

## Submission Deadlines

**First draft:**

**Final draft:**

## 1 Background

The United States has made substantial investments—physical and economic—in improving the stability of the post-invasion government in Afghanistan. Professor Wright has been asked by the Department of State’s Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources to evaluate the impact of U.S. military aid distributed during the Afghan conflict on the frequency of enemy combat operations (direct attacks on U.S. troops as well as indirect attacks using roadside bombs). This research will enable U.S. policymakers, as well as U.S. allies, to assess the value of military aid as a tool for reducing insurgent threats.

At the end of the quarter, Professors Gaarder and Wright will select the top policy memos. Students authoring the best policy memos (top 5%) will have an opportunity to engage in research for the State Department with Professor Wright in the Spring 2018 quarter.

## 2 Assignment

Write a policy memo addressed to the U.S. Department of State (“State”) assessing whether Afghan districts receiving more military aid experienced fewer direct and indirect insurgent attacks. You will need to perform statistical analyses and explain your findings to the State. Assume State is staffed by educated laypersons with minimal exposure to econometrics. In other words, you should explain all of your findings in easily interpretable ways. This means that your results should be written in clear English (not statistical jargon) and should be presented in a way that is easy to substantively interpret. We will provide data on military aid and insurgent activity at the district level. We will also provide another relevant control—whether the Afghan government maintained military control over a district during the sample period. Here are the variables.

`CERP_all`: all aid allocation (per capita)

`CERP_large`: aid allocation on large projects (per capita)

`CERP_small`: aid allocation on small projects (per capita)

`direct_attack`: attacks involving insurgents engaging in direct line-of-sight combat (per cap.)

`indirect_attack`: attacks involving remotely detonated roadside bombs (per capita)

`govt_control`: government control of district (=1)

You will use OLS regression analysis to establish if military aid correlates with fewer insurgent attacks (direct and indirect) at the district level. Carry out the following estimations:

1. Consider the relationship between military aid and direct and indirect attacks.
2. Consider the relationship between military aid and direct and indirect attacks, comparing districts under the government’s control with districts contested by insurgents.

3. Consider the relationship between small and large military aid spending and direct and indirect attacks, comparing districts under the government's control with districts contested by insurgents.

Carefully consider why aid might increase or decrease conflict as well as the potential role of territorial control by the government. Also consider why small projects might be more or less effective compared to large projects. Be sure to clearly explain whether or not the results you present imply causation.

### 3 Literature on Aid and Conflict

The literature on aid and conflict is rich, including work by Sexton (2016), that is very similar to the focus of the policy memo. The two articles below will help you better understand how researchers have previously approached this topic as well as providing you with a broader foundation in understanding how aid influences conflict dynamics. We do not believe these articles (or the policy memo more generally) will make you an expert on this topic. However, it will provide you with the essential background to get started on your assignment.

- Crost, Benjamin, Joseph Felter and Patrick Johnston. 2014. "Aid under Fire: Development Projects and Civil Conflict." *American Economic Review*, 104(6): 1833-56.
- Sexton, Renard. 2016. "Aid as a Tool against Insurgency: Evidence from Contested and Controlled Territory in Afghanistan." 2016, *American Political Science Review*.

### 4 Format and Restrictions

The memo is to have three parts:

1. **Summary:** a brief summary of your findings. Your summary of findings may not exceed .5 pages in length.
2. **Analysis:** a body of analysis that explains your analysis, which has a maximum length of 2.5 pages. Together, the summary and the body must fit onto 3 pages.
3. **Evidence:** a set of tables and figures that is two pages maximum. You must include at least one table and at least one figure that uses data. The tables and figures can be integrated throughout the text to improve flow and clarity (which means that the 3 pages of summary/analysis may be spread over more than 3 pages), but they may appear at the end after the text if you prefer. They must be well formatted.

You may include a separate title page that will not count toward the page length, but this is not required.

Use Times New Roman, 12point font with 1-inch margins and 1.5 line spacing. Text exceeding the length allowed will not be counted towards the assignment.

Make sure that you acknowledge and cite other people's ideas when appropriate, but bear in mind that this is not a literature review. Since this is a policy memo, any endnotes should be kept to a minimum. Where possible, citations can be done in-line with hyperlinks.

## 5 Grading

Writing TAs will offer feedback on your first draft. All grades will be assigned based on the final draft only, but you must turn in a first draft in order to receive credit for the assignment.

We expect that you will turn in a complete first draft, which includes conducting and reporting all analyses detailed above.

The assignment will be graded according to a standard rubric, which will assign points to four different areas as follows:

1. **Form:** does the memo follow the required form and use a structure conducive to good communication? (3 points)
2. **Task:** does the memo complete the assigned task fully and appropriately? (3 points)
3. **Voice, clarity, and style:** is the memo well written, including the presentation of data and results? (4 points)
4. **Statistics:** does the memo present accurate, complete, and easily interpretable information regarding the underlying statistical question? (3 points)