

**Planting the Seeds for Stability: The Power of Development Diplomacy
and the Impact of U.S. Agricultural Development Policy on Fragile States**
Zach Wehrli

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Introduction

Instances of global conflict have increased dramatically over the last decade.¹ As climate change, population increase, and globalization continue to proliferate over the next century, it will be crucial for stakeholders at every level to reevaluate the best ways to address issues pertaining to global conflict, violence, and state stability. Despite many multilateral and non-profit opportunities for intervention, states will most likely be tasked with mitigating the worst effects of these issues. One way that countries such as the United States (US) can begin to combat global conflict and state fragility is by reevaluating existing development strategies, policies, and budgets. Even a cursory glance at the US foreign development budget illustrates the low priority of current development policies. In fact, despite widespread misinformation among the American public, US expenditures for all international development line items constitute less than 1% of the total annual US budget.² Agricultural development policy in particular is an underutilized method of preventing conflict, increasing state stability, and advancing US national security interests in the process. Existing literature has highlighted the links between food insecurity and instability, which means that agricultural development may have the ability to simultaneously improve the lives of millions of civilians across the globe and help the US advance and protect its strategic national security interests, including the global war on terror.

¹ Uppsala Conflict Data Program

² Center for Global Development

The US has many of these vested global interests, but existing foreign and national security policy relies heavily on American military presence to engage these interests and actors, acting as enforcing agents for US policy and projects throughout the world. This is a costly model; not only is it one of the largest (and continually growing) line items in the US federal budget — falling behind only healthcare and social security — but it can also result in immense human cost in the form of American casualties.³ Agricultural development may offer an efficient alternative to continuous increases in military spending. If used effectively, it can provide dynamic new opportunities for the US government to continue advancing its strategic national security interests, while simultaneously decreasing state fragility and saving human lives in the process. By reframing agricultural development policy in this context and providing empirical evidence to support this assertion, it may be possible to make investment in international agricultural development more politically appealing.

The world of foreign aid and assistance is a complex one. For clarity, it is important to parse out the differences within this field, highlighting the aspects of foreign aid addressed in this study. The State Department identifies foreign assistance as “the voluntary transfer of resources from the government of one country to the government, or people, of another.”⁴ Within foreign assistance, the State Department recognizes three subcategories of aid including security assistance, humanitarian assistance, and development assistance – the last of these three is the focus of this study. Development assistance is unique because it supports sustainable increases in living standards and reduction in poverty through economic and social advancement, whereas humanitarian assistance focuses on providing direct assistance to those in crisis. I aim to illustrate the importance of continued and increased levels of US spending on agricultural development policy as both a humanitarian imperative leading to increased levels of stability and a means of increasing US national security in the process.

Through analysis of current US agricultural development expenditures and levels of state fragility provided by the Fund for Peace, I highlight an observable relationship between drastic increases in US agricultural development spending and consistent decreases in state fragility. To make sense of that relationship, however, it is critical to gain a contextual understanding of the existing literature on food insecurity and conflict. First, I synthesize existing spheres of thought on the impacts of food insecurity on what I identify as state fragility. By synthesizing existing literature on the topic, with a special emphasis on work completed by Cullen Hendrix, I provide a theoretical framework through which this real-world data can be analyzed. I then employ themes illustrated by existing scholars in both a quantitative and qualitative context, using Ethiopia, a state considered fragile by the Fund for Peace’s Fragile States Index (FSI), as the primary case study. By analyzing the annual fluctuations in stability as evaluated by the Fund for Peace’s FSI through the lens of US agricultural development spending, I illustrate that US foreign assistance specifically in the form of agricultural development spending can increase food security, resulting in decreased levels of state fragility, subsequently impacting US national

³ “The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2017-2027,” Congressional Budget Office

⁴ Smith, F Bureau Briefing Packet

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security. In order to eventually bring the focus to US strategic interests and national security, I highlight the links between state stability and strategic US interests, like global terrorism. Ultimately, I conclude with a set of policy recommendations that would serve the national security interests of the United States by increasing the stability of states critical to US national security priorities by combating food insecurity through agricultural development policy.

The first step, identifying existing theoretical frameworks for the relationships between food insecurity and everything from poverty to violent conflict, helps to lay the groundwork for the high level correlations identify between state fragility and US agricultural development spending. There are some important considerations to bear in mind when following this logical pathway, however. First, it is virtually impossible to prove causation between development policies and outcomes, particularly when the state is the unit of analysis. Although the sheer number of variables and factors that contribute to state success or failure make causation unachievable, illustrating the correlation between US dollars spent on agricultural development in country and state stability, contextualized by the existing literature on food insecurity and political instability, will be useful in highlighting agricultural development policies' role in stabilizing fragile states and mitigating the negative repercussions of instability. I am confident that this strong correlation paired with the existing literature on the subject will lead to a compelling argument in favor of US agricultural development spending and policies.

The Existing Literature

Authors such as Todd Smith, Cullen Hendrix, and Henk-Jan Brinkman have made inimitable contributions to the existing body of literature on food insecurity, state fragility, and agricultural development policy. By synthesizing their work to create a foundation for my own data analysis, I can utilize the existing logics articulated by these authors to strengthen my claim that US agricultural development policy has a direct impact on the stability of states in sub-Saharan Africa, which can also be interpreted to mean that increased spending on agricultural development on behalf of the United States should remain a goal of any comprehensive development or national security strategy.

The mechanisms articulated by these authors, especially the ways in which food insecurity results in a variety of destabilizing events, provide the contextual framework necessary for understanding the relationship between US agricultural development spending and decreases in state fragility score in the case of Ethiopia.

Henk-Jan Brinkman and Cullen Hendrix authored one of the most seminal works in the nascent field of food insecurity in 2010, which was eventually published as a background paper in the 2011 *World Development Report*. In it, Hendrix and Brinkman provide evidence for the link between food insecurity and different types of conflicts: civil war, interstate war, regime stability, violent rioting, and communal conflict. In one of the most compelling points in the paper, the authors study the occurrence of violent rioting in 48 different countries, graphing the relationship between these riots and price spikes in agricultural commodities. They find that the occurrence of riots reached its peak during the years with the highest agricultural commodity

prices of staple goods such as wheat, maize, and rice according to the FAO.⁵ Another critical takeaway from this working paper is that these riots are most likely to occur in countries without the capacity or infrastructure to foster strong government services — what they identify as low government effectiveness.⁶ This concept, that governments must possess the capability to respond to agriculture-related issues, is crucial in the analysis of both Ethiopia and anywhere where capacity and resilience building are the main development or aid objectives. Without the infrastructure to combat political instability as a result of agricultural issues, countries may see an exacerbation of other issues, including violence and poverty.

The conclusions found in the work by Brinkman and Hendrix are important because of the problems they identify. While they are not the only academics to highlight the links between food insecurity and all manner of violent events, they do coherently articulate a critical point for my analysis: food insecurity has the potential to cause violence. For the purposes of this paper, it also makes it possible to question whether or not there are policies and programs that could be implemented to disrupt this causal chain. Ultimately, Brinkman and Hendrix conclude that in order to break the link between food insecurity and conflict, nation-states, multilateral institutions, and NGOs should focus on implementing mechanisms that shield food consumers and producers from short-term price instability.⁷

Here, these authors analyze the cyclical nature of food security and conflict in the Sahel, which encompasses a large swath of Northern and sub-Saharan Africa, including the northern portions of Senegal, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and Eritrea, among others. They posit two important claims: first, they illustrate that violent conflict is actually a driver of food insecurity,⁸ highlighting the hugely undiscussed reality that the relationship between acute food insecurity and violent conflict is a circular, self-perpetuating one.

Secondly, they provide evidence that shows how food insecurity can result in popular mobilization and be a *risk multiplier* for conflict. Hendrix and Brinkman, explicitly and intentionally, dismiss attempted monocausal explanations for violent conflict, instead choosing to argue that food insecurity is a risk multiplier rather than a monocausal explanation for conflict. By adapting their logic here, it is possible to make strong corollary claims for the impact of food insecurity and subsequently the implementation of agricultural development policy, while still recognizing the limitations of causal explanations for violent conflict more generally. The concept of risk multipliers is of particular importance when viewed through the perspective of US policy making. Policy makers and elected representatives constrained by the political realities of a democratic system — especially the continuous election cycles of the American democratic system — have a difficult time endorsing policy decisions that lack short-term gratification or success guarantees. Instead of making false claims about direct causation,

⁵ “Food Insecurity and Conflict,” Hendrix and Brinkman, Pg. 5

⁶ Ibid.,Pg. 6

⁷ “Food and Insecurity and Conflict,” Hendrix and Brinkman, Pg. 6

⁸ Ibid.,Pg. 1

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academics and policy professionals should embrace this concept of risk multiplication in an attempt to preemptively combat the disastrous effects of under-funded agricultural development policy. In addition to these main points, they provide evidence to suggest that participating in food security interventions or development can help decrease possibilities of conflict, contributing to more stable environments. Hendrix and Brinkman’s rejection of monocausal explanations of conflict (an important deviation in conflict literature in the policy space) and claims regarding the benefits of outside intervention provide crucial contextual evidence for claims about the effects of state stability that I make through analysis of the Fund for Peace’s FSI.⁹

“When Hunger Strikes” is a more recent piece by Cullen Hendrix, taking the form of a report commissioned by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs through their Global Food and Agriculture Program. Hendrix provides evidence that suggests political instability is a direct cause of food insecurity. In this study, Hendrix analyzes the relationship between food-price shocks in the global south and the occurrence of non-violent and armed conflict.¹⁰ Using the food-price related government overthrows in Madagascar, Haiti, and the Arab Spring as starting points, he finds that food-related protests and riots were directly correlated with price spikes occurring to the FAO Food Price index.

With the support of these case studies and data from multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the United Nations, Hendrix engages in a variety of policy recommendations for donors of international development and food security aid, including: the elimination of export bans, further research on the relationship between food insecurity and political instability, advocacy for the use of regional food balance sheets, the creation of new programs to assist governments in the transition from food subsidies to more sustainable types of aid, and direct US development involvement in the most food insecure regions of the planet —namely sub-Saharan Africa.

Rabah Arezki and Markus Bruckner look at the effects of food prices on democracy and intra-state conflict in over 120 countries from 1970 – 2007. To do so, they:

“... conduct country-specific food price index that is driven by the variation in the international food prices for a panel of over 120 countries during the 1970-2207. [They] use rigorous panel data techniques that account for both unobservable cross-country heterogeneity and common year shocks, and we identify the effects that international food price variations have on political and social stability from the within-country variation of the data.”¹¹

Using this methodology, Arezki and Bruckner analyze polity scores and food price indexes according to the FAO and ultimately conclude that increases in food prices in low income countries (LICs), dramatically deteriorate the standing of democratic institutions, while

⁹ “Food and Security and Conflict,” Hendrix and Brinkman, Pg. 6

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ “Food Prices and Political Instability,” Rabah Arezki and Markus Bruckner, Pg. 6

simultaneously increasing the occurrence of anti-government demonstrations and other forms of civil conflict. In short, they find that food prices impact social and political stability.

Again, we see existing authors completing important and compelling work that highlights the observable relationship between food insecurity and volatile and political stability and civil conflict. With the exception of Cullen Hendrix's "When Hunger Strikes," however, none of these authors provide potential policy applications or study the impact that existing agricultural development policies have had on preventing the types of conflict observed in this study and so many others.

The Existing Literature – Summary

These studies and pieces of literature are instrumental in creating the foundation for my analysis as they provide causal mechanisms and explanations for the relationships that I highlight between US agricultural development expenditures and state fragility levels in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the great work that has already been completed by these authors, agricultural development and its impact on conflict, violence, and state stability is still an extremely nascent field. By building on the existing literature and engaging with these topics on an analytical level, I hope to fill the important gaps in the literature. In summary, there is little work that has been done on how existing agricultural development policies have *already* helped contribute to state stability, and there is a dearth of research on how agricultural development spending actually works to mitigate the well-documented negative effects of acute food insecurity highlighted by authors like Hendrix and Henk-Jan Brinkman. By using the existing literature as a foundation and starting point for my analysis of US spending on agricultural development, I hope to engage the literature in a new way, discussing not how food insecurity causes conflict but how the conflict caused by food insecurity discussed in the aforementioned papers is addressed by US agricultural development policy. With this, I articulate an explicitly policy-driven final argument: not only does the data show that these types of policies can work, but they already are, which means that US agricultural development policy in particular should be continued and expanded. It stands to reason that if food insecurity is causally linked to outbreaks of violent conflicts, implementing policy that decreases food insecurity and its effects (like food price spikes) can decrease the likelihood of these events. More generally, however, I link the existing strands of thought on this issue. By combining the aforementioned impacts of food insecurity on a variety of different factors and indicators, I paint a more comprehensive picture of its effect on state stability, emphasizing the importance of using agricultural development policy as a diplomatic strategy and foreign policy tool over the next century.

Quantitative Analysis – Ethiopia

With this literature in mind, it is possible to analyze a real world example, which highlights the positive impact of US agricultural development expenditures. To engage in a comprehensive analysis of this impact, a variety of different data sets are necessary to analyze the impact of US spending on agricultural development projects. The first data-set utilized is the

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Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index (FSI), which uses a variety of different indicators to measure the fragility of more than 170 states relative to one another, including the primary case study in this paper: Ethiopia. The indicators used by FSI fall into four categories: *Cohesion* (Security Apparatus, Factionalized Elites, Group Grievance), *Economic* (Economic Decline, Uneven Economic Development, Human Flight and Brain Drain), *Political* (State Legitimacy, Public Services, Human Rights and Rule of Law), and *Social* (Demographic Pressures, Refugees and IDPs, External Intervention). For consistency, I use the aggregate rating of these 12 indicators to highlight the relationship between state stability and US agricultural development expenditures. Further research could analyze other indicators such as state legitimacy, levels of political opposition such as riots and uprisings, the occurrence of political violence in the forms of armed insurgents, terrorism, and political assassinations, or overall confidence in the government. For the purpose of illustrating a high-level relationship between US agricultural development spending and state stability, however, the aggregate rating proves most useful because of its generalizability.¹² By looking at this yearly analysis of individual countries, it is possible to see how state fragility has fluctuated over time, which enables the identification of correlations between decreases in state fragility (practically known as increases in state stability), and American spending on agricultural development projects.

The Fund for Peace data is not without criticism, however, and it is important to address some of the most compelling critiques of this database before engaging in a quantitative analysis of the relationship between this data and US agricultural development expenditures. One of the main critiques of this data is articulated well by Bridget Coggins, an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Coggins argues that many concepts in the ranking remained undefined – from the sources of data for the 12 indicators of fragility itself – making an in-depth analysis of its contents difficult, if not impossible.¹³ Additionally, the relationships between the indicators are not defined or explored, and are weighted equally. This makes it difficult to identify differences between types of governance relative to one another. While these criticisms are well-founded, the macro-scale lessons from the index still stand: generally speaking, states at the bottom of the list (determined to have lower levels of state fragility) are typically safer and better governed than those at the top. Therefore, witnessing a state's descent down the list of fragile states is still important to recognize and understand, regardless of the values, scoring, or mechanisms that allowed it to decline in score more generally.

In addition to utilizing Fund for Peace's FSI, data sets provided by the Office of US Foreign Assistance Resources (F Bureau) at the US Department of State are used to investigate the relationship between US government spending and state fragility. Their influence comes from their aggregate nature; they include all US government spending on foreign development, including data on spending on behalf of all agencies. To illustrate the high-level relationship

¹² Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index

¹³ "Fragile is the New Failure," Bridget Coggins

between agricultural development implementation on behalf of the United States and state fragility, I utilize the *total annual “spent” funds on U.S. Foreign Assistance, Economic Development, Agriculture*.¹⁴ Other authors, particularly Cullen Hendrix and Henk-Jan Brinkman, have offered important insight into the types of agricultural development policies that might be most effective. This is an important question to explore, especially when creating potential agricultural development policies. For the purposes of this paper, however, I am more concerned with highlighting the general trends related to US agricultural development overall, making this aggregate number the most representative indicator.

The office of US Foreign Assistance Resources identifies agriculture as:

“The science and practice of food, feed, and fiber production (including forestry, wildlife, fisheries, aquaculture and floriculture) and its relationships to natural resources, processing, marketing, distribution, utilization (including nutrition), and trade.”¹⁵

Functionally, this broad definition means that this indicator capture any US funds allocated towards to the production and management of natural resources (oil, diamonds, etc.), agricultural commodities (wheat, corn, maize, etc.), and livestock (fish, cattle, pigs, goats, etc.). With this information in mind, here is the quantitative data analysis of US agricultural development spending in Ethiopia.

In 2006, the first year that the Fund for Peace began compiling its FSI, Ethiopia had a raw FSI score of 91.9, which steadily increased every year until 2010, when it stayed relatively even at 98.8, at the time making Ethiopia the 17th most fragile state in the world.¹⁶ In 2013, however, things began to change, with three subsequent years of decline in Ethiopia’s fragility score (also known as an increase in state stability) after nearly a decade of steady increases in state fragility, due in no small part to the fractured elites and lack of state capacity mentioned earlier.

Figure 1 illustrates this relationship, demonstrating the relationship between total US expenditures and state fragility score on the USAID indicator “*US Foreign Assistance: Economic Development: Agriculture: Spent*.” The United States spent almost nothing on agricultural development projects and assistance in Ethiopia prior to 2013. This changed when the Obama administration increased agricultural development spending in-country from merely \$48,324 to \$31,000,000. The results of this upsurge in spending, which would have begun to take effect after the end of FY 2013 in October of that calendar year, occurred in tandem with Ethiopia’s first extended decrease in state fragility score since the beginning of the Fund for Peace’s record of state fragility. As state fragility in Ethiopia continued to decrease in 2014 and 2015, US investment in agricultural development and assistance in the region grew to new heights, reaching 69.155 million in 2014 and 67.198 Million in 2015. Ethiopia’s FSI score matched this through an inverse relationship, declining through 2016. Assistance in the region

¹⁴ *Foreign Assistance Tracker*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ The Fund for Peace, *Fragile States Index*

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grew to unprecedented levels, reaching 69.155 million in 2014 and 67.198 million in 2015. Ethiopia's FSI score matched this through an inverse relationship, declining through 2016.

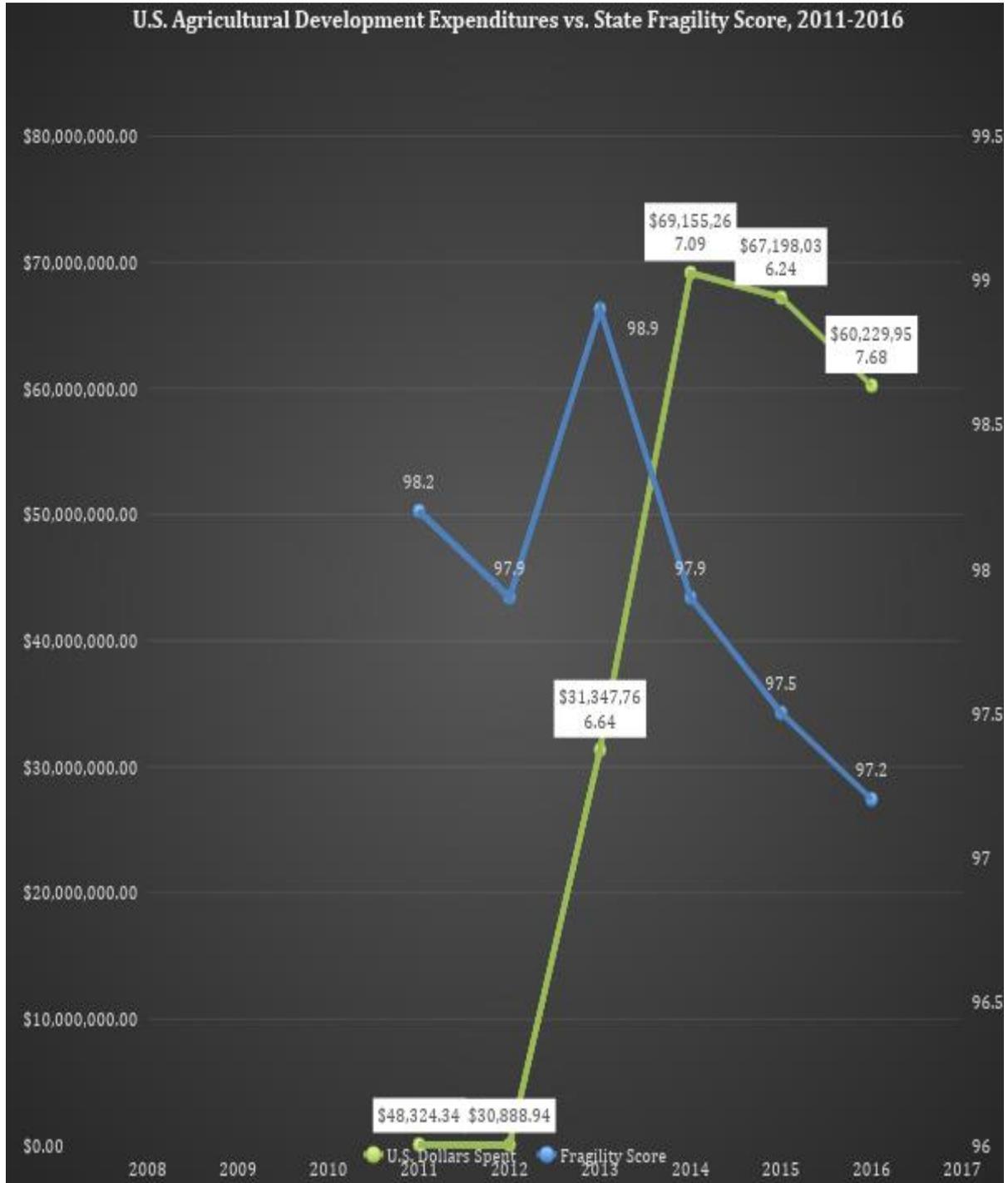


Figure 1
U.S. Department of State, Foreign Assistance
Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index

What was responsible for this decline, and what explains the 2017 increase in state fragility? One answer may lie in the amount of US foreign assistance spending that was occurring at the same time as these fluctuations.

The United States has complex spending patterns and projects, but there was almost no spending on agricultural development projects or assistance in Ethiopia on behalf of US government agencies including the State Department, the Department of Defense, USAID, and the United States Department of Agriculture. US policy in the region changed in 2013, when the Obama administration increased agricultural development spending in-country from nearly zero to 31.47 million.¹⁷ This increase in spending occurred in tandem with Ethiopia's first decrease in state fragility score since the beginning of the Fund for Peace's record of state fragility. As state fragility in Ethiopia continued to decrease in 2014 and 2015, US investment in agricultural development and assistance in the region peaked reaching 69.155 million in 2014 and 67.198 Million in 2015. Ethiopia's FSI score matched this through an inverse relationship, declining at faster rate in 2014 and 2015. While it is impossible to prove direct causation — and if Cullen and Hendrix's well-reasoned argument against mono-causal explanations are to be accepted, there never can and never will be just one cause — it is clear that there is a direct correlation between the amount of significant agricultural development spending in the region and decreased levels of state fragility.

Academics and policy makers should both be asking the same question: is the decrease in fragility score observed after the increase in American aid a statistically significant one? In order to explore the statistical significance of these shifts in fragility score, I used a one-sample t-test to determine whether or not the final fragility score, 97.2 was a statistically significant distance from the average fragility score over a given period of years. In the event that the final recorded fragility score was a statistically significant distance from the mean, it would indicate that the impact of US agricultural development spending was a statistically significant one.

First, I ran a one-sample t-test of the fragility score after recorded US agricultural development aid had been implemented in large numbers (97.2) against the average fragility score over the 11 years that the Fund for Peace has been recording this information (97.14). The resulting p-value from that test .93, which means that the final fragility score is not a statistically significant distance from the average fragility score over the entire 11 years. This is likely because of the outlier fragility score in 2006, when the Fund for Peace scored Ethiopia at 91.9. I have included a visual representation of the one-sample t-test, which can be seen in Figure 2.

¹⁷ Foreign Assistance Tracker

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. ttest fragility==97.2 if year~=2016

One-sample t test

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Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
fragil~y	10	97.14	.6934935	2.193019	95.57121	98.70879

```

      mean = mean(fragility)                t = -0.0865
Ho: mean = 97.2                          degrees of freedom = 9

      Ha: mean < 97.2                      Ha: mean != 97.2                Ha: mean > 97.2
Pr(T < t) = 0.4665                       Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.9329                Pr(T > t) = 0.5335

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*Figure 2, STATA Corp
U.S. Department of State, Foreign Assistance
Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index*

The purpose of this study, however, is to identify the impact of increased levels of American food aid on state stability rather than analyzing levels of state stability independent of other factors. To reflect this, I ran the final state fragility score of 97.2 against the mean of Ethiopia’s fragility scores from 2011-2016, or the only years for which data on U.S. food aid to the country exists. This test resulted in a mean of 98.8 and a p-value of .0196 — well within the range required to indicate that the decrease in state stability found in the years following substantial increases in American agricultural aid to Ethiopia was a statistically significant distance away from the mean over this same period of time. This test indicates that the observed shift over this period of time had a significant impact.

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. ttest fragility==97.2 if year~=2016 & year>=2011

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One-sample t test

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	[95% Conf. Interval]	
fragil~y	5	98.08	.2332381	.5215364	97.43243	98.72757

mean = mean(fragility) t = 3.7730
 Ho: mean = 97.2 degrees of freedom = 4

Ha: mean < 97.2 Ha: mean != 97.2 Ha: mean > 97.2
 Pr(T < t) = 0.9902 Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0196 Pr(T > t) = 0.0098

*Figure 3, STATA Corp
 U.S. Department of State, Foreign Assistance
 Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index*

When taken together, the combination of the easily observable relationship between US agricultural development expenditures and the statistical significance of the decrease in fragility score offers important insight into the effectiveness of US agricultural development policy as a whole.

Qualitative Analysis -Ethiopia

In order to fully understand the impact of US agricultural investment in Ethiopia, it is helpful to gain some insight into the country’s economic, political, social, and historical contexts. Ethiopia has a total GDP of \$47.5 billion with an average per capita income of \$505. Ethiopia’s population hit a staggering 94,100,756 in 2013 with an annual population growth rate of 2.55%.¹⁸ Its urban population in the same year rested at 18.59%, which means that large swaths of the country still remain classified as rural land. A majority of these rural areas are farming communities. These numbers have likely increased since the World Bank’s analysis in 2013.¹⁹ Between 1998 and 2001, Ethiopia experienced over 80,000 deaths as a result of state based violence during the Eritrean–Ethiopian War.²⁰ As a result of this tumultuous start to the 21st century, Ethiopia’s standing in the international community as seen through the perspective of state fragility was bleak, and the country was plagued by continued violence, fractured elites, and

¹⁸ World Bank Group
¹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰ Uppsala Conflict Data Program

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a lack of state capacity even after the cessation of hostilities in 2000. Although Fund for Peace did not officially begin tracking and ranking fragile states until 2006, it is easy to identify a clear pattern from that point onward, allowing for educated hypotheses about what the start of the new millennium would have had in store for Ethiopia if the Fund for Peace had been tracking FSI data at the time. Fractured elites, limited state capacity, and vast human rights abuses as a result of the end of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War resulting in Ethiopia climbing to the top of the fragile states list. In 2006, Ethiopia found itself fairly high on the list as the 26th most fragile state in the world. Pre-Eritrean-Ethiopian War, however, it is likely that Ethiopia would have found itself even further from the list of the World's most fragile states. As the first decade of the 21st century marched onward, Ethiopia saw steep increases in its total fragility index score.

Ethiopia is a particularly helpful example for another reason as well: its location in the horn of Africa means that it is experiencing the same weather conditions currently faced by Somalia, Yemen, South Sudan, and northeastern Nigeria.²¹ As of October 2017, a total of 20 million people in all of these countries were on the brink of famine (with the exception of Somalia, which has already declared a famine), making it the largest humanitarian crisis in terms of the number of people involved since World War II.²² Not only has the drought put these countries on the brink of famine, but terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda have been able to take advantage of the opportunity, gaining ground against weakened state governments. This is a particularly important factor when evaluating the usefulness of agricultural development spending through the perspective of increasing US national security. If agricultural development spending is found to increase resilience to droughts and prevent governments from weakening further and potentially giving ground to armed insurgents, it could be used as an effective strategy to limit the reach of terrorist organizations, particularly in the global south. In addition, more than 5.3 million children are undernourished, with 1.4 million of them at risk of death from severe malnutrition and more than 600,000 of them are at *imminent risk of death from starvation*.²³ Ethiopia, due in no small part to immense agricultural development investment over the last decade, has been able to maintain its food security and keep famine at bay, while Somalia has already officially declared a famine. Because of continued investment in the region on behalf of the United States and other actors, Ethiopia has been able to continue building its resilience – in and of itself an important aspect of global agricultural development policy.

One of USAID's core principles is mitigating violence and conflict, and it achieves this predominately through agricultural development policies that aim to increase resiliency. Resiliency is defined as, "the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth."²⁴ This is an important concept to consider when

²¹ The Chicago Council on Global Affairs

²² Ibid.

²³ The Chicago Council on Global Affairs

²⁴ Resilience in the Face of Drought in Ethiopia: New Evidence

evaluating Ethiopia's ability to respond to the drought as a result of US agricultural development policy. To evaluate Ethiopia's resiliency as a result of USAID's programs, it collected data from the same households, all of which were reached by USAID's Pastoralist Area Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion (PRIME) project, repeatedly during the drought. By controlling for factors like household size, food assistance, education, assets, and the gender of the head of household, USAID was able to identify that households directly benefited from PRIME: they only saw a 4% decrease in food security as opposed to the 30% decrease observed in households that were not reached by PRIME.²⁵ This is important for two reasons: first it illustrates that there are ways to isolate the impact of US agricultural development policies and spending. Secondly, building resilience through agricultural development is crucial in keeping state fragility low.

First, the level of state fragility found throughout the region makes it possible to illustrate the potential and demonstrate the impact of US spending on agricultural development policy. Secondly, similarities in climate, GDP, population, and religions make it possible to control for some variables, strengthening the validity of the argument as a whole. While these countries are still incredibly diverse, with huge variations in ethnic makeup, GDP, and internal domestic and political factors, any small steps that help control for the massive number of potential confounding variables contribute to the accuracy of the analysis.

Policy Applications and Implications

Agricultural development is an effective way of increasing state stability. Not only does it decrease levels of poverty, conflict, gender inequality, thereby increasing the stability of states, but it can also play a direct role in improving America's national security. The links between radicalism, violent extremism, terrorism, and food insecurity are stark. Ertharin Cousin, previously an Executive Director of the World Food Programme, excellently articulated the reality that when young men are jobless and hungry, they turn to radical groups capable of providing those services in exchange for their support.²⁶ The United States is still engaged in the global war on terror, with many trials and tribulations to come.. In order to effectively end this global counterinsurgency and combat expansive terrorist networks made more powerful by the global interconnectedness of our world, national security policy must look beyond traditional military strength and formulate dynamic new policies capable of striking one of the core causes of terrorism. Agricultural development can play a strategic role in US counterterrorism policy, making its investment even more important, as if it were not important enough already. If the United States is serious about finishing the global war on terror, engaging in agricultural development policy and other development diplomacy strategies will be integral to success.

In 2013, a Kaiser Foundation poll found that, on average, Americans believe that the federal government spends 28% of the total budget on foreign aid. In reality, the U.S. government spends less than 1% of the budget on foreign aid. Meanwhile, defense spending

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Food Aid Cuts 'Making Refugees Targets for ISIS Recruitment'", Kareem Shaheen.

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accounts for more than 16% of the federal budget, totaling \$646 million. By investing in agricultural development policy, not only could the United States decreased levels of state fragility, but it could also directly combat IS recruitment and Islamic extremism, which has been linked to food insecurity.²⁷ The argument for agricultural development can be sold to lawmakers and the public the same way that seemingly uncontroversial increases in military spending are sold: it is an investment in US national security. In addition to increasing our national security, agricultural development policy also contributes the vital tenets of humanitarian aid that runs central to US engagement with the world – saving millions of lives in the process and making the entire international community safer. The US also stands to gain vital new partners and allies, resulting in economic and diplomatic boons that no amount of military intervention can achieve.

Finally the salience of food security issues to countries where the US has vested strategic interests. The following is a direct statement from The Office of the Director of National Intelligence from a 2016 report on Global Food Security:

“We judge that the overall risk of food insecurity in many countries of strategic importance to the United States will increase during the next 10 years because of production, transport, and market disruptions to local food availability, declining purchasing power, and counterproductive government policies. Demographic shifts and constraints on key inputs will compound this risk. In some countries, declining food security will almost certainly contribute to social disruptions or large-scale political instability or conflict, amplifying global concerns about the availability of food.”²⁸

If agricultural development is not effective, it is still vital to US national security interests to begin addressing these issues, particularly as climate change and population increase continues to dramatically alter the political situations in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Agricultural development efforts have a unique ability to advance strategic US interests. Compounded by its effects on stabilizing food insecure regions and increasing state stability, agricultural development is a powerful, and drastically underutilized, weapon in the foreign policy and national security arsenals of the United States.

Conclusion

There is much progress to be made in the fight against global conflict, poverty, and instability. There is ample literature to support the claim that strong links exist between food insecurity and increased levels of conflict and state fragility. If that theoretical framework holds, it stands to reason that investing in effective agricultural development policies would result in decreased levels of conflict and state fragility. This logical reasoning is already at play in sub-Saharan Africa, where US agricultural development policy has played an important role in

²⁷ Kareem Shaheen, *The Guardian*

²⁸ *Intelligence Community Assessment (Pg. 1)*

stabilizing countries. By comparing annual US agricultural spending and annual fragility score from the Fund for Peace's (FSI), the correlation between US agricultural development policy and decreased levels of state fragility becomes clear. Through statistical analysis, I have also demonstrated that the decreases in state fragility seen in Ethiopia as a result of agricultural development spending are not insignificant, making the potential investment in these types of agricultural development policies even more worthwhile.

Ethiopia is just one example of the beneficial impacts that robust agricultural development policy can have. Not only did it play a role in increasing state stability, it also helped advance strategic US national security interest in the region. Through continued funding of international development programs and initiatives, the US is poised to make the world a safer, more stable place, while simultaneously advancing its national security. Because of the strong links between violent extremism and food insecurity, the prevalence on food insecurity in countries vital to US interests, and the assured exacerbation of these issues over the next century as a result of climate change and population increase, the US would be wise to engage in agricultural development efforts at a greater scale. Successful, long-term national security strategy should take all of this into account when evaluating its priorities in the global south, particularly when it comes to the horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. If the US, other countries, multilateral institutions, nonprofits, and NGOs do not begin investing in capacity and resilience building now, especially in the vulnerable and volatile agricultural sector, the likelihood that stability will decrease in large swaths of the global south is virtually assured.

My findings suggest that American disengagement from the international community is dangerous. If the US does not take advantage of its position as a global leader in international development and agricultural technology, the result will be a world with greater political instability.²⁹ By taking advantage of this opportunity and leveraging the immense power of foreign investment and agricultural development in particular, the United States can save money and lives, both at home and abroad.

²⁹ *Reforming and Reorganizing U.S. Foreign Assistance*, Conor Savoy and Erol Yayboke

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