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ARTICLE



Issue linkage in security assistance: A pathway to recipient security sector reform

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ABSTRACT

This article applies the international cooperation concept of issue linkage to identify an overlooked pathway to successful security assistance. We argue that providers can effectively incentivise recipients to implement otherwise undesirable reforms when they explicitly link implementation to another good whose value to the recipient outweighs the costs of the reforms. Drawing on original interviews, we find support for our argument in post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), where the United States used the promise of NATO's Partnership for Peace program to incentivise BiH to integrate its three armies.

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Security assistance is a ubiquitous feature of international relations and a central tool of U.S. defence strategy and foreign policy.¹ Great and regional powers conduct security assistance to advance a variety of goals, including building partner military capacity to manage local threats while conserving their own resources for higher priorities.

Though the logic is clear, the record is mixed.² Security assistance is hard because military effectiveness does not just depend on what a military has (or is given) but on decisions about personnel, command

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¹Definitions of security assistance vary widely. The U.S. government uses the term to refer to a variety of activities including material assistance, training, and advising. For information on trends in security assistance, see Theodore McLaughlin, Lee JM Seymour, and Simon Pierre Boulanger Martel, 'Tracking the Rise of United States Foreign Military Training: IMTAD-USA, a New Dataset and Research Agenda', *Journal of Peace Research*, 59/2 (2022), 286–96; Susan B. Epstein and Liana W. Rosen, 'U.S. Security Assistance and Security Cooperation Programs: Overview of Funding Trends', *Congressional Research Service*, updated February 1, 2018, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45091/3>.

²Stephen Biddle, Julia MacDonald, and Ryan Baker, 'Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 14/1–2 (2018), 89–142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745>.

structures, training, and information management.³ Beyond material aid, security assistance involves efforts to convince recipients to reform their militaries. However, local leaders are not always motivated to adopt these organizational changes, even if they would improve military effectiveness. For example, local leaders may prioritize coup-proofing over military effectiveness and loyalty over competence in their personnel policies.⁴ The problem of interest asymmetry is the rule, not the exception, in most large-scale security assistance cases.⁵ The fundamental strategic challenge for security assistance providers is thus to influence recipients to implement security sector reforms.⁶

Why do security assistance recipients sometimes implement the defence reforms encouraged by their patrons, and sometimes ignore their patron's direction, taking the material assistance, but implementing policies that keep their militaries weak? Existing work emphasises four main possibilities. First, recipients make difficult reforms when they develop a strong, intrinsic interest in improving their militaries' effectiveness due to the appearance of an acute threat.⁷ Second, recipients might make hard reforms when those reforms become less costly due to shifting constellations of domestic political power.⁸ Third, providers might convince recipients to implement reforms through a process of socialization and persuasion. While influence through socialization and rapport-based persuasion is the doctrinal approach to influence in U.S. military advising, there is considerable debate about the effectiveness of this approach.⁹

The fourth explanation for recipient security sector reform is conditionality. Providers incentivise recipients to implement reforms by conditioning material assistance on those reforms – additional assistance is the carrot,

³Caitlin Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes* (New York: Cornell UP 2015); Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth A. Stanley, *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness* (Palo Alto: Stanford UP 2007).

⁴Ibid.

⁵Biddle et al., 'Small Footprint, Small Payoff'; Eli Berman and David Lake, *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence through Local Agents* (Ithaca: Cornell UP 2019). In the broader counterinsurgency context, see also: Barbara Elias, *Why Allies Rebel: Defiant Local Partners in Counterinsurgency Wars* (Cambridge UP 2020); Walter C. Ladwig III, *The Forgotten Front: Patron-Client Relationships in Counterinsurgency* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP 2017).

⁶Rachel Tecott Metz, 'The Cult of the Persuasive', *International Security* 47/3 (Winter 2023), 95–135.

⁷Stephen D. Biddle, 'Building Security Forces & Stabilizing Nations: The Problem of Agency', *Daedalus* 146/4 (Fall 2017), 126–38; Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, 'Small Footprint, Small Payoff'; Berman and Lake, *Proxy Wars*.

⁸Andrew Radin, *Institution Building in Weak States: The Primacy of Local Politics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown UP 2020).

⁹Renanah Miles Joyce, 'Soldiers' Dilemma: Foreign Military Training and Liberal Norm Conflict', *International Security* 46/4 (2022): 48–90; Sharan Grewal, 'Norm Diffusion through US military training in Tunisia', *Security Studies* 31/2 (2022): 291–317; Metz, 'The Cult of the Persuasive'; Alexandra Cecylia Chinchilla, 'Advising War: Limited Intervention in Conflict', PhD Thesis, Chicago Univ., 2021, <https://doi.org/10.6082/uchicago.3445>; Department of the Army, *FM 3-07.1, Security Force Assistance* (Washington, DC: GPO 2009), 2–8; Department of the Army, *FM 3-22: Army Support to Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: US GPO 2013), 6–2.

reduced (or terminated) assistance is the stick. Accumulating evidence suggests conditionality is an important driver of recipient security sector reform.¹⁰ Yet, there are several barriers to effective conditionality in security assistance. Providers may have difficulty detecting the degree to which security assistance recipients are implementing the reforms.¹¹ Providers may also not be able to credibly threaten to cut off material aid because of its perceived importance to their own goals. Lastly, the assistance may not be a valuable enough carrot to motivate recipients to implement reforms they view as prohibitively costly or risky.¹²

The contemporary security assistance scholarship tends to build on insights from comparative political science and from sociology and traces its intellectual lineage primarily to scholarship on US counterinsurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan. And yet security assistance is a ubiquitous feature of international relations that predates the US wars in the Middle East by centuries. The narrow focus of the security assistance scholarship has led to regional and theoretical oversights. There is much to learn about security assistance from the rich international relations literature on alliance management and international cooperation, and from security assistance in other regions, such as Europe. The political science scholarship focused on 'security assistance' or 'security force assistance' has also been surprisingly disconnected from a separate literature on 'security sector reform'. We integrate literature that has shed considerable light on security sector reform cases from 1990s Europe with the more recent security assistance literature that has developed since the post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In particular, scholarship on the consequences of NATO expansion and other forms of foreign assistance for the transformation of civil–military relations after revolutions and regime changes is of great relevance to contemporary debates about security assistance.

Harnessing insights from the international cooperation literature and drawing on the experience of security assistance in the European context, we identify *issue linkage* as a distinct form of conditionality that can influence security assistance recipients to implement meaningful recipient security sector reform. Unlike the typical conceptualization of conditionality in the security assistance literature, which focuses exclusively on the security assistance itself as the carrot and stick, issue linkage conditionality does not require the recipient to value the aid itself highly, nor does it require the provider to credibly threaten to cut off the aid. Instead, providers of security assistance can incentivise recipients to implement costly reforms by linking

¹⁰Biddle et al., 'Small Footprint, Small Payoff'; Berman and Lake, *Proxy Wars*, 289; Ladwig, *The Forgotten Front*; Metz, 'The Cult of the Persuasive'.

¹¹Biddle et al., 'Small Footprint, Small Payoff'; Berman and Lake, *Proxy Wars*.

¹²Biddle, 'Building Security Forces and Stabilizing Nations', *Daedalus* 146/4 (2017): 126–38; Berman and Lake, *Proxy Wars*.

them to another issue of sufficiently high value to the recipient. Issue linkage conditionality thus represents a to-date overlooked source of leverage providers can use to incentivize recipients to implement reforms.

To be clear, we do not argue that issue linkage is the only pathway to effective security assistance, or that issue linkage is possible in every case of security assistance. In some cases, providers and recipients may share interests in implementing reforms, obviating the need for issue linkage (or any other strategy of influence for that matter). In other cases, interest divergence may be so severe – often because of domestic cleavages in the recipient state – that there is no issue providers can successfully link to incentivise reform. We argue that issue linkage is a pathway to meaningful security sector reform for a set of cases characterised by medium levels of interest-divergence, in which the carrot of the assistance itself may not motivate reforms as much as a carrot outside the assistance.

This article explores the plausibility of issue linkage as a form of conditionality that can achieve security sector reform and examines alternative explanations through within-case comparison of US security assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in two periods, from the Dayton Accords through roughly 2002, and 2003 through 2005. The authors closely examined original policy documents from Bosnia's Defence Reform Commissions and publicly available accounts of the reform efforts and conducted original interviews with policy makers involved at all levels of policy formulation, from military officials and technical advisors, to ambassadors, civil servants, and Bosnian cabinet ministers.¹³ These interviews provided important information about the decision-makers, their goals, and lines of thinking, providing insight into the extent to which the carrot of NATO membership influenced Bosnian decision-making regarding security sector reform.

This article advances the scholarship on security assistance by integrating it with key insights from the international cooperation literature, by extending analysis to the European theatre, and by identifying an overlooked source of effective influence in security assistance. It also suggests several policy implications. Security assistance has emerged as a central tool of US defence strategy. The conventional wisdom among US security assistance practitioners is that they can persuade recipient leaders to implement costly reforms. We join recent scholarship in demonstrating the importance of incentives for effective influence in security assistance. But while existing work tends to treat the assistance itself as the only possible carrot, we identify additional sources of leverage providers may use beyond the assistance itself to incentivise reforms. It is important to identify the range of influence options available to assistance providers, and the conditions conducive to

¹³Institutional Review Board #8 at the University of Pennsylvania reviewed Protocol #824949 for this project on April 27, 2016, and determined it to be exempt authorized by 45 CFR 46.101, category 2.4.

their effective implementation, so that providers can maximise the effectiveness of security assistance efforts where meaningful reform is possible and minimise waste by cutting bait where it is not.

Issue linkage in security assistance

Security assistance can mean many different things. We scope our analysis to cases of security assistance in which providers encourage recipients to implement security sector reforms.¹⁴ Our dependent variable is the recipient state's implementation of organizational, structural, or doctrinal changes to security institutions that the provider recommends or requests.

We argue that security assistance providers can incentivise recipient leaders to implement reforms by using the bargaining tactic of issue linkage. Issue linkage, an old concept in international relations theory and practice, refers to 'the simultaneous discussion of two or more issues for joint settlement'.¹⁵ As put by Axelrod and Keohane, issue linkage 'involves attempts to gain additional bargaining leverage by making one's own behavior on a given issue contingent on others' actions toward other issues'.¹⁶ In their example, the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 succeeded in part because Japan guaranteed elements of British and US trade in China in exchange for legal recognition of Japan's right to territory taken by Germany after WWI.¹⁷ In a more contemporary example, Saudi Arabia seeks a security guarantee from the United States in exchange for normalization of relations with Israel.¹⁸ Applied to the security assistance context, patrons can use issue linkage to motivate recipients to implement security sector reforms they would otherwise not, by using sufficiently valuable carrots other than the material assistance itself to incentivise cooperation.

Issue linkage is a form of conditionality, differentiated from existing conceptions of conditionality in security assistance theory and practice because the material security assistance itself is not the carrot on offer. The issue linkage approach offers another way to overcome weak recipient motivation to implement reforms because it does not require recipients to value the material security assistance itself highly and gives donors additional leverage

¹⁴Our argument does not apply to cases of security assistance that consist exclusively of arms transfers or financial assistance.

¹⁵Paul Poast, 'Issue Linkage and International Cooperation: An Empirical Investigation', *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 30/3 (2013), 287.

¹⁶Robert Axelrod and Robert Keohane, 'Achieving Cooperation Under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions', *World Politics* 38/1 (1985), 239. See also William Wallace, 'Issue Linkage among Atlantic Governments', *International Affairs* 52/2 (April 1976), 163–79; Ernst B. Haas, 'Why Collaborate?: Issue-Linkage and International Regimes', *World Politics* 32/3 (April 1980), 357–05.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 240.

¹⁸David Ottaway, 'Should the United States Provide Saudi Arabia a Security Guarantee?' Wilson Center, 25 September 2023, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/should-united-states-provide-saudi-arabia-security-guarantee>.

when they cannot credibly threaten to end material aid.¹⁹ While this concept is well-established in the international cooperation literature, it is absent from the debates that define contemporary security assistance in both theory and practice.

Three conditions must hold for issue linkage to increase the odds of security sector reforms. First, providers must be able to monitor the degree to which recipients implement reforms. The provider's ability to detect whether the recipient is shirking its commitments is a necessary condition for enforcement.²⁰ Second, the provider must make clear precisely what reforms the recipient must implement in order to secure the carrot, and the recipient must understand the link between cooperation and payoff. If the donor and recipient have different understandings of the reforms that must be implemented, or the reforms are defined too vaguely for the recipient to understand precisely what it must do to secure the carrot, the recipient will have less incentive to implement the reforms.

The third condition relates to the degree of interest divergence between provider and recipient regarding the proposed security sector reforms. If recipients are eager to implement reforms and interest divergence is low or nonexistent, there is no need for providers to incentivise reforms. On the other end of the spectrum, recipients may view the reforms as so threatening that no carrot could offset the high expected cost of implementation. Specifically, leaders may fear that reforms could significantly increase the likelihood of coups, or spark severe domestic upheaval. In such cases – when leaders view reforms as raising significant risks to their hold on power – issue linkage conditionality is unlikely to succeed. However, if recipient leaders view security sector reforms as costly, but unlikely to threaten their hold on power, and providers can offer carrots of great value to recipient leaders, issue linkage conditionality can plausibly incentivise reforms. Otherwise put, the less costly the recipient sees reforms to be, the less enticing the linkage carrot needs to be. In this way, our issue linkage argument follows the logic of a two-level game; we focus on how security assistance providers and recipients can reach agreements, but the size of the bargaining space is still a function of local leaders' concerns about the costs of the reforms relative to the value they place on the incentives providers can offer.²¹

¹⁹We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this language to describe our argument's contribution.

²⁰Biddle, 'Building Security Forces and Stabilizing Nations'; Walter C. Ladwig III, 'Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency: US Involvement in El Salvador's Civil War, 1979–92', *International Security* 41/1 (2016): 99–146; There is debate in the security assistance literature regarding the pervasiveness and severity of the monitoring challenge in security assistance. Biddle, Berman, and Lake emphasise monitoring costs as a significant barrier to conditionality in security assistance, whereas Metz argues that providers often pay high monitoring costs and detect shirking, yet still neglect to enforce. Metz, 'The Cult of the Persuasive,' 100, 128–29.

²¹Robert D. Putnam, 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games', *International Organization* 42/3 (Summer 1988), 427–60.

Issue linkage conditionality thus emerges as an important approach to incentivising security sector reform in 'goldilocks' cases.²² Although the conditions (particularly the third) are restrictive, the ubiquity of security assistance today means that even if many cases do not meet these conditions, dozens or even hundreds still may.

Research design

To explore the theory's plausibility, we conduct within-case comparisons of US security assistance to BiH in two periods, running first from the end of the Bosnian civil war until the early 2000s, and then from 2003 through 2005. In the first period, security assistance primarily took the form of the Train and Equip program. This program had several goals and achieved some success, but did not fundamentally reform the BiH military along the centralised, Western-style lines that the United States and its security assistance providing partners preferred. The second period is defined by two internationally led-Defence Reform Commissions, in 2003 and 2005, which made major strides in reorganising the BiH military along the United States' preferred lines. While Bosnian preferences about the final shape of the BiH armed forces continued to diverge from those of aid providers during this period, reform succeeded when the latter were able to convince BiH leaders that reforms were a necessary precondition for something they valued more than they opposed reform: participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program.

The Bosnia example is a valuable case for advancing the security assistance literature. First, it is an important case often held up as an example of security force assistance success; while post-conflict resolution in BiH is far from perfect, military reforms are one of the few areas in which institutional changes appear to have become self-sustaining and supportive of peace. As a result, it is worth examining the conditions that enabled this success. Second, the contemporary security assistance literature neglects the Bosnia case, instead emphasising the two primary cases of US security assistance in the 21st century of Iraq and Afghanistan.²³ Overemphasis on these cases

²²We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this formulation.

²³There is plenty written about security sector reform and NATO conditionality in BiH, but this literature tends to view these processes through the broader lens of norm diffusion, peacebuilding, and post-conflict governance, rather than the dynamics of security assistance and patron-led military reform. See, for example, Gulnur Aybet, 'NATO Conditionality in Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Problems of Post-Communism* 57/5 (2010), 20–34; Louis-Alexandre Berg, *Governing Security After War: The Politics of Institutional Change in the Security Sector* (Oxford, UK: Oxford UP 2022); Giulio Venneri, 'Beyond the Sovereignty Paradox: EU "Hands-up" Statebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 4/2 (June 2010), 153–78; Ana E. Juncos, 'EU Security Sector Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Reform or Resist?', *Contemporary Security Policy* 39/1 (2018), 95–118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2017.1391625>; Ana E. Juncos, 'Europeanization by Decree? The Case of Police Reform in Bosnia', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49/2 (March 2011), 367–90.

skews understanding of US security assistance and neglects plausible pathways to security assistance success.

Third, the deep engagement of the international community, coupled with the clear linkage of PfP to significant defence reform, makes this a valuable case as a plausibility probe for the importance of issue linkage: it is difficult to imagine issue linkage succeeding elsewhere if it were to have failed here. The United States exerted clear guidelines for BiH security institutions through its extensive influence over all parties at the Dayton Accords, the peace agreement that ended the war and established a constitution for the new state. Support for our argument in this case suggests it is worth examining issue linkage as a model to explain security sector reform elsewhere, too. Although it may be a relatively easy case, it is likely one of many such easy cases. For example, the promise of NATO membership played an important role in developing professional militaries throughout the former Warsaw Pact, and features prominently as a motivator for defence reform in contemporary NATO aspirants Georgia and Ukraine.²⁴ It is plausible that promises that the United States will defend Asian partners against China could play a role today in US efforts to incentivise sensitive security sector reforms.

Furthermore, the distinct approaches to security assistance with each of the two Defence Reform Commissions offer critical junctures that create within case variation on our independent variable – the offer of a valuable issue linkage carrot – while holding other key elements of the security assistance process constant.²⁵ We use congruence testing to demonstrate that the outcome in each period we examine is consistent with our expectations,²⁶ and we conduct process-tracing to examine how the Defence Reform Commission's linkage of reforms to PfP membership shaped BiH leaders' decision-making processes.²⁷

To do this, we make extensive use of interviews with key figures involved in the defence reform processes. These interviews, conducted during summer 2016 by one of the authors, serve as a basis for coding our key variables by revealing information about 'actual behaviour on specific issues'.²⁸ We measure our dependent variable, the extent to which assistance recipients implement the security sector reforms desired by their donors, by tracking the

²⁴Zoltan Barany, *The Soldier and the Changing State: Building Democratic Armies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP 2012), 237; Valeriy Akimenko, 'Ukraine's Toughest Fight: The Challenge of Military Reform' (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 22 February 2018), <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/22/ukraine-s-toughest-fight-challenge-of-military-reform-pub-75609>; Shalva Dzebisashvili, 'Conditionality and Compliance: The Shake Dimensions of NATO Influence (The Georgian Case)', *Connections* 13/2 (Spring 2014), 1–24.

²⁵Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2005), 152–79.

²⁶George and Bennett, 'Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences', 181–204.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 205–32.

²⁸Matthew N. Beckmann and Richard L. Hall, 'Elite Interviewing in Washington, DC', in Layna Mosley (ed.), *Interview Research in Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell UP 2013), 198.

progress of reforms that BiH leaders implemented over the course of the Office of the High Representative-mandated Defence Reform Commissions compared to the international community's initial goals. Similarly, we code our independent variable by identifying key offers of incentives. These interviews also shed light on the motivations and decision-making of BiH elites, permitting us to test our hypothesis that BiH elites implemented reforms *because* of the PfP carrot and would not have done so without it. We also use the interview evidence to identify variation in the levels of interest divergence and monitoring capacity across the two periods, as well as to eliminate alternative explanations for the reforms.

Issue linkage and security sector reform in Bosnia

At the end of the Bosnian civil war, Bosnian Muslims (or Bosniaks), Croats, and Bosnian Serbs maintained *de facto* control over their own armies within the newly independent state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia's new constitution created a weak central state that allowed each of its two constituent Entities – The Federation, representing the country's Muslim and Croat population, and the Republika Srpska (RS), representing Bosnian Serbs – to maintain control over defence issues, even going as far as to explicitly reference the country's multiple armed forces and establishing a Standing Committee on Military Matters (SCMM) to coordinate their activities. The SCMM was the BiH's sole defence institution in the years after the Dayton Accords, and the Federation was so weak that even its own armed forces remained effectively divided into distinct Muslim and Croat militaries.

This situation was far from ideal from the perspective of the international community, which had gone to great lengths to enforce a settlement and now held a major stake in ensuring BiH remained at peace as a unified state. The United States, in particular, preferred a single, professional military in BiH.²⁹ As one high-ranking American military commander said, 'The long term intent was to have a single entity that was capable of providing defence inside of Bosnia and that three warring factions were disarmed and contributing to a peaceful political unit'.³⁰ However, in the immediate post-war years, US officials understood that Entity officials placed such high value on maintaining control of their own armed forces that there was no carrot the US could link to reform that would incentivise military integration. Local elites were not yet unanimously interested in either unifying their militaries or in joining NATO, and foreign patrons were worried that the precarious security situation would devolve into renewed war if they tried to press these reforms.

²⁹Bosnia and Herzegovina Delegation Member at Dayton; Senior OSCE Representative; Defence Reform Commission Secretariat staff member.

³⁰Senior NATO official.

Thus, although foreign patrons had sufficient monitoring capacity to recognize the degree to which local leaders were implementing security sector reforms, they realized that they could not offer a carrot valuable enough to overcome prohibitively high interest divergence.

This changed in the early 2000s, when foreign powers recognized that interest divergence had diminished and that they could offer a carrot of sufficient value to motivate reforms: PfP membership. While Entity officials still viewed each other with some suspicion and continued to oppose integration in favour of maintaining control of their own armed forces, they also came to agree on the value of NATO membership for addressing their security concerns, and viewed PfP as a stepping stone to NATO. By identifying PfP membership as an incentive that BiH leaders valued more than maintaining control of their armed forces, the United States and its international partners were able to secure key reforms that had, up to that point, been beyond the pale for local officials.

The Train and Equip era – No carrot, little progress

In the post-Dayton years, international security assistance primarily came to Bosnia in the form of the Train and Equip program. This program had far-reaching goals that included bolstering Federation capabilities, strengthening centralised Federation institutions, and orienting Bosnia toward the West – especially by socialising it toward Western civil-military norms.³¹ In particular, the United States hoped it would ‘build and cement an integrated, NATO-backed, Bosniak-Croat Federation armed forces structure’ and instil ‘NATO military standards’.³²

Monitoring was not an obstacle to these far-reaching reforms; on the contrary, the international community was all too familiar with how challenging it was to get compliance on simpler reforms. Jim Pardew, who led the Train and Equip Program, repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the Federation’s progress on a variety of defence issues, including the passing of its Defence Law to establish joint command, the adoption of new unified Federation symbols, and the influence of specific nationalist leaders.³³ The first Defence Reform Commission mandate explicitly calls out ‘the current inadequacies of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s legal, organisation, and institutional arrangements for defence’ – clearly exhibited in the years since Dayton – as demanding strong international action.³⁴

³¹Christopher J. Lamb, Sarah Arkin, and Sally Scudder, *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program: A Lesson in Interagency Integration of Hard and Soft Power, Strategic Perspectives* (Washington, D.C.: National Defence UP, March 2014), 1–2, 99–109; Senior American diplomat.

³²Lamb, Arkin, and Scudder, *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program*, 14.

³³*Ibid.*, 40–41.

³⁴Defence Reform Commission, ‘The Path to Partnership for Peace: Report of the Defence Reform Commission’ (Sarajevo, 25 September 2003), 33.

However, interest divergence between the international community and local elites stymied the potential for reform. While the recipients of American security assistance agreed that they needed American help to build up their military capabilities, they could not agree that a unitary military command structure was desirable. All BiH parties felt the need to continue to prioritise preparations for their own defence. As the struggle over its new Defence Law shows, even within the Federation, the main goal was to maintain high levels of control and readiness with large, loyal reserve forces because this would keep them prepared for potential conflict with an RS force that, with reinforcements from Serbia, would outnumber them. While Bosniak leaders preferred a single Federation army because they thought they could control it with their greater numbers, Bosnian Croats – who maintained control of their own armed forces but lacked their own political structure under the new Constitution – were opposed to any integration at this time.³⁵ Officials from each of the three ethnic groups questioned the international community's commitment to guaranteeing peace, which caused broad resistance to reform 'because they always thought in the back of their mind that they would have to go back to war, so they wanted to sustain numerical and weapons and equipment superiority'.³⁶ Ultimately, attitudes among and between the leaders of each of the Entities was 'just what you would assess at the end of a war, with all of the emotions that were attached to that'.³⁷ The intense uncertainty and mistrust of each other within BiH meant nothing was more highly valued than ensuring security against renewed civil war; military integration was not on the table.

The international community could see the limits of BiH reform compliance and recognize that interest divergence would limit the possibilities for what could be done to incentivize reform. Consequently, there was no effort to hold out carrots for ambitious reform in this period. While the 2003 Defence Reform Commission Report notes that 'NATO has been working closely with Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1995 to create the conditions' for PfP membership – it was not on anyone's mind or offered as an explicit incentive in the late 1990s. The international community feared that pursuing anything too ambitious – like getting all Bosnian

³⁵Lamb, Arkin, and Scudder, *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program*, 38–39.

³⁶Senior official from the Office of the Inspector General. On confidence in the international community, see Robert Belloni, *State Building and International Intervention in Bosnia* (New York, NY: Routledge 2007), 23; Lamb, Arkin, and Scudder, *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program*, 100–101, 106. Senior official from the Office of the Inspector General.

³⁷Senior NATO official. Additional interviewees expressed similar views to explain the absence of robust defence reform during this period. See also Rohan Maxwell and John Andreas Olsen, *Destination NATO: Defence Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2003–13*, RUSI Whitehall Paper 80 (Abingdon, UK: Routledge Journals 2013), 23; See also Heinz Vetschera and Matthieu Damian, 'Security Sector Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The role of the international community', *International Peacekeeping* 13/1 (2006): 29–30.

actors to agree to pursue NATO membership – would undermine a fragile peace.³⁸ The United States – the key actor in Bosnian defence reform – viewed Bosnia as a quagmire that had unfortunately engaged American reputation and its commitment to NATO.³⁹ Forcing unwilling leaders to integrate hostile forces into a single new military seemed too destabilising to peace, so instead they focused on establishing an internal balance of power among the existing forces.⁴⁰ With few tangible security interests to protect in Bosnia, and having already felt compelled to enforce a peace, American ‘policy was driven by the need to get out’ and avoid the larger investments that broader reforms would require.⁴¹

The value of the dependent variable during this period aligns with our theoretical expectations.⁴² As Danijela Dudley writes, the ‘period of 1996–1999 was characterised by a complete absence of defence reforms and interethnic cooperation on defence issues’; even after the establishment of the permanent secretariat of the SCMM in 1999, each of the three ethnic parties maintained effective command and control of their own forces through 2001–02.⁴³ The SCMM continued to lack key elements of functionality and formalisation at the time of the first Defence Reform Commission.⁴⁴ Members of the Train and Equip Task Force were well aware of this, having assessed that deeper military integration and reconciliation were the least successful areas of the program.⁴⁵ While the Train and Equip program achieved its more limited aims of enhancing Federation capabilities enough to deter renewed hostilities, progress toward building an integrated, NATO-style military for the Federation was nearly non-existent. Without agreement within BiH that NATO membership was desirable and without the international community’s willingness to strike a clear path to NATO in exchange for more cooperation, organisational reform remained hollow throughout the Train and Equip program.

³⁸Defence Reform Commission, ‘The Path to Partnership for Peace’, 29.

³⁹Derek Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accords: A Study of American Statecraft* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan 2005); Ivo Daalder, *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America’s Bosnia Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press 2000), 140.

⁴⁰Chollet, *The Road to the Dayton Accord*, 193–94.

⁴¹Daalder, *Getting to Dayton*, 150; Carl Bildt, *Peace Journey: The Struggle for Peace in Bosnia* (London: Weidenfeld, and Nicolson, 1998), 385; Bosnia and Herzegovina Delegation Member at Dayton.

⁴²Lamb, Arkin, and Scudder, *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program*, 108.

⁴³Danijela Dudley, ‘Civil-Military Relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina: State Legitimacy and Defence Institutions’, *Armed Forces & Society* 42/1 (2016), 125; Defence Reform Commission, ‘The Path to Partnership for Peace’, 77–8.

⁴⁴Defence Reform Commission, ‘The Path to Partnership for Peace’, 74–7; OSCE official; Senior Military Advisor and Defence Reform Commission official; Graeme P. Herd and Tom Tracy, ‘Democratic Civil-Military Relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina’, *Armed Forces and Society* 32/4 (July 2006), 557–8.

⁴⁵Lamb, Arkin, and Scudder, *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program*, 108.

The defence reform commissions: The NATO carrot incentivises reforms

As the 21st century got underway, Bosnia's long-term prospects for stability remained hampered by a total absence of progress on its primary defence reforms. Each of the ethnic parties continued to deeply distrust each other throughout the early 2000s, shaping their approach to defence. In a few short years, however, from 2003 to 2006, international actors successfully influenced Bosnian leadership to set aside that distrust and create a single military with an integrated commanded structure. What made this success possible, when it had seemed so out of reach a few years prior? In the context of reduced interest divergence, the international community was able to incentivize Bosnian leaders to undertake defence reform by clearly linking successful reforms to the promise of PfP membership.

First, while BiH leaders remained largely opposed to defence reforms for their own sake, the threat of renewed war between the Entities had cooled enough that military integration no longer appeared to pose the same existential threat that it had in the years immediately after Dayton. In other words, interest divergence declined enough to open up bargaining space. The passage of time contributed to this, enabling all sides to feel less threatened by each other, particularly following the collapse of Yugoslavia, its 2003 transition into Serbia and Montenegro, and nearly ten years of a robust peacekeeping force. As one official explained, 'people have to get used to new ideas ... the strategic threat, if not eliminated, was greatly reduced'.⁴⁶ Additionally, the high cost of Entity defence forces was not only failing to yield desired or even necessary security benefits, but also inhibiting economic development. Bosnian Serbs, who were particularly reluctant to implement reforms, eventually observed that all states that had joined the European Union had joined NATO first, and that military reforms would support these efforts.⁴⁷

However, fear of renewed conflict, and consequently interest divergence between the Entity leaders and what Ashdown wanted did not completely dissipate. The Entities were not prepared to undertake the necessary reforms for their own sake. Separate armies still provided a security blanket for much of the public, even if some politicians were ready to accept it.⁴⁸ One senior official who served in the BiH cabinet immediately after the Second Defence Reform Commission recalled that, even then, 'all [sides] felt they were most burdened by reforms ... all sides felt betrayed' and that 'suspicions still existed on all sides'.⁴⁹ A senior Defence Reform Commission official recalled

⁴⁶Senior Defence Reform Commission official #1.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Senior Defence Reform Commission official #2.

⁴⁹Senior Bosnian Cabinet Official.

'there was nobody who thought there was any chance of defence reform' and that the situation in 2003 was still 'too emotional, [with] no trust'.⁵⁰

Local resistance to reforms persisted to the last minute. One military advisor involved in both Defence Reform Commissions noted: 'There were attempts to watering down to what was agreed. They couldn't really get away from a single army but could try to insist on separate payment, making sure units weren't too mixed, procurement separate'.⁵¹ The elimination of conscription, in particular, was a sticking point for the Federation, whose leaders continued to see tangible benefits for it: 'Right up to the last minute there were retired generals who were trying to push civil defence training in high schools, et cetera ...',⁵² Getting each Defence Reform Commission accepted by the legislature required significant effort; one official said that getting parliament to approve the Second Defence Reform Commission was 'not easy ... [it took] a lot of lobbying and me running around to different delegations and urging them to behave'.⁵³ This persistent resistance indicates BiH leaders had still not come to view the reforms as inherently beneficial.

If the international community had not emphasized PfP as an incentive for military integration, Bosnian leaders would not have agreed to implementing reform. The United States and NATO had long been operating on the principle that Bosnian defence reform should work toward implementing NATO standards and interoperability with the alliance. In 2001 and 2002, Lord Robertson, then Secretary General of NATO, had already begun to link military reform to the possibility of PfP membership.⁵⁴ Now, the international community was ready to employ the full weight of its formal powers over BiH to achieve this goal. In May 2003 the Office of the High Representative established a new Defence Reform Commission, through which the international community began to take a more heavy-handed approach to reform. While NATO had previously only demanded reforms to instil oversight at the state-level, the new High Representative for BiH, Lord Paddy Ashdown, saw full military integration and state-level control as the only ways to curb inefficiencies and corruption.⁵⁵ One senior Defence Reform Commission official described Ashdown's attitude as 'this cannot be allowed to continue, we have to find a way to bring the entity armed forces under the direct control of the state'.⁵⁶ The first Defence Reform Commission explicitly made BiH's candidacy in PfP one of its guiding principles and declared that BiH 'should now set

⁵⁰Senior Defence Reform Commission official #2.

⁵¹Senior Advisor, NATO.

⁵²Senior Defence Reform Commission official #1; Senior NATO Advisor.

⁵³Senior Defence Reform Commission official #1.

⁵⁴Senior American diplomat; Message of NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, to the Bosnian People, NATO Speeches, April 18, 2002, <https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2002/s020418a.htm>; Aybet, 'NATO Conditionality in Bosnia and Herzegovina', 20–34.

⁵⁵Short, 'The Orao Affair', 50–1, 63. Senior Defence Reform Commission official #1; Senior Defence Reform Commission official #2; Senior Military Advisor and Defence Reform Commission official.

⁵⁶Senior Defence Reform Commission official #1.

NATO membership as a strategic goal'.⁵⁷ Members of both Defence Reform Commissions worked hard to establish this issue linkage. One official stated, '[Ambassador and OSCE Representative] Beecroft was very good on this. He used to "beat people up" and say "we know you guys want to join NATO and PfP" but you can't have more than one army'.⁵⁸ This was also the lynchpin for Bosnian Serbs: one senior official summarised the position they came to during the Second Defence Reform Commission as 'tell us what we need to do to join NATO', the answer to which was that it would require them to end the existence of multiple armies within the state.⁵⁹

Not all factions in Bosnia agreed that NATO membership was valuable at the time of the first Defence Reform Commission. The Bosnian Presidency had already agreed to pursue membership in NATO's PfP by summer 2001.⁶⁰ Support for pursuing NATO membership was strongest among Bosniaks because of the absence of a co-ethnic home state they could count on for defence. They 'believed that joining NATO would give them the security that the kind of thing that happened them in '92-'95 would never happen to them again'.⁶¹ However, there were opponents in each ethnic group, with the strongest opposition coming from Bosnian Serbs.⁶² By the time of the Second Defence Reform Commission, this opposition had been substantially reduced and even they came to view PfP as valuable. Officials identified a shift in frame among Bosnian Serbs from being victimised by NATO during the civil war to recalling the alliance's support for Yugoslavia against Stalin and their collaboration during the world wars: . . . As one OSCE advisor pointed out, together these factors led to the belief that NATO was the best safeguard against reigniting conflict.⁶³ Another key figure reported that local leaders knew that 'once [BiH] became a PfP member, you could expect that NATO would assist in any security issue'.⁶⁴ By the end of the second Defence Reform Commission, all actors came to view PfP as the best way to eliminate the risk of conflict, especially as the Train and Equip program shifted the balance of power away from RS.

By the beginning of 2006 and the end of the second Defence Reform Commission, BiH had completed the process of military integration, successfully unifying the three Entity forces into a single operational chain of command.⁶⁵ Though Bosnia has yet to achieve full NATO membership, it

⁵⁷Defence Reform Commission, 28–9, 36.

⁵⁸Senior Military Advisor and Defence Reform Commission official.

⁵⁹Senior Defence Reform Commission official #1.

⁶⁰Defence Reform Commission, 'The Path to Partnership for Peace', 28; Senior Defence Reform Commission official #1.

⁶¹Senior Defence Reform Commission official #1.

⁶²OSCE Advisor; Senior Defence Reform Commission official #2; Senior Defence Reform Commission official #1.

⁶³OSCE Advisor.

⁶⁴Senior Defence Reform Commission official #2.

⁶⁵Although questions about BiH's democratic civil–military relations and capacity remain, the transformation to state-level oversight and operational control was a success. Dudley, 'Civil-Military Relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina', 132; Berg, *Governing Security After War*, 107.

joined the PfP shortly after it completed its military integration. Ultimately, the atmosphere of mistrust between the Entities and ingrained historical practice made it so that the international community still had to convince local leaders that reforms, while costly, were necessary to get what they really wanted: inclusion in the NATO community: 'NATO conditionality was a huge aspect of the urgency' that officials fostered to convince BiH leaders to 'move out of their comfort zone' and that 'they will fail if they don't change'.⁶⁶ Similarly, [First Defence Reform Commission Chairman, James] Locher 'convinced them that the first step had to be defence reform. They had to get their expenditures under control, they had to look more like a western army'.⁶⁷ BiH elites eventually came to recognise military integration as a prerequisite to PfP membership and closer ties with NATO only because foreign actors guiding the reform worked tirelessly to establish this issue linkage. The Bosnia case shows how providers who explicitly link security sector reforms to a carrot of high value to security assistance recipients can incentivise them to implement reforms they would otherwise refuse.

Alternative arguments

Dominant accounts in the security assistance literature would explain the eventual success of Bosnian defence reform as a result of one of several processes: interest convergence, shifting domestic coalitions, the persuasiveness of foreign advisors, or the use of material assistance as a carrot or stick. None of these explanations is sufficient to explain Bosnia's eventual cooperation with American defence reform goals.

First, interest divergence lessened – it did not disappear. Local elites in BiH did not come to view the recommended reforms as intrinsically valuable. As we described in the previous section, significant constituencies in each of the entities wanted to maintain operational control over their own armed forces throughout the reform process. Some topics, like the full transition to an all-volunteer army – were resisted right up until the end. Bosnian opposition to integration lessened in intensity, such that interest divergence was no longer prohibitively high. However, Bosnian leaders continued to oppose integration. They agreed to it only when the international community linked integration to PfP membership.

Second, the significant increase in BiH cooperation was not the result of the persuasiveness of American arguments or the quality of American personal diplomacy. While some members of the Federation Army who had gone through the Train and Equip system internalised the belief that the US system was better, local elites from the different entities had competing visions for

⁶⁶Senior Defence Reform Commission official #2.

⁶⁷Ibid.

what military institutions should look like and continued to reject American reform ideas.⁶⁸ The RS – whose soldiers did not undergo a socialisation process through participation in the Train and Equip program – remained wary of any measures that would further decrease its power and autonomy relative to the Federation, while Bosniaks still wanted to maintain large active and reserve forces because they had no neighbouring ethnic allies to help them defend themselves.⁶⁹ Shortly before the first Defence Reform Commission, the Serb member of the BiH Presidency vetoed legislation to reorganise armed forces at the state level.⁷⁰ All three ethnic parties seemed stuck in ‘inherited wartime mentality’ that placed a premium on the entities’ belief in defence, especially given the continued existence of war time units.⁷¹ Although there was some recognition that foreign-led security assistance goals were desirable, there remained extensive local opposition to what this actually required: a smaller all-volunteer force unified under a single command structure. Foreign advisors never persuaded Bosnians of the value of integration for its own sake. If not for the carrot of PfP, local elites would not have come to agree that military integration was worth the risk they continued to believe it entailed.

Other accounts argue that reform was successful because domestic leadership in BiH had become less nationalist and the international community avoided making demands that would provoke nationalist backlash.⁷² Thus, the reforms demanded by the international community succeeded because they no longer threatened domestic elites’ hold on power. While nationalist coalitions that were strongly opposed to military integration were indeed weakened by the mid-2000s, helping to reduce interest divergence and open up bargaining space, we show above that this was not sufficient to ensure that all relevant actors within BiH would agree to reform. More moderate domestic leaders still had to deal with publics that viewed other Entities as threats and held emotional attachments to the status quo institutions. It took a powerful carrot to get these actors to agree to reform.

While we find strong support for the argument that conditionality is an effective tool of influence, we show that linking the reforms to PfP, rather than to the material military assistance itself, was the key. Bosnian decisions to implement reforms were not motivated by American promises to increase or threats to terminate or reduce assistance. In general, the United States tried only feebly to use security assistance aid itself as a carrot or stick. During

⁶⁸Senior Advisor, NATO; Aybet, ‘NATO Conditionality in Bosnia and Herzegovina’.

⁶⁹On the RS: Legal Advisor at Defence Reform Commission; Senior Advisor, NATO; Senior Bosnian Cabinet official; Defence Reform Commission Secretariat staff member; OSCE Advisor; On Bosniak officials: Legal Advisor at Defence Reform Commission; Defence Reform Commission Secretariat staff member; Senior Defence Reform Commission official.

⁷⁰Short, ‘The Orao Affair’, 51.

⁷¹Senior Bosnian Cabinet official #1; Senior Bosnian Cabinet official #2.

⁷²Radin, *Institution Building in Weak States*; Dudley, ‘Civil-Military Relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina’.

the Train and Equip period, the United States occasionally threatened to cease aid if cooperation was not more forthcoming, but failed to follow through with its threats. For instance, Secretary of Defence William Perry explicitly declared that the Federation needed to pass a law establishing a common defence structure to continue receiving Train and Equip aid.⁷³ Aid continued to flow after the law was passed, despite the fact that the nominal organisational change that followed was hollow to non-existent.

Finally, the failure of BiH police reform appears at first glance to contradict our argument about the value of issue linkage conditionality in security assistance, because police reform was linked to the promise of EU accession.⁷⁴ However, interest divergence was much greater in the case of police reform than military reform in the latter period: the rewards offered by the issue linkage 'were perceived as weak and distant'.⁷⁵ Domestic opposition by nationalist parties was also prohibitively high.⁷⁶ Moreover, while the defence reform benchmarks for PfP membership, along with the promise of membership itself, were crystal clear, the international community's expectations for police reform were ambiguous or unspecified.⁷⁷ In short, the case of police reform failed two of the three necessary conditions for issue linkage conditionality to effectively incentivize reforms: it was unclear precisely what reforms the BiH police had to implement to secure EU accession, and interest divergence was prohibitively high.

Issue linkage in defence reform – A broader phenomenon

There are clear indications that Western security assistance providers have effectively used issue linkage to incentivise recipients to implement security sector reforms they would otherwise have refused.

Beyond BiH, the West wielded the carrot of NATO membership to incentivise security sector reform in former Soviet states. The 2002 Prague Summit, in which NATO formally invited Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia to join the alliance – played a major role in influencing these countries' security policies because the promise of NATO membership unified domestic efforts around new legislation that was necessary to modernise and democratise the security sector.⁷⁸

⁷³Lamb, Arkin, and Scudder, *The Bosnian Train and Equip Program*, 38–40.

⁷⁴Thomas Muehlmann, 'Police Restructuring in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Problems of Internationally-Led Security Sector Reform', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 2/1 (2008): 1–22; Gemma Collantes Celador, 'Becoming "European" Through Police Reform: A Successful Strategy in Bosnia and Herzegovina?', *Crime, Law and Social Change* 51 (2009), 231–42.

⁷⁵Juncos, 'Europeanization by Decree?', 369.

⁷⁶Radin, *Institution Building in Weak States*; Berg, *Governing Security After War*.

⁷⁷Muehlmann, 'Police Restructuring in Bosnia-Herzegovina', 12; Collantes Celador, 'Becoming "European" through Police Reform', 237.

⁷⁸Timothy Edmunds, 'NATO and Its New Members', *Survival* 45/3 (Autumn 2003), 145–66.

For example, Romania's defence establishment civilianised in response to pressure from NATO 'keen to ingratiate themselves with NATO and, consequently, were willing to make the major policy adjustments the Alliance required'.⁷⁹ The Baltic states – Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia – created and deployed a joint peacekeeping battalion to demonstrate their alignment with NATO's emphasis on peace-support missions, counterinsurgency, and counterterrorism.⁸⁰ These states were still primarily concerned about security from Russia and had no intrinsic interest in expeditionary operations, but they implemented these reforms and conducted these deployments to demonstrate their willingness to bear NATO burdens and their ability to interoperate with NATO in order to strengthen their case for NATO membership. Similarly, Lithuania developed special operations forces and deployed a unit to Afghanistan alongside NATO member states, not because it had any intrinsic interest in developing these capabilities, but to illustrate its worthiness of NATO membership.⁸¹

The United States has also used carrots to incentivise states to reform their security sectors outside the European context. For example, the US incentivised Japanese rearmament by making rearmament an explicit condition for ending the US occupation of Japan.⁸² In short, the United States has used issue linkage to incentivise the leaders of BiH to reform their security sectors in keeping with US interests, as it has done to incentivise a variety of reforms in a variety of regions around the world.

Conclusion

Security assistance has long been and remains a ubiquitous feature of international relations. The primary barrier to effective security assistance is interest divergence between providers and recipients – recipients often accept cash and equipment for their security sectors while continuing to resist provider efforts to encourage reforms that would improve and professionalise those security sectors. Thus, the central question of security assistance scholarship and policy is why recipient leaders sometimes implement important meaningful security sector reforms and sometimes refuse.

To-date, the security assistance scholarship under-leverages insights from the international relations literature on alliance management and international cooperation. Adapting the international cooperation insight of issue linkage, we identify an important pathway to security assistance success that

⁷⁹Barany, *The Soldier and the Changing State*, 239.

⁸⁰F. Stephen Larrabee, *The Baltic States and NATO Membership* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation 2003), <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2005/CT204.pdf>. Edmunds, 'NATO and Its New Members', 154.

⁸¹Larrabee, *The Baltic States and NATO Membership*.

⁸²Michael Schaller, *Altered States: The United States and Japan Since Occupation* (Oxford UP 1997), 31–46.

current scholarship has overlooked. Even if recipient leaders have no intrinsic interest in reforming their security sectors, and even if they do not highly value the actual assistance they receive, providers can sometimes effectively incentivise recipient leaders to reform their security sectors when they link reforms to separate rewards of high value to recipient leaders.

We illustrate this pathway through within-case comparison of US security assistance to BiH, before and after the launch of the Defence Reform Commissions. Bosnian leaders initially refused to integrate their defence institutions and implement other significant reforms proposed by their Western backers. Just 10 years after Dayton, Bosnian leaders took significant steps they had previously resisted, including integrating their defence institutions. In keeping with our argument, we find that foreign influence succeeded only after the United States decided to explicitly link the desired reforms to the carrot of PfP membership. We find strong support for the theory we introduce, while illustrating the inability of existing explanations to account for the change we observe.

The findings have significant implications for scholarship. First, we identify a new factor responsible for variation in security assistance effectiveness to-date absent in the security assistance literature. We find support for the theory that conditionality is an effective tool of influence in the security assistance context, and we widen the conceptualisation of conditionality to include carrots beyond the security assistance packages themselves. Second, we illustrate the utility of employing the lens of international cooperation to great power efforts to build militaries in partner states. Third, we extend a security assistance scholarship that has to-date focused largely on US security assistance to the Middle East and Africa to Europe, a region where security assistance has been and remains today a fundamental tool of US foreign policy and NATO strategy. The exclusion of Europe from the security assistance literature has skewed scholars' analysis of trends in security assistance effectiveness and omitted key determinants of variation. Lastly, our findings join recent scholarship in casting doubt on rapport-based persuasion as a sufficient strategy of influence in security assistance, and suggest instead that policymakers combine persuasion with incentives for maximum effect. Further, the material assistance should not be the only carrot under consideration. Security assistance providers can identify other carrots recipients might value more highly, and explicitly condition those carrots on meaningful security sector reform.

Our findings also have policy implications for security assistance practitioners. We identify issue linkage conditionality as a tool of influence policymakers can wield to incentivise partners to implement security sector reforms. Although policymakers effectively incentivised BiH leaders to implement reforms through the carrot of PfP, issue linkage conditionality (or any conditionality for that matter) is not common practice among security

assistance practitioners. This may be because the security assistance enterprise undervalues the tool, because conditionality is bureaucratically awkward or inconvenient,⁸³ or because it challenges bureaucratic interests and ideology.⁸⁴ Regardless, our findings suggest practitioners of security assistance consider issue linkage conditionality in their efforts to influence partners to implement security sector reforms.

There is still much to learn about how to apply issue linkage successfully to achieve security reform. While our argument highlights the importance of reduced interest divergence, there may be other factors that facilitated success in this case. It is especially important for future work to examine whether some types of issues work better for linkage than others. For example, PfP membership provided security advantages that directly mitigated the security concerns that defence reforms posed to domestic constituencies in a way that other issues – like EU accession – could not. Similarly, the defence reforms demanded by the security assistance providers were also seen as functional requirements for any state seeking to join NATO because of their implications for civilian control in a unified chain of command. In short, issue linkage can be a powerful lever, but not all available levers will be equally powerful.

Disclosure statement

The views here are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect those of their employers, including the United States Military Academy, Department of Defense, or US Government.

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⁸³Berman and Lake, *Proxy Wars*.

⁸⁴Metz, 'Cult of the Persuasive'.

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