**Abstract.** Post-conflict elections are often criticized as useless or even dangerous. In contrast, I posit that certain elections — those in which former militant groups compete against the governments that they were fighting — solidify post-conflict peace. Militant groups and governments commit to peace agreements by participating in elections: the electoral process provides regular transparency, visibility, and accountability for both sides, and external actors can efficiently engage through this process, under the right conditions, to monitor and incentivize compliance with the deals. Such external engagement increases the combatants’ confidence that the terms of the agreement will be respected. This paper presents this “commitment” theory and tests it using new cross-national data on peace agreements. The results indicate that conflict recurrence is less likely with electoral participation provisions, and the effect is conditional on expectations of international involvement in elections. The research introduces conditions under which elections serve as a tool for conflict resolution.
Guardian reporter: “Could you please expand more on the possibility of the opposition taking part in elections given the fact that a large part of that opposition is involved in a revolutionary war against the government?”

Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Afghanistan: “I want a political process to get underway, call it reconciliation, call it a peace process… it is better we compete at the ballot boxes than to fight in the battlefield.”

May 3, 2009

Since Afghanistan fell into civil war in 1978, the combatants and international actors have tried on multiple occasions to negotiate peace agreements and power-sharing arrangements. Attempts in 1989, 1993, and within the past few years have all met with failure. Current discussions for a deal between the government and the main militant groups, especially Mullah Mohammed Omar’s faction of the Taliban, seek to increase the odds of success by negotiating the combatants entry into regular politics as political parties competing in elections. Both international actors, like the U.N. Special Representative quoted above, and domestic actors have advocated bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table with the promise of allowing them into the political process to secure peace (for example, see Rashid 2008).

Most peace agreements intended to end civil wars now include provisions concerning post-conflict elections, and, as I will show, nearly half include provisions for electoral participation of former militant groups or their surrogates. Do post-conflict elections actually increase the odds of durable peace and state consolidation? The predominant answer in the academic literature is negative. It is widely argued that post-conflict elections may not foster peace and may even encourage a return to fighting. This pessimistic view has been supported in several studies that examine all post-conflict elections, regardless of who participates in them (empirically, for example, see Collier 2009; Collier et al. 2008; Brancati and Snyder 2011; Brancati and Snyder 2012; Flores and Nooruddin 2012).
In contrast to the existing studies, this paper focuses on who agrees to participate in post-conflict elections. I examine post-conflict elections in which militant groups agree to and are allowed to participate as political parties. As mentioned, in nearly half of all peace agreements, including those proposed for Afghanistan, militant groups plan to participate as political parties. I show that, contrary to the dominant view, certain post-conflict elections can serve as tools for conflict resolution because they act as mechanisms for commitment by engaging external actors through internationalized electoral processes.

A central problem for ending a civil conflict is how to assure both sides of compliance with the terms of any agreement. I argue that with the end of the Cold War, in addition to coordinating the major powers’ preference on peace, internationalized elections created a new political technology that facilitated the monitoring and provision of incentives for compliance with sets of standards through these aspects of the electoral process. While not initially designed for post-conflict contexts, this technology could be applied to any set of standards: compliance could be designed around standards derived from peace agreements, rather than universal standards of democracy — a “bias” that proved useful. The electoral process came to be used by external actors to engage efficiently to guarantee peace deals, beyond or instead of military intervention. Governments and militant groups could thus participate in elections as part of peace agreement to commit to the deal by involving international actors through the process to monitor and incentivize compliance.

A central implications of the theory is that peace agreements with provisions for electoral participation — provisions legalizing the militant group as a political party allowed to participate in elections to be held by the government — will reduce the risk of conflict recurrence, compared to agreements without these provisions. The effect is conditional, however, on external
engagement. These implications distinguish this theory from alternative theories, including the argument that post-conflict elections are primarily cover to facilitate the exit of armed international interveners after insecure peace agreements,¹ which has the opposite implication.

In order to test these theories against each other, I identify electoral participation provisions in each peace agreement from 1989-2005, based on the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Peace Agreement Dataset. I collected and analyzed the full text of 95 comprehensive peace agreements, which allowed me to identify which had electoral participation provisions — consisting of both clauses to hold elections and to allow the militant group to participate. I also constructed new variables to capture expectations of external engagement through the electoral process.

Using these data, I find that peace agreements with electoral participation provisions are 20 to 30 percent less likely to fail, and that the effect of these provisions is conditional on expectations of external engagement through elections. The results of these analyses are consistent with the implications of my theory. These findings suggest that — in contrast to the standard view that post-conflict elections are either a charade to ease international actors’ exit or are positively harmful for stability — post-conflict elections can stabilize peace when both sides agree to participate in post-conflict elections as part of a peace deal, which occurs when external actors are expected to monitor and incentivize compliance through the electoral process.

Additional tests are employed to better identify how electoral participation provisions affect conflict recurrence. Since electoral participation provisions have not been randomly

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¹ Indeed, this alternative argument is unsatisfying both because post-conflict elections are far more frequent than peacekeeping missions — making exit an unlikely explanation for the bulk of these contests — and, especially in these cases, because international actors often resist militant group electoral participation. Afghanistan is an exception to this, but many examples exist (Matanock 2012). Nonetheless, the theory persists, and these data offer an opportunity to test it.
assigned, identification of their causal effect is, of course, uncertain. An unmeasured omitted variable could cause the variation in both conflict recurrence and these provisions, or the provisions could act through a different mechanism than the commitment mechanism of the theory. These difficulties plague all cross-national observational analyses. I address the difficulties by controlling for possible confounds, assessing whether private information about peace might also simply produce agreements with more provisions, and identifying plausibly exogenous sources of variation that I use to re-estimate the effect.

This paper proceeds as follows. The first section develops a commitment theory that explains post-conflict elections with participation by both sides. It also offers plausible alternative theories and specifies testable implications that distinguish them. The next sections test the implications empirically, and the final sections discuss the mechanism and conclusions.

I. Theory

Elections, especially after the Cold War, may have normative appeal, but they also have drawbacks as means of dividing political power after conflicts. They are costly, post-conflict or not, due to the expenses of voter registration, campaigning, and polling. They can be dangerous since there is a possibility that the “loser” may be unwilling to wait for the next election to win, and the institutions may constrain attempts to engineer power-sharing to avoid having a loser. The power-sharing that does occur through engineering, however, also makes post-conflict elections ineffective in expressing the electorate’s preference as to how to divide power; indeed, these elections are monitored with a “bias” that primarily favors preventing further fighting by setting standards related to the civil conflict, rather than freedom or fairness (Kelley 2012; Hyde 2011). Post-conflict elections, then, may have drawbacks and may not differ dramatically from
other mechanisms for dividing political power (Fearon 2011). So, why not simply share power according to a fixed formula without elections?

I argue that electoral processes provide crucial information about compliance by former combatants with a peace agreement. International actors, even without armed intervention, can monitor and incentivize compliance in order to overcome commitment problems that otherwise plague settlements. This section makes the argument in three steps: first, it addresses commitment problems in civil conflict termination; next, it explores the aspects of electoral participation that make it a useful part of the peace process; finally, it traces a change in the international system led to involvement.

1.1 Commitment Problem

Commitment problems can make negotiated settlements difficult to reach and sustain (Walter 2002, 1999, 1997; Fearon 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2007). Commitment problems occur when either side becomes weaker as part of a peace process, even temporarily, and the other side then has an incentive to grab more power. These problems arise even when both sides agree to a peace deal that offers more to each side than fighting does. The two sides may agree to share power in order to allow both to maintain some control after civil conflict (Hartzell and Hoddie 2003; Walter 2002; Fortna 2004), but even stepwise disarmament, demobilization, and integration of governing apparatuses are accompanied by moments of relative weakness since simultaneity is extremely difficult to arrange, as is precise balance in power-sharing. Slight disparities in the timing of the integration will result in one side’s weakness relative to the other side, which then provides an incentive to grab more power for one side and an incentive to initially reject the deal for the other side. Usually the militant group is especially vulnerable,
compared to the government, because many peace deals demand its disarmament (Fearon and Laitin 2007).

A solution to the commitment problem is to engage an external actor to guarantee the deal by monitoring compliance and punishing non-compliance (Walter 2002, 1999, 1997). But an international guarantee — usually conceived of as armed intervention — faces a major hurdle: it can be costly. International actors may not be able to easily monitor compliance with the peace agreement, and, even if they can (perhaps through boots on the ground), they may lack efficient incentives to offer for continued compliance. If international actors lack motivation or disagree among themselves about the motivation, coordinated action will be impossible. Even if these issues are resolved, however, if the coordinated action remains too costly, they themselves face a commitment problem in promising to back a deal.

1.2 Committing through Electoral Participation and International Engagement

I argue that elections reduce the cost of both monitoring and incentivizing compliance, especially after the Cold War when coordination among international actors improved. The electoral processes — at least when both sides participate as political parties — provide a mechanism to monitor and incentivize compliance that matters on the margins. International actors must have enough leverage and be neutral enough so that both sides expect to be punished only for non-compliance (and expect the other side to, as well). The incentives for compliance need only to matter on the margin: that is, the cost must be greater than the benefit that side could gain from grabbing power when it is relatively stronger during the peace process. Most international involvement changes the cost of non-compliance on the margin without the use of force: even armed actors usually rely on shaming the actor leading to a loss of domestic political support, sanctioning the actor leading to a loss of aid, and/or preventing further participation by that actor
in beneficial political activities that net resources and perhaps power (this aspect of the theory builds on Fortna 2008). Much of this can occur through the electoral process: elections can increase information about and accountability for compliance when combined with a peacekeeping mission or just used in conjunction with conditional incentives. The international actor can also become credible in its commitment to reduce or revoke these resources from both sides by engaging in an electoral process in which both sides participate. Especially after the Cold War, the technology around election observation and conditionality advanced to allow for such external engagement. The theory is presented in Figure 1, and the discussion details electoral participation and external engagement in more depth, while also providing examples.

1.2a Electoral Participation

While other forms of monitoring and conditional incentives may be useful, those tied to the electoral process are especially effective if both sides participate as political parties. Components of the electoral process facilitate monitoring and incentivizing compliance. Elections create focal points since they are regular, public signals (Fearon 2011). Engaging through an electoral process thus prove a more efficient, sustainable mechanism than shuttle diplomacy or the like. Electoral participation increases information and accountability about compliance with a set of standards, whether alongside a peacekeeping mission or not.

It is important to note that these elections need not be free and fair to serve this purpose: in post-conflict societies, as discussed, the electoral results may not reveal the electorate’s satisfaction with governance standards, but the process does reveal information about compliance with a set of standards and provide opportunities for reward and punishment associated with compliance. Electoral engineering, such as the use of quotas, can institutionalize
the distribution of power expected from fighting in order to stabilize the society. This allows both sides to strike a bargain that improves their expected outcomes from fighting due to the inefficiency that fighting entails. Post-conflict elections are criticized for electoral engineering, but they fit the conceptions of Schumpeter — where elites protect themselves from the electorate by limiting its effect on the outcome — and of Lijphart — where the system is designed to share power “artificially” by incentivizing or requiring cooperation that overrides the vote (Schumpeter 1942; Lijphart 1968, 1980). Other work on post-conflict elections has also suggested that a Schumpeterian electoral system, in particular, may be useful because of the centrality of security concerns (Wantchekon 2004; Hartzell and Hoddie 2012). Even these electoral processes, however, can facilitate external engagement by providing information about and incentives for compliance. I describe these mechanisms before turning to the external engagement in the next subsection.

**Rules and Deadlines:** Elections formalize the rules and deadlines under which political competition and, potentially, power-sharing takes place. The rules consist of clear expectations for the electoral process, which may, under a peace agreement, provide at least a minimum of power to each side. For example, in South Africa, the National Assembly shared power through elections by granting deputy presidencies and proportional cabinet positions to parties reaching set vote thresholds (Zartman 1995; Maharaj 2008). Quotas are another mechanism of guaranteeing power-sharing, as in Burundi, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Lebanon. The electoral calendar must be planned in advance, sets deadlines for power distribution, and can also be linked to other provisions of the agreement. For instance, in Guatemala, a new non-partisan national police force was to be formed by the elections in 1999 (Allison 2006, 2009). All of the
peace agreements that I examine that include militant group electoral participation make it conditional on fulfilling other commitments, like force reform. The electoral rules and deadlines, then, require setting specific standards, which facilitates measuring success or failure by providing a metric against which to assess both sides’ behavior.

**Regular Assessments:** Beyond initial implementation, electoral participation requires regular, repeated intervals of increased transparency for all political parties. These regular, repeated intervals allow scrutiny of the behavior on both sides compared to the metric from the peace agreement. These opportunities are particularly productive because elections, especially post-conflict elections, receive considerable media attention (Golan and Wanta 2003). Both sides can identify non-compliance by the other side and respond about their own compliance at these intervals, while monitors and the media assess these claims compared their commitments to peace, human rights protection, redistribution, as well as electoral competition. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, 20 long-term and 300 short-term observers assessed the 2010 elections using the Dayton Peace Agreement as the “only relevant yardstick” even 15 years after the conflict (quoted in Kelley 2012; Soderberg Kovacs 2008).

**Accountable Representatives:** Finally, in order to participate in elections, public leadership emerges on each side that can be held responsible non-compliance with rules or deadlines, which facilitates punishment, including by withholding party funds and other party benefits. Party leaders become visible when campaigning and holding office, which publicizes any attempts to assassinate or arrest them but also augments their accountability for non-compliance by their own side. Candidates and elected officials are vulnerable to shaming, threatening, and
withdrawing international assistance, for instance, because if they lose resources for their constituents, they — and even the party itself — may lose support and then power. They also profit from the direct party benefits provided domestically and internationally. Thus, pressure and potential punishment more easily outweigh benefits from non-compliance. Due to this balance of incentives, the politicians also become legitimate domestic partners for foreign aid and assistance organizations (Murdie and Bhasin 2010). These partnerships reinforce the punishment mechanism since these organizations can then remove resources for non-compliance. Through the electoral process, these leaders become responsible to a variety of stakeholders and can thus be even more easily punished by them. International actors, or international actors in combination with domestic actors, are particularly well-positioned to punish: in El Salvador, for example, the U.N. engaged through elections post-conflict to incentivize compliance by both sides. On the government side, the U.N. used public statements — backed by threats from the U.S. and others to withdraw aid which would have been domestically unpopular in upcoming elections — to gain compliance by the government; on the militant group side, it criticized initial non-compliance and conspicuously did not counter the government threat to ban it from elections — the possibility of losing its ability to participate and access party funds motivated the FMLN to comply (Howard 2008; Fortna 2008). Thus, the electoral process increases the leaders’ visibility and credibility but also accountability for violations. I discuss more examples of all of these mechanisms in the qualitative evidence presented after the quantitative evidence.

These roles of the electoral process build on existing theories of elections as focal points to identify and sanction misbehavior by governments (Fearon 2011). In theory, domestic actors could guarantee the peace agreement like a social contract by sanctioning non-compliance by
either side; after a civil conflict, however, civil society is often weak and/or disarmed of its main threat — rebellion (Wantchekon 2004) — and it can be highly polarized, so it often will not be able to monitor and incentivize compliance with the deal, especially not neutrally for both sides. Thus, locating internal sources to engage through the electoral process to provide a guarantee for a peace agreement is thus unusual, at least in large conflicts; instead, an international actor should be needed to “mediate and supervise joint disarmament and state-building,” and civil society only useful afterward (Wantchekon 2004).

1.2b International Engagement

International actors, however, can provide this function, at least after the Cold War. In particular, the mechanisms through which international actors promote democracy, such as international election observation and conditional aid, allow them to become relatively credible, neutral monitors and backers of compliance. These “technologies” offer lower cost mechanisms to guarantee peace agreements through the electoral process, as long as both sides participate as political parties.

After the Cold War, the normative “win” of liberalism, relief from the central goal of containing Communism, and beliefs about advancing peace-prone potential allies encouraged democracy promotion (Carothers 1999; Dunning 2004; Lebow and Risse 1995; McFaul 2010). Civil conflict generated security concerns about contagion and transnational threats from weak states (Gleditsch et al. 2008; Chiozza and Goemans 2004; Brown 1996), and now the U.S., in particular, could act on its long-standing preferences for involvement and intervention (Legro 2005; for examples, see Feste 2003; Mayall 1996 among many). Much of the intervention was undertaken through intergovernmental organizations due to the cost effectiveness of multilateral
action (see especially Kreps 2011), and norms developed about such intervention (Finnemore 1996, 2003; Evans and Sahnoun 2002).

Armed intervention, which has been the focus of the existing literature on international involvement to terminate conflict, certainly increased (Walter 2002, 1997, 1999; Cronin 2009; Fortna 2004, 2008). But the costs of such involvement can call into question the presence and persistence of peacekeeping troops (on this, see Gilligan and Sergenti 2008; Fortna 2008; Beardsley 2011). Large missions often withdrew with non-compliance, while small missions did not grow large, which would be expected if they were to act as a tripwire (Fortna 2008). Few peacekeeping missions are sufficiently motivated to act in this way — perhaps in cases when they used force to establish peace initially (Fortna 2008). The majority of cases require another mechanism, but, as discussed, it need only matter on the margin.

The mechanisms international actors developed to promote democracy were not designed to deal with post-conflict commitment problems — they emerged region by region over time as liberalism advanced — but they proved useful for doing so. The role of this technology in stabilizing conflict and post-conflict contexts was recognized from the end of the Cold War (McCoy et al. 1991). First, international election observation, along with the presence of media and non-governmental organizations, especially those involved in human rights protection, provided a mechanism for monitoring how well political parties meet electoral and other standards. Indeed, in post-conflict contexts, the standards for compliance are primarily those of the peace process, not universal norms; the “yardstick” is the Dayton Accords, for instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kelley 2012; Hyde 2011).

Moreover, international election observation has been linked to a range of conditional benefits: as soon as the Cold War ended, eight out of nine transitional elections were
internationally monitored between 1989 and 1993, and monitoring was seen as a mechanism for “unlocking foreign aid or loans or averting foreign support for opponents” (McCoy 1993). International actors also used diplomatic and economic pressure to democratize, including trade benefits and balance-of-payments support in cases of positive changes and economic sanctions in cases of negative changes (Carothers 1999; McFaul 2010; Marinov 2005, 2004). The most common incentive for democracy promotion was democratic aid, through programs begun in the 1980s and significantly expanded in the 1990s, which was highly conditioned on compliance — with standards specific to cases, especially in post-conflict contexts when they were linked to the settlements, and some across cases, like those prohibiting coups (Carothers 1999; McFaul 2010; Knack 2004; Natsios 2006; Azpuru et al. 2008; Youngs 2008; McCoy 1993). Quantitative studies find some aid sanctions, primarily small, specifically linked to negative election reports (Hyde and Marinov 2011). The provision of this aid was tied to elections, and it focused on political parties (Carothers 1999). Many, like those in Guatemala as well as Mozambique, include trust funds tied to the former militant groups’ political parties.

Expectations about such external engagement are not constant even post-Cold War, but they are predictable. There are post-conflict states that hold elections without requesting observation — such as Ethiopia in the 1990s — or conditional aid, and others simply do not hold elections due to the expectation that they are in regions or have characteristics that make neutral engagement through the electoral process unlikely. This technology of democracy promotion — international observation and conditional aid — spread regionally at different rates. All of these studies suggest that, once some states adopted this form of international intervention, other states in the same regions faced significant pressure to also adopt (Santa-Cruz 2005; Hyde 2011; Kelley 2008; Azpuru et al. 2008; Youngs 2008). Beyond regional variation, certain systemic
strategic goals removed the possibility of neutral enforcement of compliance in certain states. Thus, the expectations of such external engagement to monitor and incentivize compliance vary in measurable ways.

The international actors engaging through the electoral process include foreign states and international organizations. The U.N. has led most intervention missions, deploying peacekeeping troops but also by observing elections and overseeing parties’ trust funds. Regional intergovernmental organizations, the European Union, the Organization of American States, and the Organization of African Unity/African Union, as well as NATO, also serve some of these functions. These intergovernmental organizations are, of course, driven by and provided resources by the major powers, especially the U.S., but also regional and former colonial powers. Finally, a number of non-governmental organizations observe elections — most notably, the Carter Center (Hyde 2011; Kelley 2012).

1.3 Hypotheses

A major implication of this theory is that peace agreements that include provisions for militant group electoral participation should lead to less conflict recurrence between signatories, compared to other agreements. If electoral participation by both sides generates information to monitor and mechanisms to incentivize compliance, both sides should expect marginally more cost and less benefit for non-compliance (and, indeed, should only include the provisions for electoral participation with this expectation, which I test through the next hypothesis). If both sides are encouraged to comply, then each is less likely to return to fighting, preemptively or as punishment. Thus, when a dyad terminates violence through a peace agreement that includes electoral participation provisions, compared to other agreements, the theory implies a decreased risk of conflict recurrence.
Hypothesis 1: Signing a peace agreement with electoral participation provisions, rather than any other peace agreement, should decrease the risk of conflict recurrence within the militant group-government dyad.

The commitment theory also refines this implication to a conditional hypothesis: the theory posits that electoral participation is useful in increasing durability if international actors use the process to monitor and incentivize compliance with the agreement. The first hypothesis may hold because external actors are expected engage in most cases with conditions for electoral participation, but this is a truer test of the theory: it implies that electoral participation provisions will act as commitment mechanisms, and thus decrease the risk of conflict recurrence, only if an external actor is likely to engage in the electoral process. In advance of the peace agreement, certain measures estimate that likelihood of engagement. Thus, the more specific hypothesis implied by the theory is a conditional hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Signing a peace agreement with electoral participation provisions with an expectation of international engagement should decrease the risk of conflict recurrence within the militant group-government dyad.

1.4 Alternative Theories and Hypotheses

The principal alternative theories make different predictions about elections and prospects for peace. Few studies of post-conflict elections examine militant group participation. General bargaining theories sometimes do, but without the focus on transparency and accountability in the commitment theory. Instead, elections are treated as a lottery in which one side wins power and the other loses (based on Walter 2002; recently, for example, see Flores and Nooruddin 2012). As in the commitment theory, basic bargaining theory posits that both sides will agree to electoral participation provisions if they receive at least what they anticipated receiving from
fighting (and perhaps more since fewer resources may be destroyed by not fighting). These elections, according to these theories, are a means of power-sharing and may need backing by peacekeeping missions (Walter 2002), but agreements with such electoral participation provisions should be no more or less likely to fail, compared to other peace agreements that also share power.

The idea of elections as simply a mechanism for distributing power has recently come under convincing challenge from work beyond conflict contexts (Fearon 2011): costly elections are potentially the same as other mechanisms for distributing power, unless they also do something else, like (1) create a focal point for coordinating popular mobilization or international conditionality, or (2) resolve an information asymmetry between the sides about their relative strength. The commitment theory builds on the idea of elections as a focal point, but what about the idea of elections to resolve an information asymmetry? If elections provide new information (and thus could overcome an information asymmetry), compared to prior information from the battlefield, then one side will do worse than expected at the ballot box. Unless the difference between the sources of information is smaller than the additional cost of fighting, that side would have an incentive to return to the battlefield where it is relatively stronger — either to renegotiate or continue fighting. That side will have some leverage in labeling the elections unfair and unacceptable since post-conflict elections are often obviously engineered, as discussed (Kelley 2012; Hyde 2011). Elections may thus undermine peace processes because they create divergent beliefs. There are a few cases of elections used to resolve information asymmetries, such as in Angola, and peace failed.

Most theories of post-conflict elections do not consider militant group electoral participation. Some of these studies argue that international actors view elections as establishing
legitimate governments for post-conflict states, whether or not they actually do, or as allowing exit by interveners (Finnemore 1996; Paris 2004; Lyons 2002; Diamond 2006). A strong form of the legitimate government theory holds that, through elections governments will become more responsive, provide better services, and win the hearts and minds of the population (for a recent example, see Ferraz and Finan 2008 although U.S. policymakers also make this argument).

Under this theory, post-conflict elections, with or without participation, should decrease the risk of conflict recurrence. The implication is inconsistent with findings in the existing empirical evidence (Collier 2009; Collier et al. 2008; Brancati and Snyder 2011; Brancati and Snyder 2012; Flores and Nooruddin 2012), and also in the data that I assess in this analysis.

A strong form of exit theory holds that international actors require post-conflict elections, even without stable state institutions, in order to be able to withdraw support, especially peacemaking or peacekeeping troops (see especially Lyons 2005; Kumar 1998; Lyons 2002). In explaining militant group electoral participation, rather than elections with or without participation, the theory is less convincing: first, much of the literature asserts that international interveners proceed through a series of steps toward post-conflict elections as a “rule of thumb” (for example, see Collier 2009) — despite variation and evolution across cases (Ottaway 2003) — while these steps have only occasionally been documented, usually in states without previous elections (for example, see Frère 2010). In much of my data, governments already hold regular elections. Moreover, the militant groups usually demand participation, rather than international actors insisting on it — indeed, in some cases, such as Guatemala and El Salvador, international actors initially resist it (Matanock 2012). Second, electoral participation provisions are much more prevalent than U.N. peacekeeping missions in these data on peace agreements, and these features are not correlated enough for the exit theory to account for the bulk of the variation
Despite these initial discords between fact and theory, it is useful to test this widespread theory as an alternative. Under the exit theory, post-conflict elections should increase the risk of conflict recurrence: intervention is the most likely in states with the most severe conflicts (Collier 2009; Fortna 2008), and so, if international actors want to withdraw as interveners, they would do so from these severe conflicts — perhaps especially if the peace agreements are unstable and so the interventions are costly (for an overview, see Reilly 2008).

In sum, the commitment theory implies a decrease in the risk of conflict recurrence with electoral participation provisions, but the other theories imply no change or perhaps an increase. One broader theory implies a decrease, but for all elections, not specifically those with the provisions. These empirical implications allow me to test between the theories.

II. Data

2.1 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is conflict recurrence after a peace agreement. I turn to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Peace Agreement Dataset to identify peace agreements in civil conflicts after the Cold War, 1989-2005. This dataset includes all settlements signed between at least two opposing sides that were active in conflicts that reached at least 25 battle deaths per year. A peace agreement had to “concern the incompatibility” that the signatories were fighting over, and it had to “solv[e], regulat[e] or outlin[e] a process for how to solve it” (Harbom et al. 2006). I cluster continuous peace processes to treat sets of negotiations planned to end with a

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2 Even if the U.N. somehow signaled that it would only provide troops if a future election were set to provide an exit date (an argument in Lyons 2005), these patterns in the data still hold.
solution as a single event. Peace agreements are different from, and potentially last longer, than ceasefires that pause but do not seek to settle conflicts (for example, see Fortna 2008).

I convert these data to dyadic agreements between each militant group and government that sign. The UCDP Peace Agreement Dataset includes multiple militant groups in each observation, but conflict recurrences varies at the dyadic level: in Cambodia, for example, three militant groups signed the Paris Agreement in 1991, and then one returned to fighting within a year, one in five years and one not at all. Most of the comparison in the analysis occurs across conflicts, but some occurs within the same conflict and even the same agreement.

In order to code conflict recurrence, I use the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset to measure whether conflict recurs in each dyad after the peace agreement. I identify whether the militant group, under the same name, reenters the dataset (Gleditsch et al. 2002). I thus capture conflict recurrence at a level of at least 25 battle deaths per year. Lower-level conflict could reignite, splinters could restart conflicts, or an entirely new militant group could begin fighting. While each of these are reported in some cases in the UCDP Peace Agreement Dataset, none seem to be systematically linked to electoral participation provisions in the reports, although analysis of these types of violence would be a useful extension to the study.

The resulting dataset contains 95 dyadic peace agreements between 66 dyads in 41 civil conflicts between 1989 and 2005. In 34 instances, the dyads return to civil conflict by 2010 —

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3 Clustered peace processes include the Guatemalan negotiations guided by the United Nations (1990-1991 and 1994-1996), for example. I also control for “aborted” peace processes in which later negotiations were supposed to obtain but did not. Full coding details are available from the author in a supplemental appendix.

4 There are 15 cases missing the full text of the peace agreements. In five cases, detailed summaries allowed interpretation of the provisions with some certainty. In 10 cases, all in Chad, however, the summaries were not detailed. I drop them from the analyses, but reanalyzing with the uncertain coding does not change the results.
36 percent of the agreements. The minimum break in fighting is less than one year and the maximum is five years in cases of conflict recurrence.

2.2 Independent Variable of Interest

Electoral participation provisions consist of agreement on, not implementation of, two components: holding elections and allowing participation by the militant group as a political party. I identify whether: (1) clear expectations of a future election are agreed upon in the deal by setting a date or deadline for elections — or already exist if elections have been held regularly for two cycles and are reformed but not revoked by the deal — and (2) clear expectations of both sides running candidates in the elections are agreed upon in the deal. In almost all peace agreements with elections, the governments are to conduct (and thus participate in) the elections, but, to set an expectation of militant group participation, the deal must (a) legalize or provide a concrete timeline for legalizing it as a political party or (b) create a transitional government that explicitly includes it as a political party (without bans on later participation); or, less frequently (c) the group must already participate regularly, perhaps through a public alliance with a political wing. In most cases, these joint electoral participation provisions are easily identifiable — for example, in the 1992 Chapultepec Peace Agreement in El Salvador, the election date was set, and the parties agreed to the “legalization of FMLN [militant group] as a political party” through legislative decree.

This definition of electoral participation provisions does not depend on implementation. One side or the other can fail to implement the provision, even if it is coded. In a few cases, the government did not hold elections, or held them late, despite provisions for them (with militant group participation). In each case, fighting began again. Additionally, in a couple of cases,

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5 Again, the details and a list of uncertain cases (coded both ways in the robustness checks) are available from the author in a supplemental appendix.
elections were held, but the militant groups did not participate. Conflict recurrence is mixed after these cases. The expectation of the commitment theory is, of course, that the uncooperative side will be punished, and I show some evidence from case studies on this in the mechanism section. Implementation, however, is an outcome measure of a peace agreement, not the initial provisions to which both sides agree, which is what these data capture.

Of the 95 dyadic peace agreements, 43 peace agreements — 45 percent — include electoral participation provisions. The deals that do not contain these provisions usually have other institutional arrangements for sharing control of the government and/or the military, which often operate through regional autonomy arrangements. In 30 agreements — 70 percent of the 43 — both the government and the militant group implement these provisions and participation occurs (although, as discussed, I analyze the provisions not their implementation).

III. Analysis of the Main Hypothesis

Initial analysis shows that including electoral participation provisions in a peace agreement — which, again, is agreement to hold elections and allow both sides to participate — has a positive effect on the survival of peace. With conflict recurrence data through 2010, Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of peace show that it survives longer after peace agreements that include electoral participation provisions than after those that do not (Figure 2). A log-rank test for equality of the survivor functions suggests a statistically significantly difference between the curves (at a 0.01 level). The flat shapes of the survival estimates indicate that, if conflicts recur, they recur in just over a year on average, and never after more than five years, in these data, which suggests that the risk is highest in the years just after the deal, which I discuss further below.
A cross-tabulation of electoral participation provisions and conflict recurrence shows that only 19 percent of the deals with these provisions had conflict recur, whereas 50 percent of those without such provisions had. The chi-square statistic indicates that conflict recurrence and electoral participation provisions in peace agreements are negatively and statistically significantly correlated (Table 1). These tests offer initial evidence that peace agreements with electoral participation provisions are associated with less likelihood of conflict recurrence compared to those without them, but it is a naïve assessment of the data.

If the independent variable is actual participation in post-conflict elections that are actually held, instead of provisions in the peace agreement to hold and participate in elections, conflict recurs in only 10 percent of deals, compared to 47 percent otherwise (Table 1). The relationship is, again, statistically significant. Most of these post-conflict elections that occur are monitored (93 percent with participation compared to, at most, 83 percent otherwise). Both the occurrence and monitoring of post-conflict elections depends on successful implementation of the agreement — the effect is thus larger using this measure (37 percent), but the provisions variable is preferable. I use that variable throughout the rest of the analysis.

3.1 Identification Strategy

The relationship between electoral participation provisions and conflict recurrence may be due to an omitted variable affecting both. Ideal identification of a causal relationship would rule out confounds by randomly assigning electoral participation provisions to peace agreements, which, of course, is not possible. Instead, I adopt a multi-pronged strategy for dealing with omitted variable concerns. I provide some case evidence on the mechanisms in the final section, but first
I examine these data in several different ways. First, I control for the possible confounds that the existing literature and my own analysis suggest are potentially problematic. In previous work, I have identified when electoral participation provisions, and the findings fit the commitment theory: they tend to occur in states with likely international involvement but much more broadly than armed intervention, and they are not determined by other conflict- or state-specific factors that may make peace more or less likely (Matanock 2012). Second, I identify other provisions, like agreement to integrate or reform the armed forces, which may be correlated with electoral participation provisions but signal that some agreements are stronger simply due to private information about the dyad’s desire for peace (or another unmeasured variable).

Finally, analyzing the conditional hypothesis, I show that when external actors are expected to engage — that is, when the “technology” for monitoring and incentivizing compliance with electoral and other standards is prevalent in the region — electoral participation provisions have an impact on conflict recurrence. Otherwise, they do not. I capture these expectations through regional variables with over time variation that are not dependent on the state in conflict and are somewhat exogenous to the conflict (other papers, like Dube and Naidu 2010 use similar variation outside of the state in question as instruments - an approach which I also consider). Together, these tests provide greater confidence that there is a causal relationship between electoral participation provisions and peace.

3.2 Model Specification

Given that peace agreements vary in whether they fail, but they uniformly fail in a few years if they fail (Figure 2), the appropriate dependent variable is a binary indicator of conflict
recurrence within five years. I thus fit a logistic regression model, rather than the duration models common in this literature (for example, see Fortna 2008). Finally, since observations may be related by state, I cluster the standard errors by state to provide standard errors robust to this type of heteroskedasticity.

3.3 Control Variables

In order to identify possible confounds, I draw on recent work on what factors affect electoral participation provisions (Matanock 2012), and the larger existing literature on what factors affect conflict recurrence. Most of this literature focuses on how the conflict ended, whether peacekeeping missions were present, and how institutionally the peace process is implemented (Fortna 2008; Gilligan and Sergenti 2008; Brancati and Snyder 2012; Toft 2009; Beardsley 2011; Flores and Nooruddin 2012; Hartzell and Hoddie 2003). In this study I am conditioning on how the conflict ended — through peace agreements — so there is less variation to explain; controls that are significant in other studies thus may not be significant in this study. The controls include indicators of settlement difficulty, conflict severity, international relationships, including peacekeeping missions present, and measures of democracy and development.

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6 Given the small size of the dataset, and the number of controls, I re-ran these as linear probability models (Wooldridge 2002; Angrist and Pischke 2009). The results are substantively similar, although the interaction term in Model 7 loses its statistical significance.

7 “Fails within five years” is indeed a hazard rate, just not a standard hazard rate (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004). To compare these results with existing studies, I re-ran these as Cox proportional hazards models — un-parameterized duration models — and the results are substantively similar.

8 As an alternative control, I coded whether one side was dominant during fighting (and thus perhaps winning) (based on Cunningham et al. 2009), and it does it change the main effect (nor is it statistically significant).

9 In addition to these variables, I include alternative variables (in addition to alternative specifications of variables like democracy): (1) for settlement difficulty, indicators of identity conflicts and count of factions not signing; (2) for conflict severity, indicator of strength (see previous footnote); (3) for international relationships, indicators of any peacekeeping missions,
shows the summary statistics for the control variables, as well as the dependent and independent variables of interest. I also control for region indicators, time-period indicators (1989-1994, 1995-2000, and 2001-2005), and their interaction.

[Table 2]

The most important controls in the analysis are other provisions in the agreements: those to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate combatants (DDR), reform the security sector (SSR), and share power beyond elections (Harbom et al. 2006). Each of these provisions may directly reduce conflict recurrence (for example, see Hoddie and Hartzell 2007; Toft 2009; Walter 1999, 2002); it is also plausible that combatants have private information about whether peace will be durable, and, when it will, they include more provisions in the agreements. If such an omitted variable is driving both more provision inclusion and less conflict recurrence, these other provisions should be negatively correlated with conflict recurrence and positively correlated with electoral participation provisions. Thus, by including controls for other provisions in the agreement, I can assess the likelihood of such private information as an omitted variable.

3.4 Results

Model 1, without any controls, indicates that conflict recurrence is less likely with electoral participation provisions (Table 3). The coefficient is -1.48, and the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The interpretation of this effect is identical to the interpretation of the cross-tabulation, of course: including electoral participation provisions is associated with a 31 percentage point decrease in the likelihood of conflict recurrence — 19 versus 50 percent.

[Table 3]

U.S. alliances, U.S. military aid, and former colony of one of the P5. None significantly alter the main result. These are detailed in a supplemental appendix available from the author.

26
**Controls:** The result on electoral participation provisions remains with controls for possible confounds (again, Table 3). When the control variables are added to the model, the coefficient on electoral participation provisions is -2.37, and it is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. To interpret the coefficient, I use Monte Carlo simulation to generate predicted probabilities based on Model 2 (Tomz et al. 2003). I hold all of the binary variables at their modal values and the non-binary variables at their mean values. The likelihood of conflict recurrence decreases 27 percentage points, from 53 to 26 percent, when electoral participation provisions are included. This is similar to the 31 percentage points in Model 1.\(^{10}\)

In terms of the controls themselves, few have statistical significance across specifications. The coefficient on territorial control is negative and statistically significant in most specifications of the model (-1.28 in Model 2). If the combatants in a territorial conflict reach an agreement, which may be difficult, peace is more durable than in a non-territorial conflict. Mechanisms like greater autonomy may allow for stable power-sharing settlements. The coefficients on proxy conflicts, those begun before 1990 with U.S. and Soviet Union involvement, and oil production are positive and consistently statistically significant (2.65 and 1.23, respectively). Finally, the coefficients on U.N. peacekeeping mission are not statistically significant, which may be due to the study’s scope: it only examines conflicts ending in peace agreements after the Cold War because these are the cases in which the commitment theory predicts variation in electoral participation provisions.

In Model 4 and 5 (alongside the other controls), I include the region and time-period indicators, and their interactions. The coefficient on electoral participation provisions remains

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\(^{10}\) Robustness checks include dropping each conflict and alternative specifications using control variables (see previous footnote). The significance and size of the coefficient on electoral participation provisions remains similar.
negative and statistically significant, and actually increases in magnitude (-1.67 and -2.84). Of these controls, Europe has no conflict recurrence (eight agreements), while the Middle East has complete conflict recurrence (two agreements), so both drop out. Conflict in Asia is more likely to recur compared to Latin America or Africa, and in 2001-2005 compared to 1989-1994 and 1995-2000 (but not statistically significantly).

**Other Provisions:** Including other provisions also leaves the coefficient on electoral participation provisions similarly sized and statistically significant (Model 3 in Table 3): -2.07. Of the other provisions, the coefficient on DDR is also negative, -1.18, although not quite statistically significant at the standard levels (the p-value is 0.16). In other specifications, such as including only the provisions, the coefficient on DDR is statistically significant. The coefficient on electoral participation provisions is statistically significant but smaller in that model, which may be due to the exclusion of certain controls, especially the territorial conflict indicator. Without this indicator, the model may be misspecified since it is negatively correlated with both the dependent and the independent variable of interest. Electoral participation provisions and DDR provisions are correlated at 43 percent, which may also strain the statistical model, given the small sample. Nonetheless, the effect of electoral participation provisions remains robust, even as it varies a bit in magnitude.

The inclusion of the other provisions also suggests that they do not all reduce the likelihood of conflict recurrence, nor are they systematically included together in peace agreements. Political power-sharing provisions, either through electoral means or not, are associated with more likelihood of conflict recurrence, the coefficient is 1.65, and it is statistically significant. Thus, not all provisions in an agreement make conflict recurrence less
likely, or at least there is a different selection effect in these cases. SSR provisions are not statistically significant (the p-value is 0.91). Neither provision is highly correlated with electoral participation provisions (13 and 26 percent, respectively). Overall, then, electoral participation provisions do not seem to merely be included in agreements alongside various provisions that all reduce the likelihood of conflict recurrence, which suggests that an omitted variable that corresponds to “motivation for peace” or “difficulty of maintaining peace” is not driving the result.

IV. Analysis of the Conditional Hypothesis

The commitment theory also implies that electoral participation provisions are associated with less likelihood of conflict recurrence conditional on expectations of external actors willing to engage to monitor and incentivize compliance with a peace agreement through the electoral process (Hypothesis 2).

4.1 Conditioning Variables

In the analyses of the conditional hypotheses, I examine plausibly exogenous variables that likely represent the expectation of external engagement through the electoral process. I use the cleanest measures of international involvement in the election process that I could identify: (1) the percentage of legislative elections in the region that were observed by international missions in the year prior to the peace agreement, excluding the state under analysis (Hyde and Marinov 2010); and, (2) the percentage of regional development assistance that is devoted to democracy and governance, averaged over the previous two years (Azpuru et al. 2008).

The regional election observation variable, in particular, demonstrates external engagement in the electoral process most cleanly (Hyde 2011; Kelley 2012): as mentioned,
international election monitoring provides information about the elections, democratization, protection of rights, and, specifically in post-conflict states, the conditions of peace agreements (and “bias” leads to prioritizing peace agreements’ conditions) (Kelley 2012; Hyde 2011). International election observation, importantly, came in regional waves, as did other aspects of democracy promotion (Kelley 2012; Hyde 2011; Azpuru et al. 2008; Youngs 2008; Santa-Cruz 2005). The clear conclusion about this over-time regional variation in the existing literature is that it varied due to the level of international involvement in that region, either directly through supply of monitoring (Kelley 2012), or indirectly through demand for it (Hyde 2011). In both cases, states expect and receive benefits for compliance and punishment for non-compliance (Carothers 1999), which, again, varies regionally over time beginning in Latin America (Azpuru et al. 2008). Thus, this technology of external engagement through elections envelop states more or less rapidly after the Cold War depending on their regional characteristics, especially level of international interest in the region (Kelley 2012; Hyde 2011). These regional democracy promotion variables are unlikely determined by the possibility of a peace agreement in the excluded state in the next year including electoral participation provisions; the variables are also unlikely determined by a promising environment for peace due to some other omitted variable. Neither of these regional variables are perfect measures of an expectation of external engagement through elections, but they represent the best measures possible.¹¹ These different cuts at the analysis taken together provide evidence for the effect on peace.

¹¹ The values that the regional democracy promotion variables take influence the results, and their distributions influence the confidence intervals. For both variables, there is sufficient variation: for regional election observation, for example, the values span the range although most are above 0.5 (see figure) It shifts substantially from year to year, so I also include averages (current year and two-year lag) and all elections instead of just legislative elections; the results hold and, in fact, are stronger.

[Additional Figure A]
4.2 Model Specification

In order to test the commitment theory through the conditional effect, this analysis focuses on the interaction effect of these regional democracy promotion variables, as proxies for expectations of external engagement, and electoral participation provisions. Others use time trends outside of the state under analysis as instruments, like U.S. military aid (Dube and Naidu 2010), and these variables are useful because they may be somewhat exogenous to private information driving the negotiations leading to peace agreements. They may exert their own effects, however. By including the variables and the interactions, I use the logistic regression model to assess the conditional effect.\textsuperscript{12}

4.3 Results

I compare a model with just electoral participation provisions and regional election observation (Model 6) to one with these variables and their interaction (Model 7), as well as one that adds regional and time-period controls (Model 8). I do the same for democracy and governance.

\textsuperscript{12} This relationship could also be captured by instrumental variable (IV) analysis. The regional democracy promotion variables work as instruments if they are plausibly unrelated to the dependent variable except through the independent variable of interest (Sovey and Green 2011). The first assumption may hold: as argued, most concern about an omitted variable is due to private information about either side’s commitment to peace, so regional measures, excluding the state under analysis, may be somewhat exogenous — they may not, however, be completely exogenous. An overidentification test with both instruments (IV3 in Additional Table) does not reject the null that the instruments are uncorrelated with the error term, however, which bolsters their use. The second assumption holds in the tests of IV strength, at least for IV1. The IV estimator is based on two stage least squares regression (2SLS) — linear estimation is potentially better (Angrist and Pischke 2009). I use both variables as instruments, separately and together. I include controls that are statistically significant in predicting either independent or dependent variables. The correlation between electoral participation provisions, instrumented in these models, and conflict recurrence is negative and statistically significant; it is also larger than uninstrumented (-0.31), which is expected with the local average treatment effect. Details are in a supplemental appendix available from the author.

[Additional Table A]
assistance as a percentage of development aid (Table 4). The interaction term is consistently negative, and it is usually statistically significant.

[Table 4]

Using Model 7, I calculate the conditional effect of participation provisions at each value of regional election observation (Figure 3). This figure indicates that when at least 30 percent of the elections in the region in the past year were internationally observed, including electoral participation provisions in the agreement is associated with a reduction in the likelihood of conflict recurrence (and the effect is statistically significant at the standard levels at 45 percent).

[Figure 3]

When I include the other control variables, including the other provisions, none of these variables — electoral participation provisions, regional election observation, or the interaction — are individually statistically significant, but jointly they are significant, as demonstrated through log rank tests comparing models that include and exclude them (also in Model 8). Some controls (like the indicator of proxy wars) are highly correlated with regional election observation (negatively) and participation provisions (positively), so they may diminish the significance. The interaction term in each specification is negative, though, and indicates that the effect of electoral participation provisions still gets stronger as observation of elections in the region increases. The relationship is particularly striking given that the inclusion of region and time-period controls means that identification is based on variation of regional election monitoring rates beyond simple trends.¹³

¹³The time-periods are 1989-1994, 1995-2000, and 2001-2005, while the regional election monitoring rates vary by year. Otherwise, there would be no variation to explain.
V. Comparison with Existing Studies of Post-Conflict Elections

Finally, in order to compare these results to existing studies, and to test the normative hypotheses about whether all electoral participation provisions have a positive effect on peace, I generate a variable for all electoral provisions — with or without militant group participation provisions. The effect of all electoral provisions is not statistically significant (−0.34 (0.60), so the p-value is 0.58), which is what other studies of post-conflict elections find (for example, see Collier et al. 2008). Breaking the variable into three parts — electoral participation provisions (the independent variable of interest), electoral but not participation provisions, and no electoral provisions — the effect of electoral participation provisions is negative and statistically significant relative to both electoral provisions and no provisions (with the first omitted, the coefficients are 1.66 (0.69) and 1.16 (0.70), respectively).

VI. Mechanism

The negative relationship between electoral participation provisions and conflict recurrence implied by the commitment theory thus appears robust. In the previous section, I discussed dealing with potential omitted variables problems by including controls, analyzing whether agreements were stronger and included various provisions based on private information, and testing conditional effects using lagged regional trends in democracy promotion as proxies for expectations of external engagement, which I argued are less endogenous to the militant group-government decisions. Even so, in observational cross-national data, it is still possible that an omitted variable drives the relationship between electoral participation provisions and peace, or that another mechanism explains the relationship. In order to assess whether the mechanisms in
the empirical analysis are those predicted by the commitment theory, I briefly assess some qualitative evidence.

First, do post-conflict elections with participation by both sides provide a repeated chance to assess compliance with peace agreements? Contests were held after the initial post-conflict election, and these contests internationally observed: of the 14 elections with participation provisions by 2000 that had compliance through the first election, 13 held at least a second election with only two substantial delays (Hyde and Marinov 2010). All 13 second elections were internationally observed. These repeated contests occurred in states with already-regular elections, like the Republic of Macedonia, as well as states without, like Mozambique.

Second, within-case evaluation also shows evidence of the commitment mechanism at work. I provide a few illustrations from my larger research on the conflicts that span the end of the Cold War, as well as on a set of randomly-selected cases. Both monitoring and incentivizing compliance through elections are apparent in the cases of durable peace.

In the Republic of Macedonia, the electoral process provided the opportunity to monitor compliance post-conflict. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) sent 800 observers for the September 2002 elections, in addition to 180 ceasefire monitors (Phillips 2004). The objective went beyond ensuring an open election: the U.S. State Department, for example, warned that international development assistance depended on meeting standards fair competition and peace promotion (quoted in Liotta and Jebb 2004). The U.S. negotiator said both sides knew that they had to comply with the deal because “we would all be, first of all, monitoring and, secondly, they knew that anybody who got caught failing to hold up their end of the bargain would be held accountable,” including through delay or denial of the state membership in popular inter-governmental organizations and treaties (Pardew 2011). In other
cases, the observers were even more explicit that the criteria for monitoring elections were the terms of peace agreements. To return to Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, the Dayton Peace Agreement, with its ethnic quotas, were endorsed as the “only relevant” criteria for evaluation, despite being highly engineered (quoted in Kelley 2012; Soderberg Kovacs 2008).

In addition to monitoring, the process provides opportunities to incentivize compliance. In El Salvador, as mentioned, the incumbent presidential candidate faced right-wing resistance on implementation, and so the U.N. used public statements — backed by threats from the U.S. and others to withdraw aid — to gain compliance by the government (Howard 2008; Fortna 2008). Costing the state these crucial funds would have been unpopular at election time. The U.N. also incentivized compliance by the militant group through the electoral process: when an explosion in an arms cache in Nicaragua was attributed to the FMLN, the U.N. criticized it forcefully and conspicuously did not counter the government threat to ban it from elections. The possibility of losing its ability to participate and access party funds motivated the FMLN to reveal and destroy other weapons caches (Howard 2008). Many other examples exist: most of the current literature is on conditional incentives for the state, but they are also prevalent in the form of party funds for the militant groups. In Mozambique, for instance, the U.N. established an $18 million trust fund for Renamo to help it transform into a political party, which also provided an effective conditional incentive — used when the group threatened to leave elections and return to fighting (Nuvunga 2007; Turner et al. 1998).

In other cases, non-compliance on the electoral participation provisions themselves provides transparent moments for accountability. In Indonesia, the government procrastinated on legalizing the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) to participate in elections until international monitors from the Helsinki Peace Process intervened to convince it to comply with this condition.
In Burundi, the Arusha process required that all of the forces of the militant group, the CNDD-FDD, move to cantonments before it could transform into a political party and participate in elections. The CNDD-FDD initially procrastinated, but, as other parties began to campaign, it rapidly demobilized since it did not want to lose its electoral support (Bentley and Southall 2005).

External engagement continues in later post-conflict elections: the electoral process has been used to punish occasional violations. These violations often occur when some substantial militant groups remained in the cold, which placed pressure on one side or the other not to comply. In Northern Ireland, electoral participation facilitated punishment of non-compliance by the militant group: the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) and its armed wing, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), failed to comply with its community policing commitments, and so the party’s annual £27,000 fund for its community work was suspended, which hurt its political chances in a context where parties provide community funds (Happold 2004; Purvis 2009). In Colombia, the government faced backlash when it failed to protect the presidential candidate of the M-19 militant group, which had transitioned to a peaceful political party in 1990. The government was “criticized far more over [this] assassination than over the previous deaths” (Dermota 1990). Indeed, afterward, international actors — especially the U.S. — sanctioned the government for sponsoring paramilitaries and violating human rights, which produced better protection for the party (Leahy 2010; Quiroga 2009). The violations may have even been prevented if not for actions by militant groups not included in these peace deals. Such groups are often problematic for peace agreements (for example, see Kydd and Walter 2002).

Third, in cases of failure to implement electoral participation provisions, external engagement lost its credibility due to a lack of resources or impartiality. In Rwanda in 1993, for
example, the Arusha Agreement was signed in August. By October, when the U.N. voted on backing the agreement with international intervention, however, two U.S. Blackhawk helicopters had been downed in a civil conflict with a similar scope in Somalia (Howard 2008). The timing likely accounted for external reluctance to engage: it resulted in fewer troops deployed, but also a lack of resources, including conditional resources, to incentivize compliance (Howard 2008). In Cambodia, the U.N. mission was seen as siding with one militant group against two others during implementation, and so assurance that it would sanction non-compliance by the first, especially in the electoral process, became weak. The Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) ultimately had to be included in an ad hoc power-sharing deal to keep the peace. The CPP leader would go on to say that “international standards exist only in sports” (Bjornlund 2004).

Finally, many peace agreements that do not include electoral participation provisions came into effect with little international interest, and so they rely on other mechanisms like granting autonomy to allow the former militant group to maintain some control over their regions and thus to protect themselves against the government reneging. For example, the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tract Peace Accord in Bangladesh allowed for autonomy and continued armament. The whole process might have gone more smoothly, however, according to those involved, if an international actor had been willing to monitor and potentially sanction violations of the process (see interview in Fortna 2008). The mechanisms in these cases — resulting in both successes and failures — seem to operate as the commitment theory predicts.

VII. Discussion

Overall, electoral participation provisions in peace agreements are associated with a strong and statistically significant decrease in the likelihood of conflict recurrence. This is the main
implication of the commitment theory. In these models, the coefficients indicate a decrease of about 20 to 30 percentage points, depending on the specification. None of the variables that existing studies find influence conflict recurrence, included as controls, drives this relationship — not even peacekeeping missions. The inclusion of other provisions in the agreement, such as provisions for security sector reform, also do not change the result; indeed, some other provisions, especially other types of power-sharing, increase the likelihood of conflict recurrence and are not highly-correlated with electoral participation provisions. These results suggest that the main result is not driven by private information leading to multiple provisions and more durable peace.

I also examine the conditional effect that the commitment theory implies: electoral participation by both sides should help them commit to a peace agreement if an external actor will engage through elections to monitor and incentivize compliance with the peace agreement. The interaction of electoral participation provisions and lagged regional democracy promotion variables — which the existing literature shows are indicators of expected international involvement by region over time, not of specific state features, and thus plausibly somewhat exogenous to civil conflicts and the private information that shape their settlements — decreases the likelihood of conflict recurrence.

The alternative theories that predict no effect or even a negative effect — especially the exit theory — of electoral participation provisions on peace, or that predict either effect of all electoral provisions (with or without participation) on peace are not supported by these data. On the last point, as has been found in other studies, in my data there is no significant effect of all kinds of post-conflict elections on peace duration (again, for example, see Collier et al. 2008). Once we focus attention on agreements that involve electoral participation provisions, which I
have argued are means to engage external actors to monitor and incentive compliance and thus trust in the implementation of a peace deal, conflict recurrence is again less likely, compared to electoral provisions without participation and to no electoral provisions. These results suggest that elections in which militant groups and governments plan to participate have a different effect from those in which they do not. This finding also suggests that some post-conflict elections — those without plans for inclusive participation — are associated with relatively more likelihood of conflict recurrence. New work will need to explain why these remaining post-conflict elections are not stabilizing.

VIII. Conclusions

Are post-conflict elections an effective tool for maintaining a durable peace? This paper suggests that certain elections — those that include participation by both sides of a dyad fighting a civil conflict — engage a commitment mechanism. Electoral participation by both sides lowers the cost for external engagement by establishing specific rules and deadlines; setting regular visible opportunities to monitor compliance; and, establishing public representatives for each side that facilitate accountability for non-compliance. After the Cold War, international actors could help commit both sides to implementing and honoring a peace agreement through electoral engagement. The paper shows quantitatively that conflict recurrence is less likely with electoral participation provisions — an implication of the commitment theory. Initial qualitative evidence also supports the commitment mechanism: for instance, in successful cases of political participation provisions, external actors engaged through the electoral process, including its specific rules and deadlines, to monitor and incentivize compliance by both sides. Overall, in contrast to more uniformly dismal views of post-conflict elections, this paper demonstrates that
post-conflict elections with participation by both sides, as well as engagement by an external actor, can serve as a tool for conflict recurrence.
Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Commitment Theory

ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION
(Rules/Deadlines, Regularity, Accountable Representatives) + EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT
(Democracy Promotion, Conditional Assistance) → Information about Compliance Incentives for Compliance
Figure 2: Kaplan-Meier Survival Estimates of Peace

Years after the Peace Agreement

Without Participation Provisions

With Participation Provisions
Table 1: Conflict Recurrence after Peace Agreements, 1989-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Provisions</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recurrence</td>
<td>19% (8)</td>
<td>50% (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>81% (35)</td>
<td>50% (26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi-Square(1)=10.01, Pr=0.001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual Participation</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recurrence</td>
<td>10% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>90% (27)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi-Square(1)=12.32, Pr=0.000

*Of participators, 93 percent of post-conflict elections are internationally observed (while 83 percent of non-participators are).
Table 2: Summary Statistics\textsuperscript{8,9}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failure of Peace in the Government-Militant Group Dyad (within 5 years)( (=1) )</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Participation Provisions( (=1) )*</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Election Observation (Percent, Lagged)( (=0-1) )</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Democracy and Governance Assistance (Percent of Development Aid, Lagged 2-year average)( (=0.01-0.19) )</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Control Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Territorial Conflict( (=0-1) ) (Gleditsch et al. 2002)</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of the Dyad’s Conflict( (=0-38) ) (Gleditsch et al. 2002)</td>
<td>7.45</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aborted Agreement Process( (=1) ) (Author)</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Agreement( (=0-5) ) (Harbom et al. 2006)</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proxy War( (=1) ) (Lacina and Gleditsch 2005)</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major War( (=1) ) (Gleditsch et al. 2002)</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil Production Indicator (Lagged)( (=1) ) (Ross 2011)</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.N. Peacekeeping Mission( (=1) ) (Multiple Sources)</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Democracy (Lagged)( (=7-10) ) (Marshall et al. 2006)</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections in the Region (Count, Lagged)( (=1-14) ) (Hyde and Marinov 2010)</td>
<td>8.11</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real GDP per capita (1,000’s, Lagged)( (=0.16-27.58) ) (Heston et al. 2011)</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other Provisions (Harbom et al. 2006)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DDR Provisions( (=1) )</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSR Provisions( (=1) )</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Sharing Provisions( (=1) )</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: these 95 dyadic peace agreements occur in 40 states.

*Again, provisions in peace agreements to hold elections and allow both sides to participate as political parties, not implementation of these provisions.
Table 3: Effect of Participation Provisions on Conflict Recurrence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Provisions</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other Controls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regions, time periods, their interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>Regions, time periods, their interaction, and all other controls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Election Observation (Percent, Lagged)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.15)</td>
<td>(0.95)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial Conflict</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1.28*</td>
<td>-1.71*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.74)</td>
<td>(0.90)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of the Dyad’s Conflict</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.85)</td>
<td>(0.85)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aborted Agreement Process</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.85)</td>
<td>(0.85)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Agreement(s)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>-0.70*</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
<td>(0.38)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proxy War</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.65**</td>
<td>2.64**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.11)</td>
<td>(1.28)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major War</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.54)</td>
<td>(0.67)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil Production Indicator (Lagged)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.23**</td>
<td>1.62**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.61)</td>
<td>(0.70)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.N. Peacekeeping Mission</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.58)</td>
<td>(0.62)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Democracy (Lagged)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections in the Region (Count, Lagged)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Real GDP (1,000s, Lagged)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDR Provisions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-1.18</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.83)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSR Provisions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.84)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Sharing Provisions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.65**</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.75)</td>
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</table>

Number of Observations 95 94 94 83 83  
Pseudo R-Squared 0.08 0.27 0.34 0.15 0.52  
Log pseudolikelihood -56.70 -44.91 -40.80 -46.89 -26.33

Note: Method is logistic regression analysis. DV is conflict recurrence by government-militant group dyad within 5 years (binary). Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors, clustered by state (maximum=40). Number of observations varies, aside from control missingness, because region/time-period/interaction perfectly predicts success/failure. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01
Table 4: Conditional Effect of Participation Provisions on Conflict Recurrence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 6</th>
<th>Model 7</th>
<th>Model 8</th>
<th>Model 9</th>
<th>Model 10</th>
<th>Model 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation Provisions</td>
<td>-1.34***</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>-1.39**</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.77</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.65)</td>
<td>(1.23)</td>
<td>(1.52)</td>
<td>(0.67)</td>
<td>(0.76)</td>
<td>(0.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Election Observation</td>
<td>-1.37</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Percent, Lagged) [A]</td>
<td>(1.11)</td>
<td>(1.32)</td>
<td>(1.35)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation Provisions* A</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-3.40*</td>
<td>-3.42</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(1.98)</td>
<td>(2.36)</td>
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<td>Regional Democracy and Governance Assistance/</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Aid (Lagged Two Year Average) [B]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation Provisions*B</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Controls</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Regions, time periods, their interaction</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Regions, time periods, their interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Observations</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-Squared</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log pseudolikelihood</td>
<td>-55.69</td>
<td>-54.45</td>
<td>-45.60</td>
<td>-55.69</td>
<td>-48.82</td>
<td>-41.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Method is logistic regression analysis. DV is conflict recurrence by government-militant group dyad within 5 years (binary). Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors, clustered by state (maximum=40). Number of observations varies, aside from control missingness, because region/time-period/interaction perfectly predict success/failure. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

These can be clustered by region (5) with similar statistical significance: the only notable change is that the interaction term’s p-value is 0.13 in Model 5.
Figure 3: Conditional Effect*

*From Model 7 with a 95 percent confidence interval.
Additional Figure A: Distribution of Peace Agreements by Regional Election Observation

![Graph of Peace Agreements Distribution](image-url)

- **With Participation Provisions**
- **Without Participation Provisions**
**Additional Table A: Instrumental Variable Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IV1</th>
<th>IV2</th>
<th>IV3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First-stage regression (DV=Participation Provisions)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specification (in addition to three controls)</td>
<td>Using Regional Election Observation</td>
<td>Using Regional Democracy and Governance Assistance</td>
<td>Using both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kleibergen-Paap Wald rk F statistic</td>
<td>17.10</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td>10.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV (2SLS) estimation (DV=Conflict Recurrence)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation Provisions</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>-0.61*</td>
<td>-0.50*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.34)</td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil Production Indicator (Lagged)</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
<td>0.19*</td>
<td>0.20**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial Conflict</td>
<td>-0.23*</td>
<td>-0.27**</td>
<td>-0.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proxy War</td>
<td>0.40***</td>
<td>0.48***</td>
<td>0.44***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Observations</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hansen J Statistic (Overidentification Test)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Method is two-stage least-squares regression analysis; numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors, clustered by state (40); * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01
Work Cited


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Pardew, James. 2011. Interview with the Author. Stanford, CA (by telephone), April 20.


