

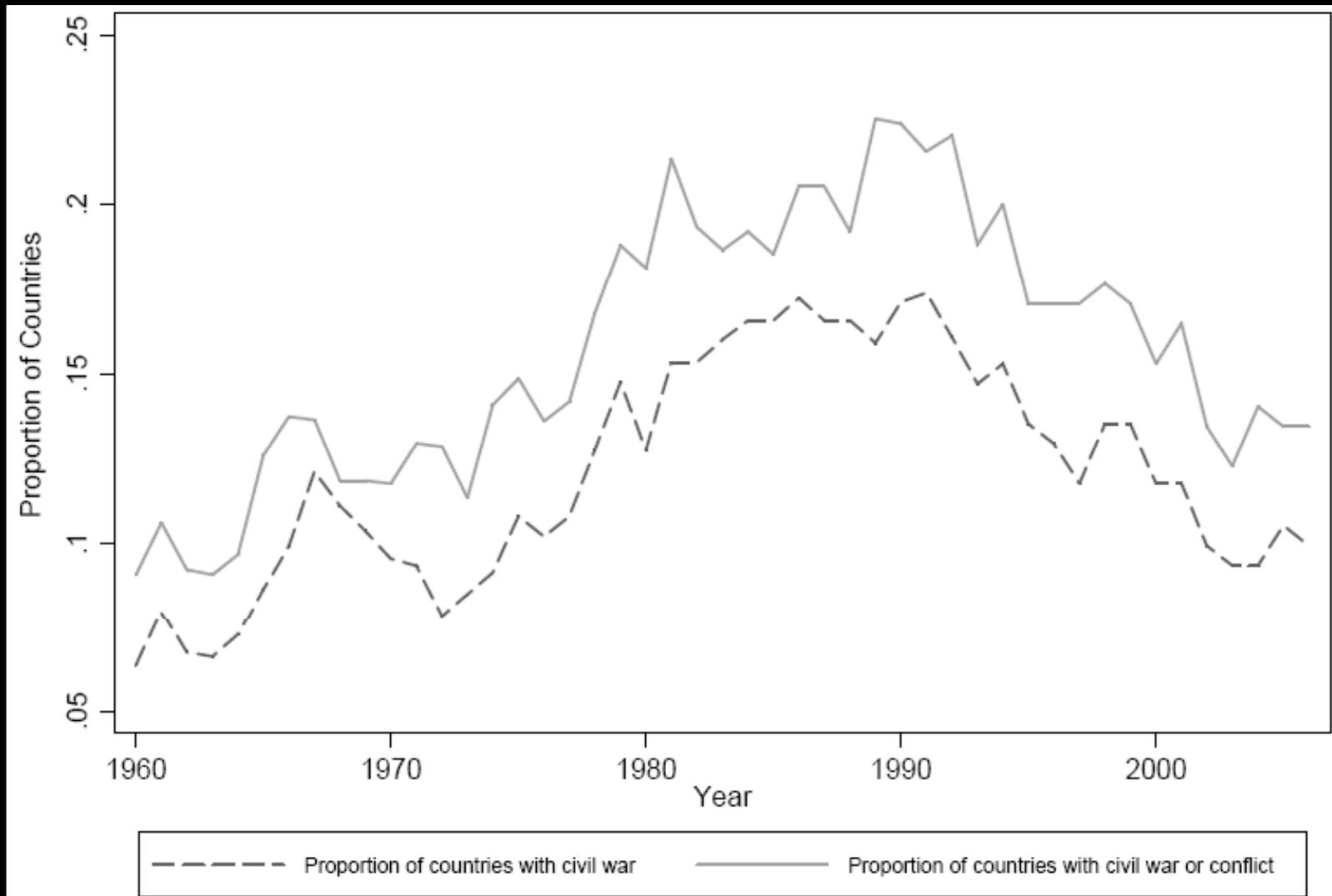
10 things I kind of believe about conflict and governance

(sometimes even with evidence)

1. Civil war is on the decline

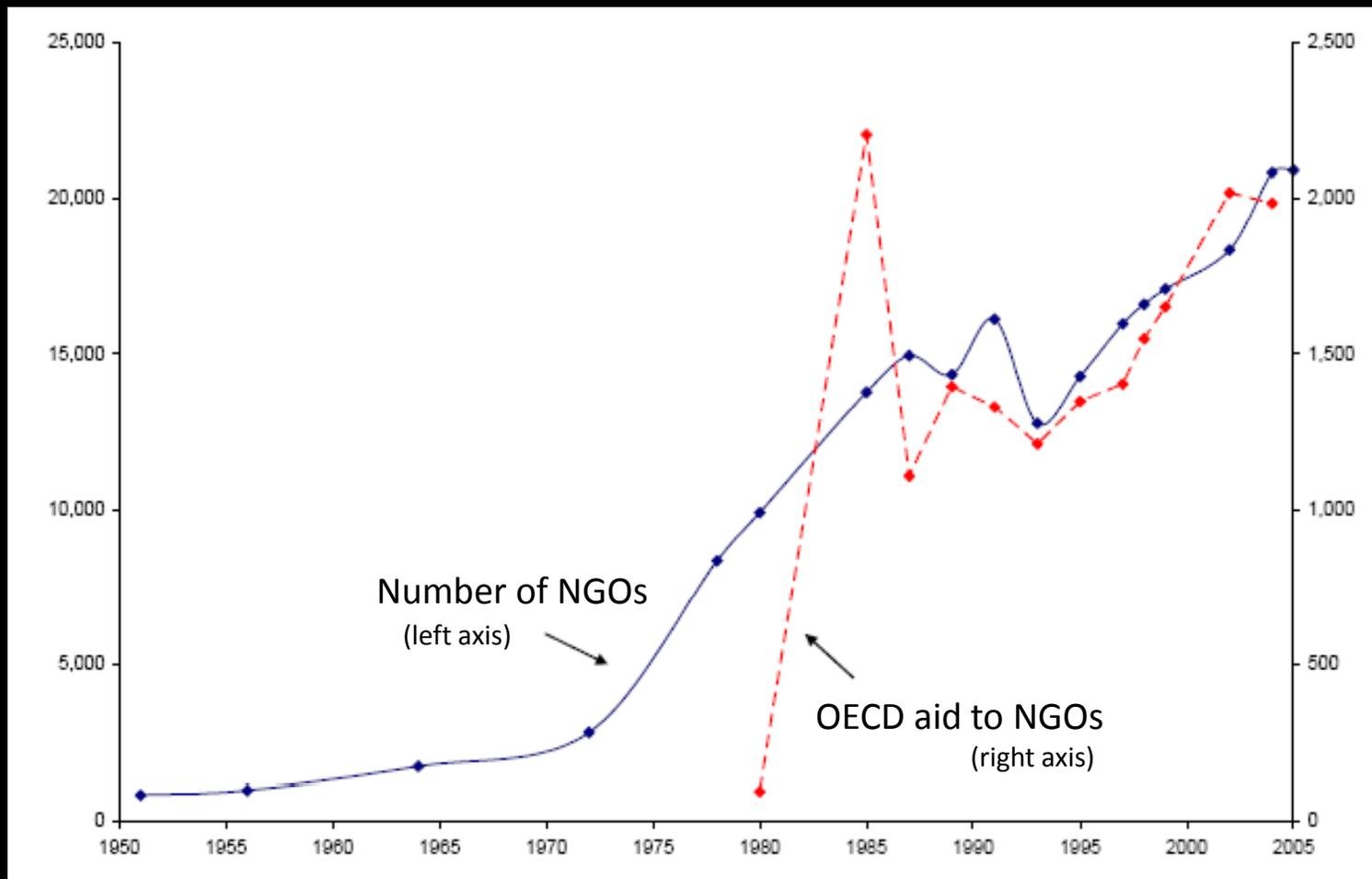
We'll hope the trend continues

Proportion of countries with an active civil war or conflict, 1960-2006



But some things are on the rise

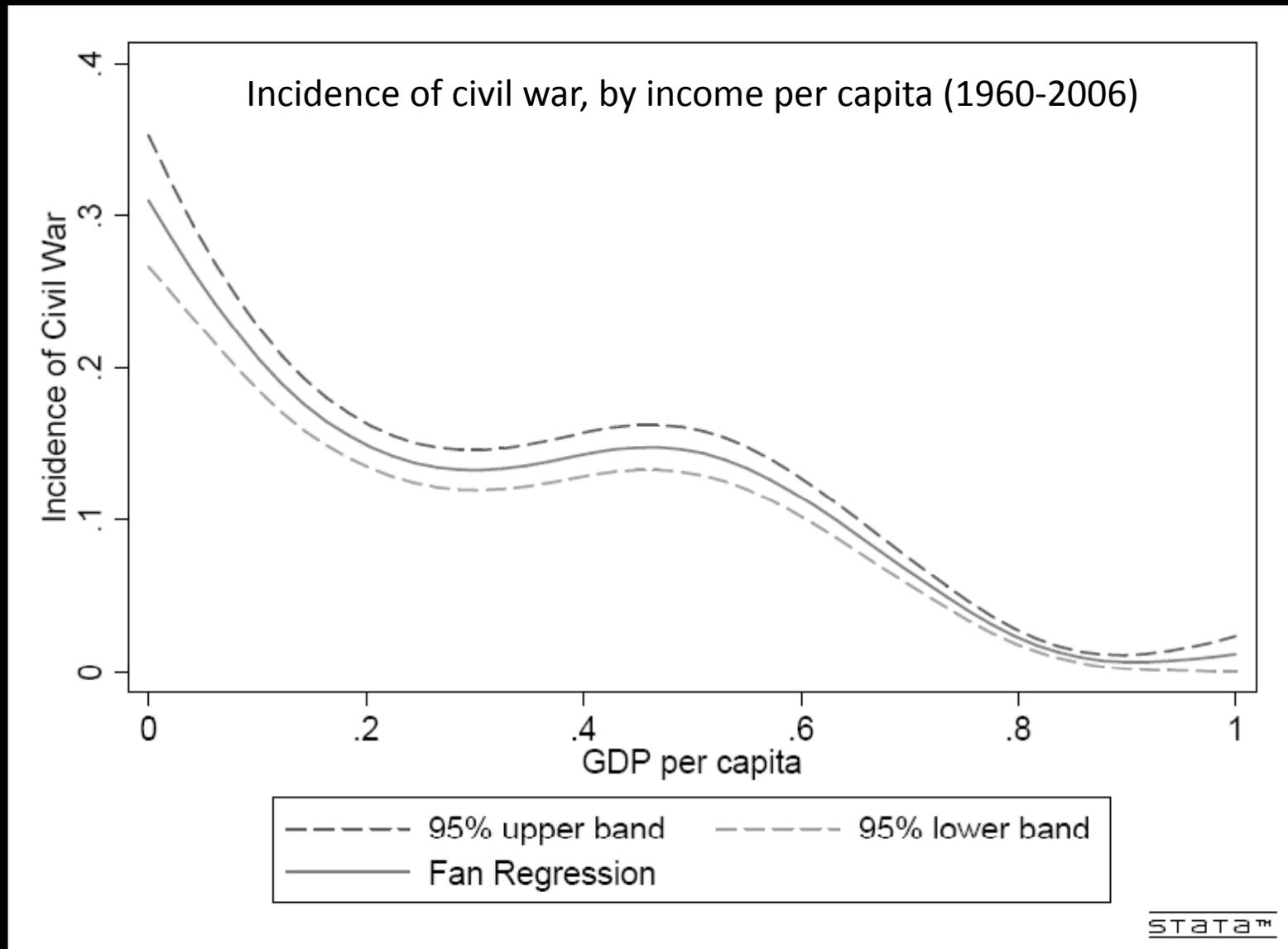
Growth of international NGOs, 1950-2005



Fewer conflicts
A more crowded NGO space

A good moment for strategic thinking

Poverty would seem to be the biggest driver of war



2. But there's no evidence that poverty causes conflict

Things correlated with poverty are
more likely culprits

Why should we be skeptical that poverty \rightarrow conflict?

- Once you account for other factors, the poverty correlation goes away
- Sudden shocks to national income don't seem to cause conflict
 - E.g. trade and commodity price shocks
 - Rainfall shocks lead to conflict, but very weakly and historically

Hey – What about these guys?



3. Actually, poor and unemployed young men don't seem to be a source of social instability

The triumph of theory and intuition over evidence

The short story

- The people who riot and fight are poor unemployed young men
- The people who do not riot are poor, unemployed young men
- There isn't much evidence of a relationship between income and the propensity to riot or fight

Does employment ↓ violence?



Northern Uganda: Experimental evaluation of a vocational training program for 10,000 youth

The solution may be non-economic



Monrovia: Experimental evaluation of a behavior change and cash transfer program for street youth

4. Conflict and violence are at root a governance failure

Lack of Security

Absence of Justice

Illegitimate and unaccountable rulers

Is this a consequence of poverty, or the absence of effective security and control?



It's mostly correlations and historical cases, but:

- Strong states—democracies and autocracies—seldom see internal war
- Some of the best predictors of conflict:
 - Below-average quality of governance (for the income level)
 - Uncompetitive executive controlled by minority factions
 - Transitional regimes

This makes sense

- War is costly
- Competing groups usually negotiate a solution
- When does negotiation break down?
 - Personal rule: leaders care more about themselves than the state or populace
 - Weak governments can't make strong commitments
 - Injustice escalates passions

5. The MDGs and good governance may be at cross-purposes

Law and order are the first and most
basic functions of the state...

...but are the last item on the
development agenda

What's missing?

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

When did the UK and US have income levels similar to today's fragile states?

Table 3: Estimated comparator years for equivalent GDP / capita (1990 Geary Khamis dollars) of fragile states versus leading country history

	GDP/capita 2003	Comparator year – UK	Comparator year - US
Afghanistan	668	around 1500	early 1700s
Angola	871	mid 1500s	early 1700s
Somalia	877	mid 1500s	early 1700s
Rwanda	900	late 1500s	mid 1700s
Sudan	1,088	Late 1600s	late 1700s
Congo	2,006	1838	1855

A 20th century welfare system
on a 16th century state structure?

6. Elections do not good governance make

We shouldn't confuse processes
with outcomes

Assuming this is even the priority
outcome

The “ritual of democracy”

“Giving aid donors an election barely clean enough to receive a low passing grade, but dirty enough to make it difficult for the opposition to win.”

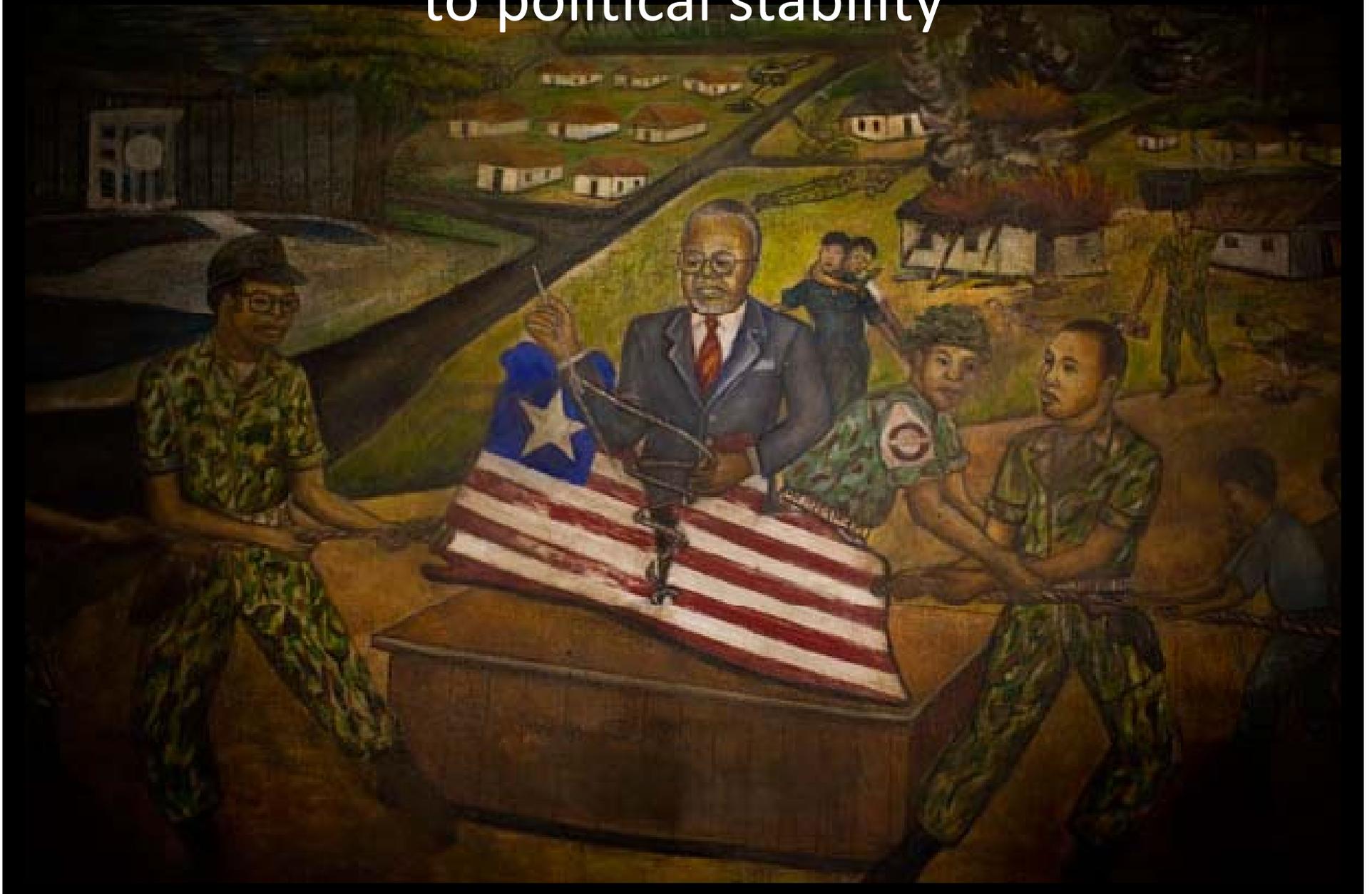
- Marina Ottaway



What are the broader preconditions that foster state capabilities and management?

- Systems of conflict resolution
- Systems of downward accountability
- Relatively impersonal, professional bureaucracies
- Elites with a vested interest in growth and peace
- ...

Centralized, personalized rule anathema to political stability



The evolution of checks and balances

Kenya

- War averted by settlement
- Autonomous middle class and business interests
- Legislature asserting independence
- Judiciary exercising voice
- Vibrant free press
- New constitution

Liberia

- Legislature now elected
- Push to devolve powers
- Budding press
- Judiciary recovering
- National commissions defying government
- But private sector still weak

Polycentric governance

Make the state more difficult to capture

Partly decentralization

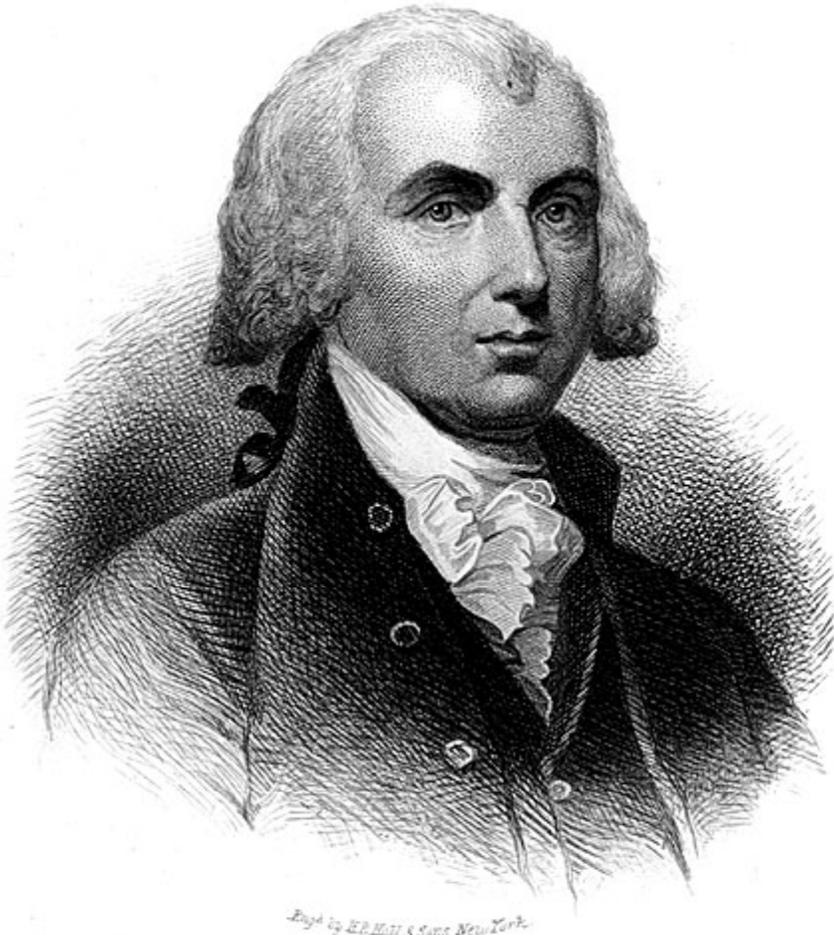
- Local elections
- Local budgetary power
- Local taxation and regulation
- Local accountability

But not just decentralization

- Global law and institutions
- Regional security and economic apparatus
- Professional bureaucracies
- International NGOs as observers
- Vibrant civil society

“Ambition must be made to counteract ambition.”

– James Madison
Federalist Paper no. 51



(Not necessarily a recipe for efficiency and effectiveness.)

Interlude:

Name that developing
country President



You get 5 clues

1. Elections marred by fraud and intimidation
2. Final count was disputed in four regions, three of which were under military occupation by a supportive commander
3. The inauguration ceremony was held in secret because of fears of an insurrection
4. Troops killed dozens while quelling protests over his reign
5. Half his children died of tropical disease before reaching second birthday



Rutherford B. Hayes
19th President of the USA (1877-81)



"THAT'S WHAT'S THE MATTER."

BOSS TWEED. "As long as I count the Votes, what are you going to do about it? say?"

7a. Political development, like
economic development, evolves
slowly

Political stability is more important to
development than lower corruption
or cleaner elections

7b. Good governance will take a
long, long time

Implication: We need to ~~lower our~~
have appropriate expectations of
fragile states

How long will it take the average fragile state to get to the governance levels of a Kenya, Botswana or Vietnam?

ICRG indicator	Indicator level	Threshold	Years to threshold at pace of:			
	Current actual, fragile situations		Recent average, fragile situations	Average, non fragile all countries	Fastest 20	Fastest over the threshold
Bureaucratic Quality	1.0	2.5	Infinity	116.1	19.9	12.0
Corruption	1.8	3.5	Infinity	Infinity	27.4	14.3
Military in Politics	1.9	4.0	Infinity	103.4	16.6	10.3

8. Institutions develop through internal forces, not foreign NGOs

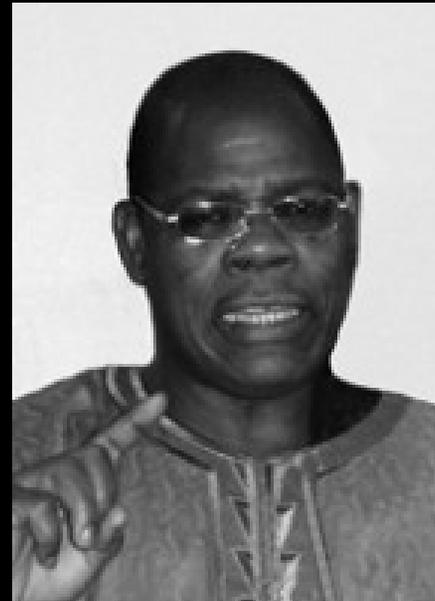
Social movements

Conflict

Party and political organization

“There is really only one process of democratization, and that is a process of struggle. Democracy is never given, it is always taken.”

— Claude Ake



Will historians look back on Kenyan election violence as a tragedy or a milestone?



9. Just being there may be a governance intervention

Sometimes NGOs are the only
impersonal, professional meritocracy
in town

In developing country business, the scarce resource
is management.
(Businesses are not the only ones)



Bureaucracy, like management, is a technology and a culture

- Bureaucracy once had a good connotation
 - Systems of impersonal, professional rule
 - Norms and cultures of compliance
 - Meritocratic
- Diffuses slowly
 - Shifting norms, accumulating experience
- Outside the capital, international NGOs may be the primary

10. We don't really know how to
build better governance systems

(but that doesn't mean we shouldn't try)

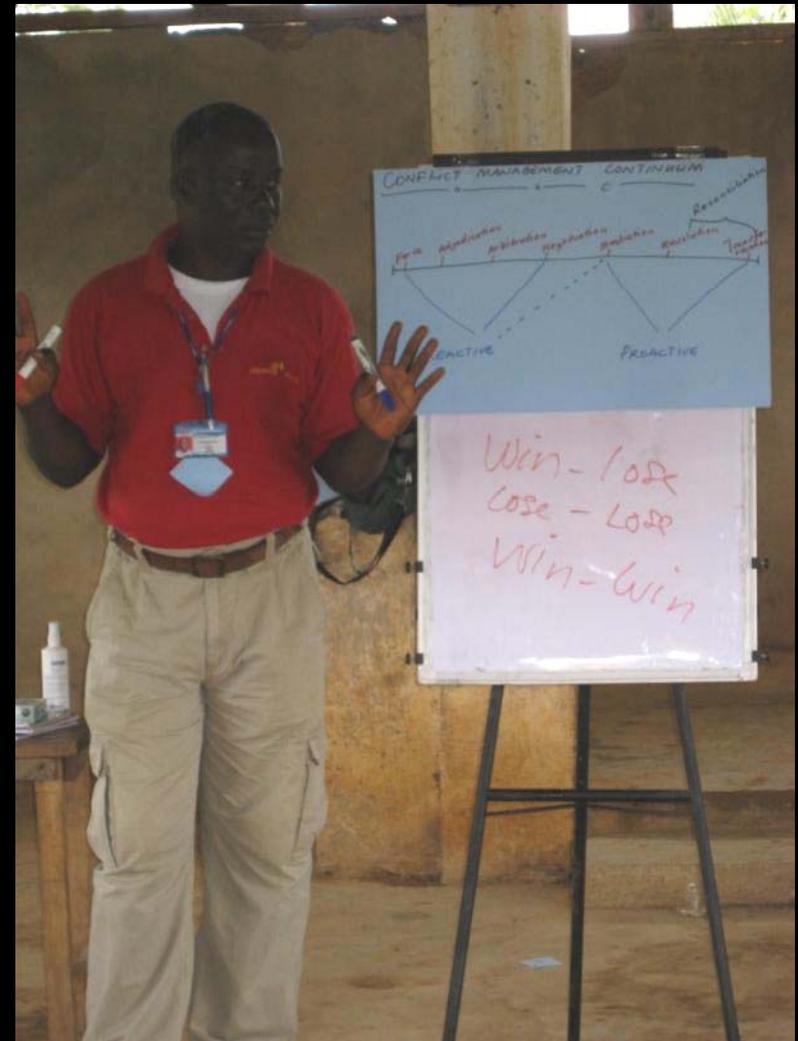
Among the many important things we don't know how to do well:



- Help resolve land disputes
- Promote accountability of local officials
- Build community organizational capacity
- Foster social movements
- Build judicial capacity
- Strengthen political parties
- Bolster a free press

Some things we spent a lot of money on, and we're not sure if they make a difference

- Civic education and trainings
- CDR / CDD
- Building public buildings
- Social norms messaging (especially on human rights)
- Employment programs



International NGOs have advantages and disadvantages

Advantages

- Longer time horizons
- Humanitarian incentives
- Not susceptible to the (local) political cycle
- Not accountable to local strongmen
- Resources

Disadvantages

- Weak local knowledge
- No mechanism for downward accountability
- Transparency standards incompatible with local systems

Implications for international NGOs

- This is a local process you can (at best) support
- It's harder than most of the things you do
- Do it seriously or don't mess around
- Do no harm
- Have realistic expectations
- Avoid premature load bearing
- Experiment and evaluate
- Foster local partnerships and people