sahel region presents a credible threat of attack by hostile non-state actors that are often transnational in nature. This particularly focuses on groups from countries such as Mali and Guinea. Still, Senegalese forces have managed to take advantage of their SFA success and deployed troops to the regional United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), a dedicated

multinational task force to tackle regional instability and to contain the proliferation of armed militias from potentially spreading to Senegalese territory (U.S. State Department, 2021). In the SFA process, Senegal often worked in adjacent roles with U.S. military counterparts. During security assistance, regular exercises were conducted in the mid-2010s, where Senegalese personnel could mutually teach and train with U.S. Marines and Coast Guardsmen (McDonald, 2015). These exercises were ultimately fruitful in allowing Senegalese forces—in combination with French exercises—to alleviate domestic pressure brought on by local insurgents and extremist groups.

VI.   Empirical Design: Case Selection, Operationalization, Datasets

I conducted this study utilizing a mixed methods approach, focusing on binomial multivariate logistic regression to test for a positive correlation between SFA success outcomes and my hypotheses. I chose this particular regression technique to evaluate the effects of multiple variables—in this case, my five hypotheses. After finding my results, I contextualize my empirical findings with historical and observational process tracing to assess alternative hypotheses that could better determine SFA success outcomes. For my regression, I gathered a sample size of 30 countries that actively received SFA, confirming these programs were ongoing by leveraging Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports per country. My case selection evaluated for certain conditions focusing purely on the recipient's military performance after receiving some degree of SFA: a failure in SFA would be determined by continued U.S. troop deployments, insurgency victories against SFA-recipient forces, or unchecked expansion of insurgency presence within the recipient's territory despite SFA.

Table 1.

Selected and Categorized Case Studies For Regression (Countries)

Successful Recipient States of SFA		Failed Recipient States of SFA	
Algeria	Malaysia	Cameroon	Mali
Djibouti	Morocco	Central African Republic	Mozambique
Ethiopia	Panama	Chad	Niger
Ghana	Philippines	Colombia	Nigeria
Indonesia	Senegal	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Paraguay
Kenya	Tunisia	Honduras	Somalia
Malaysia	Uganda	Iraq	Syria
		Libya	Lebanon

1. Success observations were coded as 1; failed observations were coded as 0.

1. Panel Data — Professionalization (IMET Funding)

Following this, I collected panel data from 2010 to 2020 on the following variables: transparency, manpower, freedom, and IMET funding. For IMET funding, fiscal panel data was extracted from a public U.S. State Department database containing all budgetary and fiscal information relating to foreign assistance—military and civilian—from FY2000 to FY2024 to acquire data for my hypothesized variables. For the scope of my research, I focused my search filters from FY2011 to FY2021 with filtered searches for the following terms: *military* and *International Military and Education Training*. All data searching was constrained to the 30 countries of this study.

To test any possible effects of IMET funding on SFA outcome correlation, I narrowed my sample data to federal disbursements instead of federal obligations, which are legislatively earmarked, but not necessarily paid to foreign partners. In addition, I constrained my observations to focus on current U.S. dollar values for scaling. I then extrapolated the fiscal data, organized by year and country, to a data sheet for later use in my multivariate regression.

Although over 310 observations were collected for 11 years of data, occasional years for certain datasets, such as Libya, had no recorded entries for IMET funding. Since the context of the dataset is focused on annual procurements of IMET funding, I recorded entries of "$0" in these infrequent dispersed observations, reflecting that no money was disbursed in those years.

2. Panel Data — Gathering Transparency Datapoints

To test any correlational effects of transparency on the outcome of SFA success, an aggregate dataset measuring countries' levels of institutional and political corruption was leveraged for this particular variable. The Corruption Perception Index annually measures, studies, and interprets corruption's temporal and transient effects on international actors. Although the organization lacked comprehensive datasets holding a decade's worth of data, independent checks on each annual report dating from 2020 to 2010 were done to collect the necessary data for transparency. After filtering the list of countries to the 30 observations I have chosen, I then proceeded to group the raw data points in preparation for later aggregation, transformation, and regression testing.

3. Panel Data — Manpower, Armed Personnel

To test the variable of manpower and its effects on SFA success outcomes within recipient states, a dataset from the World Bank, which recorded entries for armed personnel by country, was extracted. For countries with entries of N/A values, historical analysis was conducted to observe possible causes for their lack of official records of armed personnel. In this case, Libya was shown to not have any entries from 2010 to 2019. At first anomalous, the case of the Arab Spring and subsequent Libyan Civil War had disintegrated Libya's national military force, inflicting severe damage to its capabilities as a sovereign actor. In these cases, despite

mentions and reports of various armed militia groups taking over the role of the previous Libyan military, this study treated such values as 0 to illustrate a lack of a cohesive government that could not act on its security provisions.

On the other hand, affiliate militia groups within Libya received U.S. military assistance in tackling ISIL fighters in 2016 and onwards (Blanchard, 2023). During this time, SFA-level activities were reduced, supporting short-term tactical operations against insurgents. As such, Libya was counted as a failure as it represented a provision of U.S. military assistance over a period of time, but there was an institutional inability to leverage this assistance for military self-sufficiency against pervading insurgent threats.

4. Panel Data — Freedom Score

Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* database was leveraged to provide aggregated measures of civil liberties and freedom by country and annual basis to test the relationship between freedom index scores and successful SFA outcomes within recipient states. Drawing on this, panel data was extracted from this database and filtered for the thirty recipient states. Due to the use of different analytical aggregations in the early years, such as 2010 to 2012, these aggregates of freedom were scaled out of 10 instead of 100 as 2014 began to do. A simple multiplication of ten was conducted to these early data points, scaling all data points to the same range before being input for regression.

To account for potential skewed distributions within the data sets, histograms were produced to evaluate for skewed distributions before preparing the variables for regression. Within RStudio, histograms were prepared for each variable to detect normal or skewed distributions.
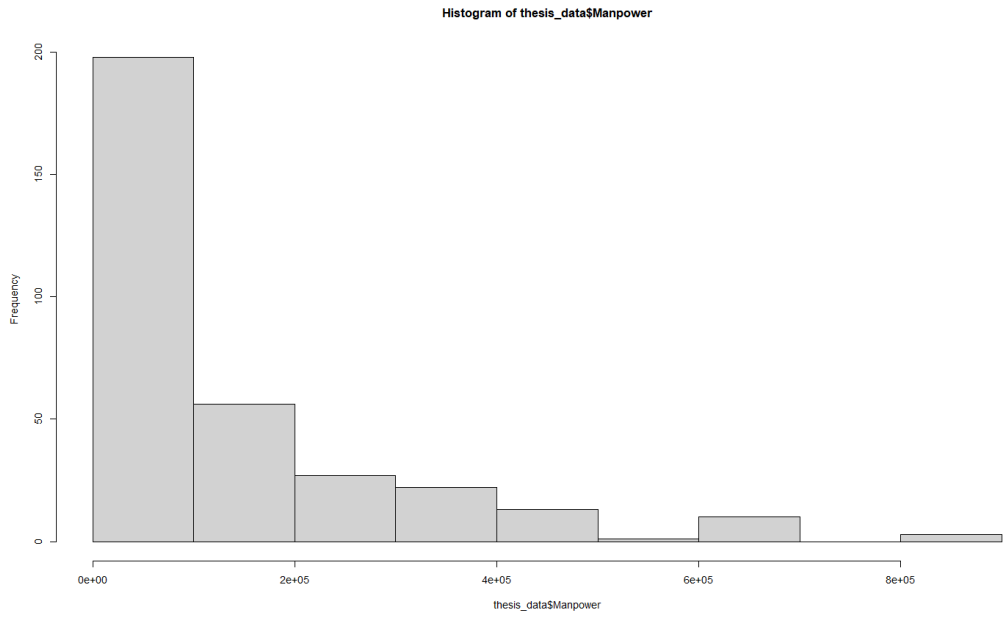
Figure 3. *"Histogram of Manpower Data Distribution."*

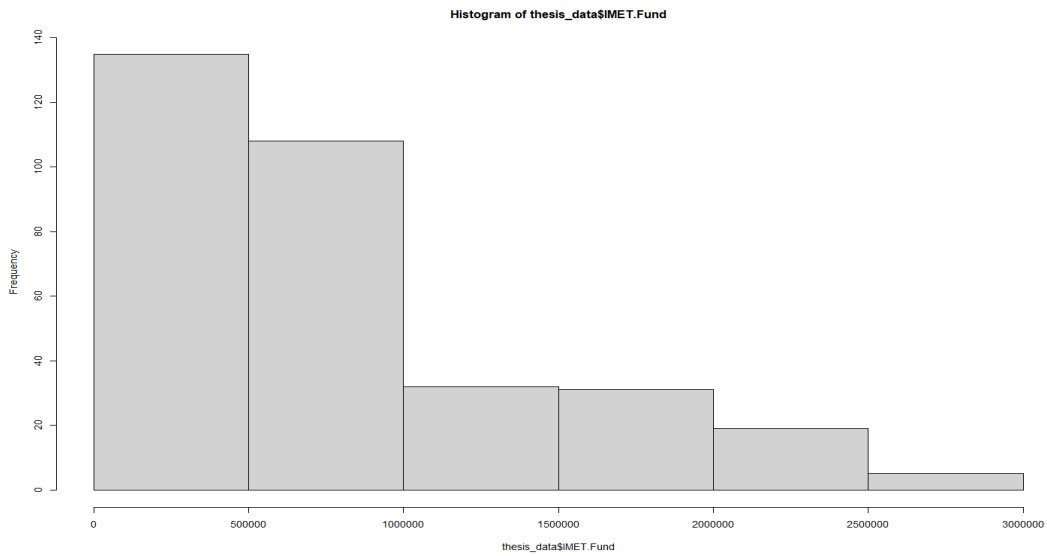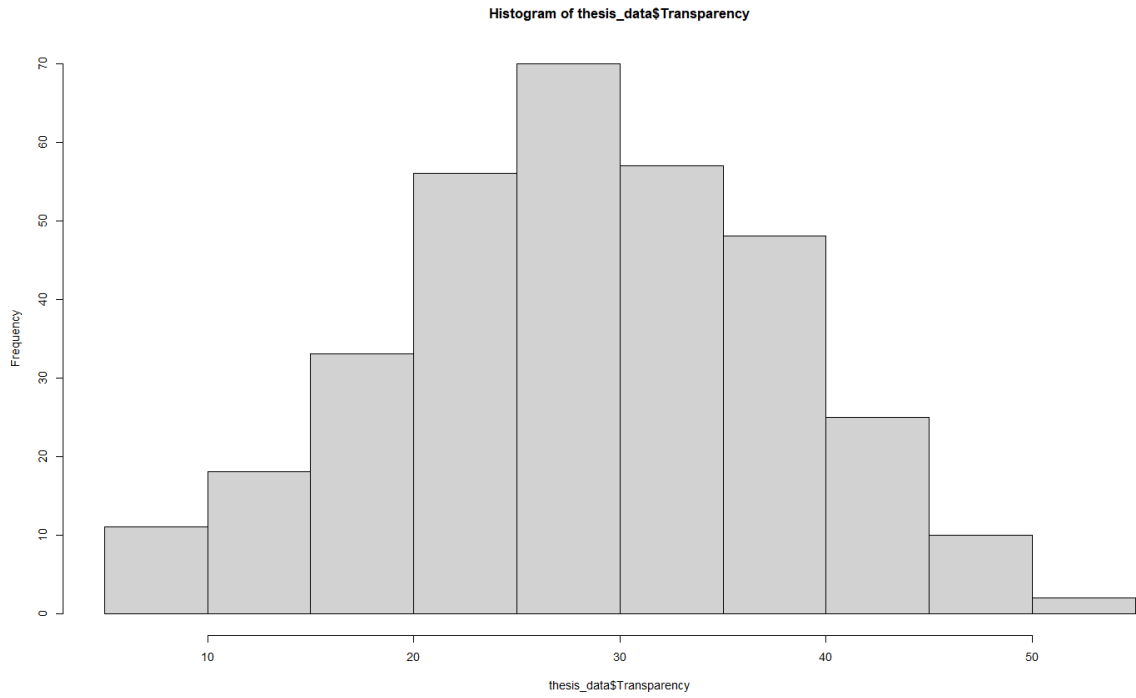**Figure 4**. *"Histogram of IMET Funding Data Distribution."*

Histogram of thesis_data$Transparency

Figure 5. *"Histogram of Transparency Data Distribution."*

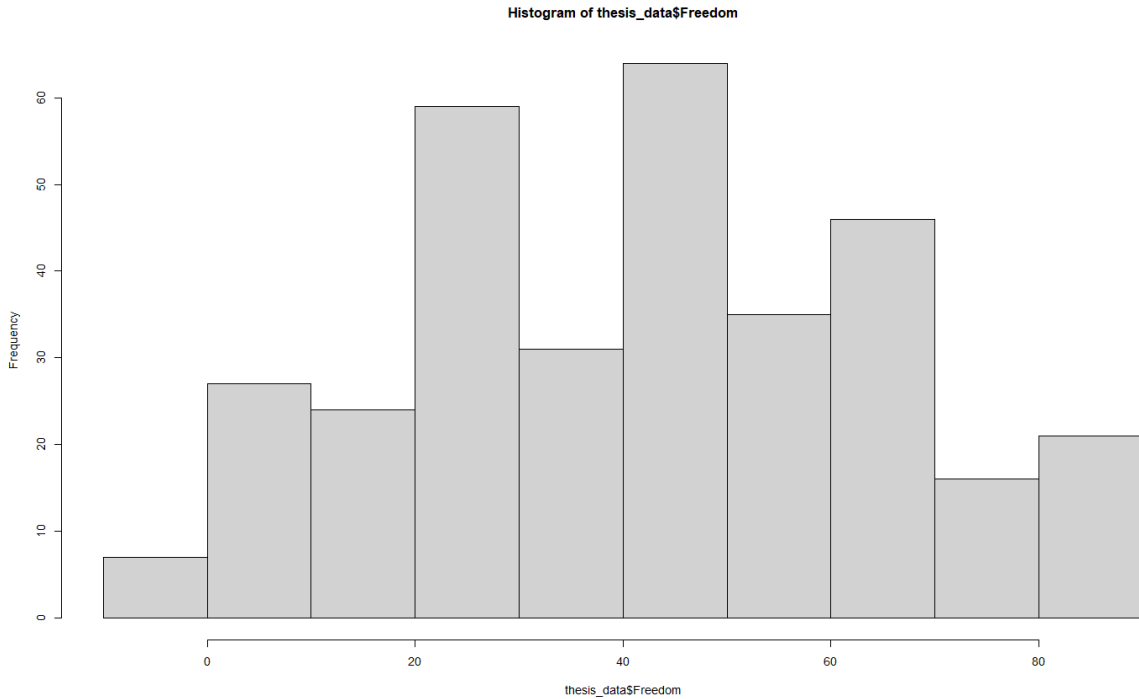**Histogram of thesis_data$Freedom**

Figure 6. *"Histogram of Freedom Score Distribution."*

Because transparency was the only dataset with a normal distribution, aside from the freedom score, the panel data for all countries and years measuring transparency was transformed into mean values. Freedom, manpower, and IMET funding data, due to their degrees of skewed distribution, were aggregated into median values to maintain a consistent sample for regression. To clarify, an example would be that Afghanistan's transparency scores from 2010 to 2020 were aggregated down to one mean value representing the eleven years of data before being inputted into regression. Simultaneously, the other eleven years of data for manpower, IMET funding, and freedom were separately aggregated into median values before regression. This method was applied to all thirty case studies before regression.

VIII. Binomial Multivariate Logistic Regression: Findings

Table 2.   Individual Effects of Predictor Variables on SFA Success Outcome

Measure	Overall	Failure	Success	P-value
N	30	17	13	—
Success Rate (%)	13 (43.3%)	0 (0%)	13 (100%)	
Transparency mean (SD)	28.88 (8.79)	23.91 (7.12)	35.38 (6.20)	<0.001***
Manpower median (SD)	124720.00 (160244.30)	110182.35 (140561.64)	143730.77 (187139.98)	0.579
Freedom Score median (SD)	41.83 (23.21)	32.82 (20.89)	53.62 (21.32)	0.012*
IMET Funding median (SD)	$836,256.93 ($664,141.56)	$605,674.35 ($622,976.92)	$113,778,8.00 ($612,100.08)	0.027

Significance Levels: ***$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$; *$p < 0.10$.

Table 3. Multivariate Logistic Regression Between SFA Success and Potential Predictors

Characteristic	OR	95% CI	p-value
Transparency	1.37	1.10, 1.88	0.017**
Manpower	1.00	1.00, 1.00	0.7
IMET Funding	1.00	1.00, 1.00	0.5
Freedom Score	0.98	0.90, 1.05	0.5

Significance Levels: ***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.10$
OR = Odds Ratio, CI = Confidence Interval

At this point, my observations within Table 1 were to consider initial statistical descriptions concerning the variables, specifically their standard deviations and success rates, as a comparison between failures and successes. Furthermore, it also reflects their potential significance on SFA outcomes when not controlling for other variables. My observations within Table 3 reflect my regression results, showing the estimations for what would apply to 95% of cases. In particular, I found that transparency was the most significant variable of my hypotheses because of its p-value of 0.017, indicating a strong correlation to positive outcomes of SFA provision. When controlling for variables, I found that freedom scores, when accounting for other factors, did not have statistical significance when tested jointly for correlation to success. Manpower and IMET funding also demonstrated little to no statistical significance in correlation to SFA success. As such, we can draw conclusions based on this regression analysis when considering the hypotheses laid out previously in this thesis.

IX. Result Interpretations, Modified Assumptions, Alternative Hypotheses

In this section, I will scrutinize my findings and generate new hypotheses based off of my empirical analysis. Referring to my results, I can infer that transparency strongly indicates SFA success outcomes. It can also be a multifaceted measure of a recipient's ability to be accountable, politically effective, and potentially popular with its civilian base. Although the United States provides human rights training within its foreign military assistance curriculums, it is also vital to emphasize that recipient countries tend to be undemocratic, unresponsive to liberal and Western norms, and economically weak. Therefore, the normative doctrines and their applied effects on the recipient country's institutions are potentially minimal or negligent. However, it at least corresponds with the general assumptions that other scholars have made, verifying that states with higher levels of institutional accountability—and, therefore, lower levels of political or military corruption—tend to perform better with the doctrines of SFA. Simultaneously, another observation can be made about how transparency metrics could warrant additional study for a more precise definition of transparency.

For example, it would be practically impossible to eliminate corruption from all facets of a country's institutions: small or infrequent levels of abuse will be committed regardless. Instead, I would interpret this as a step towards analyzing more precise measurements of what constitutes transparency. It is very well established that democratic nations tend to perform unusually well in military operations (Biddle, 2004). Still, an elusive question remains regarding what determines that successful outcome. If I were to modify my variable and generate new hypotheses with the same observations, I would consider the following:

1. **Modified "Transparency" Hypotheses for Future Study**

H_1: *The more often a recipient government abides by legal term limits, the more likely the recipient will have a successful SFA outcome.*

H_2: *If the recipient state investigates or prosecutes more than half of its annual corruption allegations, the recipient state is more likely to have a successful outcome of SFA.*

H_3: *The fewer restrictions or laws the recipient state imposes against the media, the more likely the recipient will have a successful SFA outcome.*

H_4: *The more frequently a recipient state experiences a peaceful transition of power, the more likely the recipient will have a successful SFA outcome.*

H_5: *If the recipient state's population has access to more civil liberties and freedoms, the recipient state will more likely be motivated to integrate SFA doctrines for protection.*

H_6: *The more political parties a recipient country has in its legislative process, the recipient state is more likely to have a successful outcome of SFA.*

H_7: *The more responsive the recipient state is to public opinion, the more likely the recipient state will render a successful SFA outcome.*

These hypotheses, derived from my original hypothesis, which simply measured indexed aggregates of transparency, would be significant for future scholarly research to help identify more specific conditions of what determines a successful SFA outcome. In short, the broader security literature should be more confident that political accountability is an incredibly powerful indicator of security assistance outcomes. However, this posits further analysis into the "bases" of defining a country's transparency now that this thesis has established a strong positive correlation with success. My alternative hypotheses would now seek to test that subcategory of state characteristics.

2. Modified "Manpower" Hypotheses for Future Study

H$_1$: *The more frequently the recipient military takes operational lead without U.S. assistance, the more likely the recipient will receive a successful SFA outcome.*

H$_2$: *The more armored vehicles a recipient military has, the more likely the recipient will receive a successful SFA outcome.*

H$_3$: *The more mobile artillery pieces a recipient military has, the more likely the recipient will receive a successful SFA outcome.*

H$_4$: *The more frequently the recipient military takes charge of a military operation, the more likely the recipient will achieve a successful SFA outcome.*

H$_5$: *The more training camps a recipient military has, the more likely the recipient will have a successful SFA outcome.*

H$_6$: *The higher the salary a recipient pays its military personnel, the more likely it is to achieve a successful SFA outcome.*

H$_7$: *The more soldiers a recipient has per mile of its land-based border, the more likely it is to achieve a successful SFA outcome.*

Next, I refer to the variable of manpower. Despite the rationale that manpower is a critical component of any modern army, the data reflected a lack of statistical significance in the relationship between a recipient state's number of soldiers and the outcome of success. If manpower is an inappropriate measure, I infer three possibilities for why that may be, based on the findings of my regression. First, I would more thoroughly question the accuracy of reported entries within any dataset concerning conflict-prone states and the number of troops they may have. Although my study considered Afghanistan an example of a recipient state documenting falsified numbers and artificially inflating confidence, my hypothesis did not consider the

statistical effect of *other* conflict-prone states exaggerating their numbers. Furthermore, the issue of numerical quantity is also a superficial measurement of a military's effectiveness. As seen repeatedly within military history, the commander's ability to adapt and make informed decisions are more significant variables that can turn the odds of a fight. Numerical advantages may also not be as applicable in modern counterinsurgencies. As the literature suggests, insurgencies are almost always disadvantaged regarding numbers, equipment, training, and other tangible resources (Switzer, 2022; U.S. Government, 2012).

Therefore, insurgents may resort to asymmetric warfare that relies on suicide bombing, assassinations, or guerrilla tactics to amplify their damage output. Instead, it may be more appropriate to evaluate a country's military capabilities by other metrics rather than manpower which can be distorted. I would incorporate other metrics to understand levels of morale or commitment by a recipient country's military to be a more competent soldier. I would operationalize this via income granted per soldier or officer and determine if higher personal salary levels could be tied to morale, commitment, and SFA success.

Secondly, I would modify my argument to consider the issue of equipment and training. Although my original hypotheses attempted to consider the depth and scope of a military's effectiveness, it is also true that this only applied to officers. My modified hypothesis would consider the standard gear that an ordinary soldier is expected to receive, the operational doctrines of the country's military strategy (i.e., combined arms doctrine), or other force multipliers that could more accurately describe the conditions of the recipient's military capabilities. In this case, I would look at instances where certain countries could be separated from those with regular access to armored vehicles from those without. Simultaneously, geographical conditions would have to be taken into consideration. As addressed in the

Afghanistan and Philippines process tracing sections, U.S. security force assistance often manifests as the deployment of smaller units, training experts, and shipments of combat-purposed materiel. The U.S. military is compelled by a doctrine focusing heavily on operational efficiency, superior firepower, and a combined arms doctrine. Therefore, such attitudes may transfer over to recipients who may not consider the proportionality of their strikes against materially weaker insurgencies. Regardless, insurgencies intentionally engage their targets asymmetrically for amplified damage and reduced costs. The nature of fighting modern counterinsurgencies can be operationally challenging, requiring logistical advantages to overcome environmental disadvantages, as seen in Afghanistan.

Thirdly, I would confront the newfound issue of military performance. Although this study measured SFA success via certain variables, my alternative hypotheses also consider the degree of initiative from the recipient government. I would classify this as understanding the country's willingness to take action without U.S. military supervision or to take charge of military operations within their territory. As Afghanistan demonstrates, accurate predictors of competency should be taken seriously to reduce false confidence and maintain accurate projections of capability. I would also expand this measure to consider the issue of *improvement* over time. Specifically, I would want to test for a correlation between a trend of tactical or operational victories and tying those to successful outcomes of SFA. This also leads to an additional point: terrain. Insurgencies, prone to relying on asymmetric warfare, intentionally harness terrain to maximize their combat advantages (Chow and Han, 2023). Terrain, unsurprisingly, is an absolute force multiplier in the grand context of warfare. Therefore, I will develop a new hypothesis for how efficiently a recipient state's military forces may navigate their territory while maneuvering against insurgents. I would also investigate security literature

discussing a possible correlation between border length, border changes, border communities, and the number of soldiers they have for every mile of their border (Abramson and Carter and Ying, 2021; Stewart and Liou. 2017; Atzili, 2007).

3. Modified "Freedom" Hypotheses for Future Study

H₁: *The more female policymakers the recipient state has in its government, the more likely it is to achieve a successful SFA outcome.*

H₂: *The more educated the average civilian is in the recipient state, the more likely it is to achieve a successful SFA outcome.*

H₃: *The more religiously tolerant a recipient state is towards its people, the more likely it is to achieve a successful SFA outcome.*

Despite strong expectations that this variable would have positive associations with successful SFA outcomes, its context could be explained by certain outliers, such as Kenya, which exhibits a democratic government with strong military performance as an SFA recipient but lacks the qualities of a robust democracy in terms of transparency and respecting civil liberties. Therefore, a natural prompt of inquiry from this finding is to determine whether or not democratic values are important for SFA recipients. The United States Congress has historically applied diplomatic and political pressure on partners abroad, restricting aid based on human rights violations or other synonymously illicit actions. For example, the "United Nations verified that more than 6,000 children were recruited and used as soldiers in 2021, including in Syria, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mai, Central African Republic, [and by] non-state actors" (Weber, 2022). Formal legislation has been taken to tackle these abuses, such as the Child Soldiers Prevention Act, and coup-related restrictions were enforced to deny any funds

or security assistance to violating countries. As defined within my study, freedom was also meant to broadly refer to civil rights, human rights cooperation, and norms such as freedom to practice religions, gender equality, political participation, etc. However, freedom in this instance could easily have been too broad of a variable to assess for practical relevance to the issue of SFA success outcomes. Thus, I would specify the precise democratic values to test the following assumptions:

a. *Is there a certain level of freedom that correlates to successful SFA outcomes?*

   And if not,

b. *Is there an observable limit to the number of rights-related abuses a recipient can commit while avoiding funding restrictions by Congress and still attain SFA success?*

These would serve as the design parameters for a potential empirical study that seeks to establish a theoretical explanation for determining the successful outcomes of SFA within countries that commit human rights abuses but not enough to be denied aid. On a practical note, these testable assumptions lead to my hypotheses, which would discuss issues of certain "freedoms" that could correlate to successful military outcomes. Beyond gender equality, I would want to assess if the average citizen's accessibility to education could be a weighing factor on the issue of military outcomes. For example, I rationalize this hypothesis to test for causal relationships between the average citizen's level of education—years of schooling—and the outcome of success. If citizens are not educated, it is also possible that the core infantry that makes up the bulk of the nation's military may also lack formal education. If so, this would prove problematic for instances of IMET where military professionalization efforts may struggle to gain traction.

Another hypothesis I would seek to investigate, in the context of "freedom"-based phenomena related to successful SFA, could be the economic state of the recipient itself. If the government could not keep up with its fiscal obligations, the operational integrity of the recipient state's military would certainly—and rightfully—be questionable. The economic characteristics of the recipient, in relation to freedom, would also be noteworthy for presenting newfound ideas that may not have been considered in the preexisting literature: does a country's GDP matter for ensuring SFA is successful? If families were able to generate more income with higher-quality jobs, would this have a beneficial impact on the chances of success? Freedom on its own is a fairly broad spectrum, and even with aggregates of various characteristics, such as gender equality, it may prove to be more useful to security scholars if *specific* freedoms were tested rather than presuming that freedom levels are irrelevant.

Based on my earlier assessments for transparency, I rationalize this decision to investigate "freedom" as I argue there to be a mutually symbiotic relationship between the two variables: if a government is accountable and transparent to its citizens, this implies respect for legal institutions within the state. If there is respect for the rule of law, this suggests a potentially positive example of *specific* democratic values being a determinant sign of SFA success. Another way I rationalize this is by establishing a mutual "social contract" between state and people, the recipient governments would also be fostering popular support for their policies, therefore, maintaining a successful outcome of SFA.

4. Modified "Professionalization / IMET" Hypotheses for Future Study

H₁: *The more military exercises a recipient military participates in, the more likely the recipient can attain successful SFA outcomes.*

H₂: *The more years a recipient country participates in IMET training, the more likely it is that the recipient will attain successful SFA outcomes.*

H₃: *The more multilateral military operations a recipient military participates in, the more likely the recipient can attain successful SFA outcomes.*

The statistical significance of IMET funding (otherwise labeled as professionalization) was found to be little to none concerning SFA security assistance. However, to some degree, this suggests an issue with the research design. Formal military education programs are generally difficult to enter, require diplomatic permission to participate, and take years of preparation. The original hypothesis, which argued that higher levels of IMET funding would be correlated to higher levels of SFA success, revealed that it is likely institutional issues may be overwhelmingly mitigating the impact of IMET-educated officers. Another point to consider is the difficulty in tracking IMET students after they graduate from the program and return to their native countries. As students return, it is currently unknown to what extent—if at all—the student's superior officers integrate their education into their forces. The ability to measure this effect would bring compelling evidence to the broader literature on security force assistance but is likely to be impossible. In addition, the cultural attitudes and norms instilled by a formal U.S. military education are likely to be jarring for a country seeking to reform its military practices. Without strong and consistent training support from U.S. experts, it is debatable whether IMET graduates can significantly apply their educational experiences to their home militaries.

On the other hand, it may be more practical to investigate the number of years that a government could participate in IMET programs. A correlation could potentially be made between the number of years a country could partake, the number of students they could send, and the amount of money provided for that training. In this case, like before, the cost of the program would be taken into account with additional variables to test against. Beyond IMET funding, it may be ideal to consider military exercises that the recipient participates in, or actively leads on its own. Although the complexity of the exercise would not be necessary to measure, it may be relevant in understanding the types of exercises that the recipient military does to better train its troops and officers in simulations. This would also be true for countries like the Philippines, which regularly conducts joint military exercises with the United States within regional waters. However, this would also be treated as a professionalization since it describes an activity where military forces simulate responses to operational demands.

In this sense, joint counterterrorism and counterinsurgency exercises may be a more substantive predictor of successful SFA outcomes. The professional conduct of recipient military officers would be a significant metric for understanding why SFA outcomes succeed, but largely because any self-sufficient military logically *requires* competent officers to be organized and functional. Therefore, although my original hypothesis showed little to no statistical significance, my adjusted hypotheses could—if not should—leverage more practical insight into the relationship between recipient officers and their own outcomes for success.

XI. Research Limitations

This thesis was constrained on several issues concerning data availability and interpreting the accuracy of qualitative studies from U.S. military institutions. Additional variables that were considered but ultimately dropped from this article would be the following metrics: the amount of effective military intelligence that a recipient country can gather or produce on its own, and the level of transportation infrastructure that can be measured. Military intelligence, especially concerning insurgencies and terrorist organizations, plays a significant role in interpreting whether or not overt factors alone drive SFA outcomes—or if information asymmetry may disrupt recipient efforts to be self-sufficient. This task would be multifaceted: first, information asymmetry could be done by the enemy or U.S. providers. I rationalize this as a degree of potential infiltration by enemy forces, especially in my observation, Senegal.

Despite its robust success with SFA, Senegal is notably susceptible to infiltration by hostile actors. Therefore, this invokes a question of causality. If enemies can successfully infiltrate Senegal's forces, but Senegal succeeds with SFA, is this outcome determined by Senegalese military intelligence rooting out rogue actors or carried out by U.S. officials? Furthermore, if U.S. intelligence cannot be immediately shared with the relevant stakeholders in a recipient government, it is possible that SFA recipients are unwillingly and unknowingly dependent on U.S. assistance to win on the battlefield. Thus, I operationalize intelligence to understand a variable beyond military-specific values. Alas, because of a lack of actionable or reliable data, military intelligence cannot be measured and was removed from the original list of hypotheses.

Secondly, I refer to the variable of logistical infrastructure as another instance of limited researchability. Currently, no authentic dataset or metric exists for aggregating or measuring the efficiency and robustness of a nation's transportation infrastructure which plays a key role in recipient countries. Because most recipient countries tend to be conflict-prone, developing, and economically unstable, this suggests that there may even be a low degree of developed infrastructure that would allow domestic security forces to respond quickly to insurgent threats. If so, an aggregation of this infrastructure score would have been ideal in understanding if nation-building efforts, especially by the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq, were improving military self-sufficiency within the recipients. I would operationalize this as measuring roads, railroads, relevant waterways, airports, and other means of transporting supplies and troops to reach distant targets. In other ways, it also could be a test for U.S. military officials to evaluate. If transportation infrastructure were, hypothetically, a statistically significant variable in my regression, I would still question if this was an issue of recipient countries not being able to develop their own capabilities—or if U.S. forces, constrained by a lack of quality infrastructure, is simply unable to maximize their assistance efforts.

The significance of this dataset would serve an integral part in seeing if future SFA provisions should also focus on establishing facilities that would help with military response times. This would also test understanding of the return on the United States' numerous investments in "nation-building." If the United States were to continue funding infrastructure projects abroad, an empirical test should be conducted to determine long-term effects corresponding to levels of SFA success. Despite my attempts to develop and measure infrastructure datasets, most case studies did not have such data for analysis. Therefore, this

variable that sought to measure transportation and logistical infrastructure was removed from the original list of hypotheses for testing.

Thirdly, I would concede that the degree of technological innovation and literacy within a recipient state is nearly—if not totally—impossible to measure or interpret. Specifically, this variable would have referred to the ability of recipient military forces to have standard equipment necessary to fight a war against insurgents. A common criticism within the SFA literature on Afghanistan was that U.S. leaders failed to consider that their doctrines and capabilities heavily depended on extensive logistical networks. Therefore, if U.S. military experts are training—and instilling—American attitudes of waging a war based on combined arms, superior firepower, and technological mastery, the United States would be setting their recipients up for failure.

However, this would also be a helpful variable in understanding success cases. I assessed that one of my case studies, Kenya, successfully integrated SFA doctrine into forming an effective fighting force. The "U.S. government considers Kenya [to be a] strategic partner and key regional actor in East Africa, and critical to counterterrorism efforts in the region. Kenya is sub-Saharan Africa's third-largest economy, a regional finance and transportation hub" (Blanchard, 2020). My operationalization would go as far as to extend this to local means of producing ammunition, replacement parts for vehicles, or other essential supplies necessary to conduct counterinsurgency or counterterrorism properly. Still, because these may often be piecemeal facilities used by irregular militia or the fact that there is simply not any reliable dataset to measure this, I was forced to remove it from empirical consideration.

XII. Areas Warranting Further Research

In this section, I will discuss elements of my research that warrant further empirical or mixed-methods testing from security scholars. I will also draw on possible factors not initially considered in the scope of this paper's design phase, but are appealing elements to furthering the literature's interpretation of determinant factors and SFA success outcomes. Although I introduced modified hypotheses earlier to account for future research, I would emphasize that those modified hypotheses were built to be contextualized around my quantitative analysis. In short, those sections modify original hypotheses for a future expansion of this work and were done with rationalizations already within the parameters of this thesis' design process. Naturally, the inclusion of additional observations who receive U.S. SFA should also be included—but for some, such as Taiwan and Ukraine, both are special circumstances that are not valid for my study which focuses on active counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations.

First, I want to focus on the intersections of border proximity which I fleetingly addressed in my modified hypotheses. Considering the transnational nature of insurgencies and terrorist groups, especially in my African observations, I combined this factor in mind that Senegal was notably susceptible to malicious infiltration. If my assumptions about information asymmetry and intelligence gaps are correct, it could also imply that recipient countries are being infiltrated and unaware of it. This leads back to my emphasis on conducting empirical or mixed-methods research on describing border conditions within African recipient states and whether these border regions are generally accessible by terrorist organizations. The manpower issue was also a key factor in my assessment that recipient states, with large land borders relative to their available manpower, could be severely disadvantaged. Insurgencies can take advantage of this and consolidate themselves within border regions that are difficult to access or simply

impractical to defend without sufficient manpower regularly. Furthermore, suppose recipient

states somehow overcame this disadvantage with vehicles and aircraft from U.S. assistance. In

that case, it still raises questions about the ability of the recipient to be self-sufficient in these

scenarios. If helicopters and surveillance aircraft are deployed, does the recipient state have the

expertise and resources to maintain or replace these instruments? The African recipients' diverse

ecosystems and physical environments may also have a significant role in understanding the

nature of borders. In short, this could initiate a scholarly investigation on whether SFA

recipients, who are entirely land-locked with porous border regions, are disadvantaged against

asymmetric threats.

Secondly, I would want to discuss the nature of security force assistance—but not in the

unilateral fashion that I have written. Instead, it is the role that *other* nations may play in security

assistance programs for SFA recipients. For example, France was the primary contributor of

security assistance to Niger, which is fighting a trans-Sahel conflict against rogue and radical

actors. However, France withdrew its military forces from Niger in late 2023 at the request of the

new junta, leaving many analysts concerned about Niger's ability to fight alone (Associated

Press). Still, German security officials have also demonstrated strategic concerns for wanting to

equip and train African militaries, especially to challenge and restrain Russian influence across

the continent (Watson and Street, 2022). Subsequently, this presents an inconsequential challenge

for scholars to consider in understanding security assistance: the role of multilateral security

assistance programs and whether their overlapping natures may benefit or harm the recipients.

Although the United States often prefers to conduct joint exercises with many allied nations

abroad, the same cannot be expected of recipient states which lack the infrastructure or capability

to integrate lessons from several parties. Although it could be argued that Western democratic

militaries tend to be allies and have similar doctrines, I posit that this would come to be a detriment for recipient militaries for two reasons: one, that allied nations may still have competing interests to maximize geopolitical influence over weaker nations; and two, that recipient militaries may become overly dependent on multinational coalitions to bolster, or replace, their roles as security personnel in the region.

A third consideration would be the proliferation of advanced technologies in the coming years. As the world enters a time of increasingly sophisticated and capable technology platforms, the doctrines of counterinsurgency that were once taught may no longer be applicable. As weapon platforms such as drones become more capable and reliable, the delivery of powerful ordinance may change how future wars are fought against hostile non-state actors. Instead, insurgency groups may be able to inflict the same degree of damage as before but with even fewer costs due to the nature of increasingly accessible and powerful equipment. This would include the issue of artificial intelligence, which is a technology that is already being integrated into military applications across the world (Goldfarb and Lindsay, 2022). Although I insist that human nature will still be integral to combat operations, recipient militaries would lack the means to fight against AI-empowered threats. They would not be able to depend on their training to counteract such weapons platforms. The literature has already proven that recipient countries require enormous resources to be self-sufficient and militarily capable. However, the dire threat of technological proliferation is that it is ever-evolving and can pose insurmountable challenges against a counterinsurgency-focused security force. Therefore, security assistance scholars should seriously consider the effect of technological development within recipient states and their vulnerability to well-equipped, increasingly capable insurgencies.

My fourth—and final—consideration to expand the overall scholarly literature, is factoring in the issue of climate change. Since the beginning of security literature, which sharply increased since the 9/11 attacks, very little attention has been brought within the community to address the emerging threats that climate change poses against recipient states. Recipient states, especially my thirty observations, are all developing or conflict-prone states that lack climate-resilient infrastructure to keep up with extreme weather, extended droughts, or scarcity in critical resources such as food and water. International observers and scholars emphasize the growing threat that climate change poses by population displacement, food insecurity, and intense radicalization within vulnerable communities, especially within Africa (Ross, 2004; United Nations, 2021). In other words, it may be critical that security assistance scholars—and policymakers—account for the steady approach of climate change and how it can aggressively multiply conflicts already present within recipient states.

If populations are put at further risk of scarcity or extreme weather, the opportunities for terrorist groups to recruit and inflict damage grow as well. Recipient governments that were already struggling may be unable to keep up with the logistical challenges of a changing climate system. The displacement of populations could cause significant instability across border regions, further complicating the task of identifying potential hostile actors from legitimate immigrants seeking shelter and safety. The issue of climate change has yet to be presented within the qualitative or empirical literature of security assistance. Still, its growing threat could possibly multiply already extant dangers within SFA recipients. The United States would especially need to pay special attention to the logistical challenges that climate change can inflict on its security assistance programs, adding even more difficulty to what seems to be an already overwhelming task.

XIII. Conclusions

After conducting a qualitative analysis of my case studies and testing my theory with regression, the United States will experience extensive challenges in the near future in handling its foreign security assistance policy. Although I could test my theory alongside preexisting assumptions from the security community, I conclude that even with transparency, my hypotheses' sole statistically significant variable was qualitatively insufficient at precisely explaining the true nature of what factors support successful SFA outcomes. However, despite this lack of specificity, I was able to draw a strong positive correlation between elements of a transparent or accountable government to cases of successful SFA. This empirical test offers strong evidence to support the broader community's claim that recipient governments must be responsive to civilian actors and mitigate abuses of power.

I found that measurements of manpower were statistically insignificant and could very well be misrepresentative factors to test for a recipient state's likelihood to be successful. I rationalized this empirical finding by proposing that measurements of manpower can easily be misrepresented—which was done in Afghanistan, hence invoking the issue of "ghost soldiers"—and that without additional modifiers, manpower is an insufficient descriptor of how capable or effective a military is. For example, the issue of manpower could be attached to how much of a recipient state's budget is allocated toward military resources. If soldiers are inadequately paid, this can lower morale and discourage soldiers from fighting armed insurgents. Another implication of my empirical analysis could suggest that successful SFA recipients may have smaller borders than failed SFA recipients, allowing them to defend against insurgent attacks more easily. The topic of borders could also have a disproportional effect on my observations—if insurgencies are consolidated within land-locked regions near land-locked

recipient countries, how many of my failed observations may be overwhelmed by attempts to defend their borders with inadequate numbers? How many successes are augmented by being able to concentrate their SFA-trained forces in relatively tiny theaters? Thus, I find that although my empirical analysis indicated a lack of correlation to successful SFA outcomes, there are compelling explanations to explain why and, therefore, turning us towards alternative measures of military capability.

Although professionalization makes practical causal sense to be associated with success, it was also found to be statistically insignificant. I reason that this may be because professionalization in the context of my study was too broad or simply did not capture the necessary details of what plays *into* a recipient military's ability to demonstrate professionalization. Instead, I reason that a recipient military's officer corps should be evaluated, not necessarily by an investment metric, but by their battle performance. For example, if Country *X* was provided IMET training from 2010 to 2022, a decline in IMET funding could *inversely* suggest professionalization. I rationalize this by reframing my initial assumption that professionalization is a metric kept up by high funding. Instead, it could suggest that a recipient's growing capability via IMET training justifies reducing U.S. costs to continue training them, prompting a decline over the years. I also concluded that professionalization measures could be indicated via how many times the recipient took initiative in combat, or participated in military exercises to simulate actual combat.

Freedom, although an important aspect of U.S. foreign assistance training and curricula, also failed to be a statistically significant determinant in my research. If the empirical analysis is consistent, I reason that this could be because a recipient's level of civil freedom may play no part in how effective their military may be. Authoritarian or oppressive governments may focus

large amounts of resources on military upkeep to preserve regime power, whether against domestic opponents or foreign adversaries. If freedom were insignificant, I would justify this quantitative outcome by noting how citizens may not feel empowered enough to address their oppression. As I mentioned earlier, the United States often continues to supply SFA to countries that have been criticized for human rights abuses. However, this does suggest a theoretical model that balances the maximum number of abuses a recipient country can commit without being disbarred from U.S. foreign aid. Freedom alone can also be an inappropriate aggregate to determine a successful SFA outcome. For example, although this study has established that recipient states with higher levels of transparency tend to have successful SFA compared with Western nations, they would fare poorly in scoring against the global average. Instead, more accurate measures such as gender equality in political decisionmaking or education levels would be easier and more substantial indicators for how successful a recipient is with SFA support. Instead of evaluating an aggregate, it could be necessary to further scrutinize the results by examining actual applications of freedom and civil rights before accepting the null hypothesis outright. After all, correlation does not always mean causation.

Despite my limited findings, I have determined that on a theoretical and empirical basis, security literature has broadly been correct about its assumptions for SFA success outcomes being tied with transparent and accountable governments. However, although I have found strong statistical evidence to solidify this assumption, I argue that additional enhancements can be made to the model to identify precise activities that allow SFA success. If the literature and evidence support the finding that a free press or a term-limited government is essential to success, it may allow Western democracies to concentrate their forces on recipients with these qualities to ensure the maximum amount of "return" for their investment.

Still, the issue of security assistance is not as simple as understanding the determinants that create successful SFA conditions. I would add that in addition to my empirical analyses and findings, my assessments of security force assistance have only demonstrated that the scholarly community has yet to breach the surface in actually understanding what characteristics a successful country should have to be self-sufficient. Despite its triumph, the significance of transparency can only be as useful as its vagueness. My contribution to security assistance literature was essential for testing previous theories. I produced empirical testing to verify that certain variables, assuming all others are considered, can have universal applicability regardless of geopolitical or geographical variations amongst SFA-recipient observations. My findings should rule out niche generalizations and assumptions from previous scholars—mostly military officials and analysts—and, hopefully, encourage a more nuanced and informed approach towards security assistance using a mixed methods analysis approach.

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