

BEYOND MILITARY POWER:
THE SYMBOLIC POLITICS OF CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS TRANSFERS

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For Stephanie Wall,
whose love of life,
desire to explore the world,
and instinct to help others
continues to inspire.

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Abstract

Why do states transfer arms to one another, and what are the effects of these weapons transfers? Conventional weapons are the weapons most commonly used in war, and states devote significant resources to acquiring them, spending an estimated \$401 billion in 2014. Despite this link to conflict and economic resources, we know very little about why states seek certain weapons and not others, or the outcomes of these transfers. In contrast to arguments that conflict or economic profit guide weapons transfers, I argue that states use weapons transfers to send political signals. These signals, based on the symbolic value of the weapon, clarify—to friend and foe alike—the extent and depth of the states’ political relationship. My dissertation offers a typology of weapons and their expected effect on the receiving state’s foreign policy behavior; theorizes the circumstances under which these outcomes should be observed; and assesses this theory using case studies of US arms transfers to India and Pakistan (1954-1967), Egypt and Israel (1962-1968), and China and Taiwan (1972-1979), as well as large-*n* statistical and network analyses, in turn offering a novel explanation of key foreign policy dynamics.

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Introduction

In 2013, Turkey unexpectedly announced it would purchase a theater missile defense system from China, leading to a diplomatic crisis in the NATO alliance. Turkey was expected to purchase arms from one of its fellow NATO members, since the alliance includes top-tier missile producers, such as the US, France, Italy, Germany, and the UK.¹ The NATO allies were puzzled by Turkey's choice of China, as well as the weapon itself. China's FT-2000 missile defense system had never been exported, and would not be compatible with NATO's existing arsenal, including the Patriot missiles that were then deployed along Turkey's border with Syria. Though the FT-2000 had not been used outside of China, it was believed to be highly capable, and would not have negatively affected Turkey's relative capabilities.² Nonetheless, Turkey's willingness to consider a non-NATO missile supplier was immediately condemned by the NATO allies. Even before Turkey paid for the missile system, this deal affected foreign policy within NATO. One analyst observed that "the whole alliance [was] in conversation with Turkey" at a NATO summit.³ Turkey continued to be the topic of discussion at a subsequent G20 summit.⁴ That is, the

¹ Jacob Resneck, "Turkey riles NATO with Chinese Whispers," *Deutsche Welle*, 19 February 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/turkey-riles-nato-with-chinese-whispers/a-18269483>

² Brooks Tigner, "Turkey's Missile Buy Overshadows NATO Meeting," *The Atlantic Council* 22 October 2013, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/turkey-s-chinese-missile-buy-overshadows-nato-meeting>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Mustafa Kibarogly and Selim Sazak, "Why Turkey Chose, and Then Rejects, a Chinese Air-Defense Missile," *Defense One*, 3 February 2016, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2016/02/turkey-china-air-defense-missile/125648/>

mere announcement of this unexpected weapons transfer was enough to trigger a condensed period of high-level dialogue between Turkey and its NATO allies.

Turkey ultimately delayed finalizing the deal with China, though it was happy to raise the prospect of buying Chinese weapons from whenever it was dissatisfied with its treatment by NATO. The specter of the Chinese deal was raised, notably, in 2015, on the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, and again when Turkey disagreed with US and European approaches to the war in Syria.⁵ Finally, in September 2017, Turkey signed a deal, and deposited an initial payment, on the Russian-produced S-400 missile defense system. The Turkish president said, “Nobody has the right to discuss the Turkish republic’s independence principles or independent decisions about its defense industry,” patently dismissing geopolitical concerns over the deal with Russia.

The NATO backlash directed at Turkey highlights that weapons’ origin is a salient point of information for states. It was significant to both Turkey and the NATO states that Turkey was pursuing specifically *Chinese* and *Russian* missiles. For Turkey, the transfer was a way to express its discontent with its allies, and in particular with efforts by France and the US to recognize the Armenian genocide.⁶ China saw an opportunity to widen the gap between Turkey and its Western European allies, and would have benefited from

⁵ Aaron Stein, “Missile Confusion: Turkey’s Dance with the Chinese,” *Arms Control Wonk Blog*, 19 February 2015, <http://guests.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/4889/missile-confusion-turkeys-dance-with-the-chinese>.

⁶ *Ibid.*; Bulent Aliriza and Samuel Brannen, “Turkey Looks to China on Air and Missile Defense?” *Center for International & Strategic Studies*, 8 October 2013, <https://csis.org/publication/turkey-looks-china-missile-defense>; Selcan Hacaoglu, “Turkey to Keep Missile System Outside NATO as China Deal Looms,” *Bloomberg*, 19 February 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-02-19/turkey-to-keep-missile-system-outside-nato-as-china-deal-looms>.

securing a contract to export its missiles to the “West.”⁷ By announcing China – rather than a NATO state – as its new missile supplier, Turkey signaled a rift between it and the NATO allies, which led the allies to engage in dialogue with Turkey about its role in NATO. Similarly, Russia saw the Turkey deal as an opportunity to sow dissent within NATO.

This example shows that weapons serve dual functions in international politics. They affect military capabilities but also send signals about political relationships. I argue that weapons transfers are credible signals of political relationships, and that these signals matter because they affect the foreign policy behavior of states. Weapons transfers are an essential tool for producing, sustaining, and severing political ties, even when the weapon does not affect the relative balance of power. These signals sent through weapons transfers help explain why war does or does not occur, why states pursue cooperative or belligerent foreign policies at various times, and are tools for establishing hierarchies within alliances.

SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

To show the link between weapons transfers and foreign policy, I proceed in three steps: (1) provide a way to distinguish between types of conventional weapons; (2) identify the different signals sent by different types of transfers; (3) connect signals to foreign policy outcomes.

Even intuitively, we know that a tank is very different than a supersonic jet. Yet most analyses of weapons lump these into the same umbrella “conventional weapons” category.

⁷ See Emre Peker, “Turkey Breaks from West on Defense,” *Wall Street Journal*, 21 April 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/turkey-shifts-away-from-west-on-defense-1429608604>.

I argue that this is not a particularly useful analytic category and provide a way to systematically talk about differences between conventional weapons. I take an inductive approach to classify weapons based on the prestige of the type of weapon, and the military utility it has for the state receiving it. This categorization is highly contextual, and means that weapons can be in different categories for different states. Take, for example, Singapore’s recent purchase of nearly 300 Cold War-era tanks from Germany. Singapore is an island, and tanks are usually unforgiving on civilian roads, so it is not immediately clear what, if any, military use these tanks will have for Singapore. Egypt, on the other hand, would see much higher military utility from tanks.

Similarly, not all weapons are prestigious, and some weapons can be prestigious even if they aren’t militarily useful. In one notable – and recurring – example, US diplomat George Ball called the F-104 fighter jet a “glamour object.”⁸ Glamour weapons contrast with weapons like jeeps or tanker planes: weapons that are important militarily, but don’t have any of the prestige or wow-factor associated with them. Comparing military utility to weapon prestige produces four ideal types of weapons.

		Military Utility	
		High	Low
Weapon Prestige	High	Boom	Bling
	Low	Backbone	Blip

Table 1: Weapon Typology

⁸ Telegram State (Ball) to New Delhi, 20 August 1963, p. 3, RG 59, Box 3761, Folder DEF Defense Affairs US-Pak 1/1/63, US National Archives (USNA).

This typology provides a framework for talking about differences between conventional weapons that does not rely on often tenuous classifications of weapons as offensive, defensive, or “tail.” It thus avoids debates about whether weapons should be analyzed from a tactical, operational, or strategic level, and does not have to labor over what to do with weapons that are *both* offensive and defensive.⁹ While this typology is useful for talking about differences between conventional weapons, on its own it says nothing about the range of signals sent by different types of weapons transfers. To determine signal type, I consider states’ broader political context to determine which types of weapons transfers are expected or unexpected. This is important because, for example, we’d expect the NATO allies to have different transfer relationships than a NATO ally would have with China or Brazil. As explained in further detail in Chapter 2, I argue that we can determine which transfers are expected or unexpected for a given relationship based on the degree of common or conflictual interests between those states.¹⁰ Crucially, the signal that is sent by an arms transfer depends on whether the transfer was expected or unexpected. Expected arms transfers send a *reinforcement signal*: this type of transfer confirms or cements existing relations. Unexpected transfers, by contrast, constitute new relationships or mark a change in existing relations. When the transfer is unexpectedly positive – such as receiving a higher quantity or better type of weapon than anticipated – the transfer sends an *upgrade signal*. When the transfer is unexpectedly negative – such as

⁹ Biddle 2001; Glaser and Kaufmann 1998; Lynn-Jones 1995; Van Evera 1998. On the “tail” in tooth-to-tail ratio, see Van Creveld 2004. Fortifications, for example, are defensive because they protect your own territory and forces, but this protection can enable an offensive strategy since you know your own land is secured.

¹⁰ Snyder 1984a.

the denial of a request or receiving a lower type of weapon – the transfer sends a *downgrade signal*.

Finally, I connect each of these signals to distinct foreign policy behaviors. Reinforcement signals, coming from expected weapons transfers, should lead to continuity in foreign policy. After receiving a signal that everything remains the same, the receiver of the weapon should not change its foreign policy. Oftentimes weapons transfers become so ingrained and part of standard operating procedure that they have no effect on the receiver's foreign policy, as in the NATO alliance; they simply reinforce the current state of affairs. The foreign policy effects of upgrade and downgrade signals depend on whether the receiver is status quo or revisionist.¹¹ Although weapons transfers effect foreign policy, they do not fundamentally alter a state's strategic orientation. Upgrade signals facilitate bolstering behavior in status quo states. The upgrade signal indicates that there is the possibility for a closer relationship between the sender and receiver. I expect the receiver to accordingly take actions to strengthen this budding relationship.¹² In revisionist states, upgrade signals can lead to aggression, as these states seek to translate their new political alignment into more forceful pursuit of their goals. Downgrade signals should lead status quo states to pursue compromise with their adversaries. Sensing winds of change, these states will seek to do whatever it takes to guarantee as much of the status quo as possible. Revisionist states, on the other hand, will want to take action before their downgraded political alignment becomes reality, and thus should pursue prevention. Both status quo

¹¹ On the importance of status quo vs. revisionist, see George and Smoke 1974, 526; Jervis 1976, Ch.3; Slantchev 2005.

¹² Bell 2015, 97-98.

and revisionist states should, after receiving a downgrade signal, seek re-alignment with an alternate partner. Figure 1, below, summarizes the signals and receiver's foreign policy behaviors that result from weapons transfers.

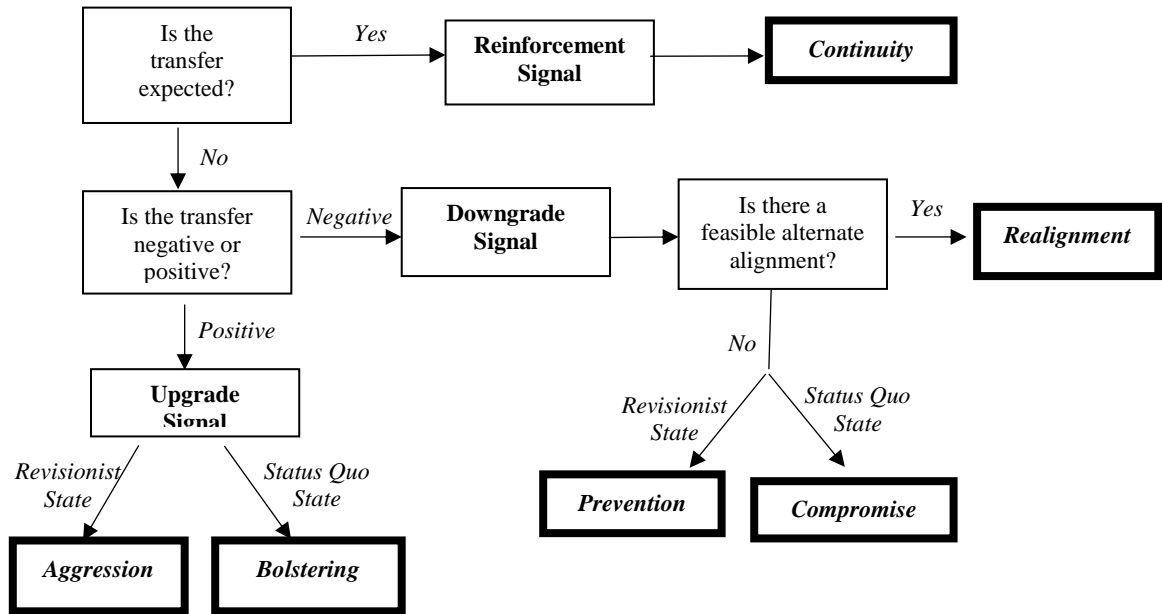


Figure 1: Arms transfers, Signals, and Foreign Policy Outcomes

Relationships, of course, are dynamic and change over time. Therefore, the weapons that send each type of signal can change over time as relationships persist or change. While a squadron of fighter jets might have sent an upgrade signal early in a relationship, a similar transfer five or ten years down the line might be construed as a downgrade signal. States' expectations change, which is why the type of weapon – the content of the tie between states – is so integral to explaining the link between arms transfers and foreign policy outcomes.

Understanding the effects of conventional weapons transfers matters deeply for policymakers and for scholars. Weapons transfers most obviously have stakes for states' abilities to fight wars or deter conflict, yet policymakers looking for answers about the

relationship between arms and conflict will find themselves disappointed. Because scholarship treats “conventional weapons” as a monolithic category – ignoring the different war-fighting capabilities of a tank as compared to a jet – scholarship lacks a coherent understanding of the relationship between weapons and war. The theory developed in this project provides better leverage on this question by differentiating between types of weapons *and* states’ strategic orientation. The case studies that follow help explain the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan in 1965; offer an amended explanation of the June 1967 war; and address the lack of armed conflict between China and Taiwan.

This project also has stakes for scholars and policymakers interested in credible signals in international politics. Whether discussions of “red lines” or cheap talk, the different ways that states can credibly commit themselves to a course of action has long occupied the thoughts of leaders and scholars. The central insight of this dissertation is that conventional weapons are widely recognized symbols, that transfers of these symbols constitute credible international signals, and that these signals matter because they affect *political* relationships. Though there can be costs associated with transferring weapons, the signal itself comes from symbols and shared understandings. This project is a first step toward developing a theory of communication that does not rely on either extreme of costly signals or of cheap talk, and shows the deep social context and contingency of signaling in international politics. My analysis of conventional weapons transfers thus extends work by Robert Jervis concerning international communication based on symbols and perceptions.¹³

¹³ Jervis 1970.

Analyzing conventional weapons as both tool and symbol sheds light on questions of international order and polarity. Though the structure of the international system matters, structure does not place the same constraints on every actor. As the following chapters show, even in the relatively rigid bipolar structure of the Cold War, weapons transfers crossed blocs: the West traded with the Soviet bloc and vice-versa. My argument about foreign policy behaviors examines the feasibility of alternate alignment partners, and uses the strength and depth of ties between states to make this assessment. Though, for example, it would seem that the Cold War structure would preclude China from being a feasible alignment partner for a Western ally, this was often not the case. Polarity at the level of the system can often bear only a passing resemblance to polarity at the regional level.

With respect to international order, the signals sent by weapons transfers are implicated in the production and communication of status hierarchies. Withholding particular planes from, for example, all but the closest allies is a way of drawing an intra-group clique. Similarly, that clique can expand if other states are given that same plane. Alternately, a receiving state can draw boundaries between it and potential peer states (or structural equivalents) by refusing to accept certain weapons. Establishing or clarifying these status hierarchies is often a deliberate motivation behind weapons transfers.

Finally, treating arms as both military tool and symbol shows the promise of linking materialist and constructivist approaches to international security. Addressing both dimensions of weapons shows that perceptions of relative power are a function of *both* military capabilities and relationships with other states. Weapons transfers serve the vital role of signaling and clarifying these political relationships. Combined with the focus on

relationships, this work shows how international actors use symbols and signal to make and unmake relations that constitute world politics.

ROADMAP

The body of the dissertation lays out the argument in more detail. In Chapter 1, I review existing scholarship on conventional weapons transfers, highlighting oversights and issues with data usage and models. The second half of this chapter includes a description of the global arms trade, drawing on fieldwork and quantitative network analysis to show changes over time. Chapter 2 develops my theory of conventional weapons transfers. I argue that weapons transfers are a credible form of signaling that clarifies the extent and depth of states' political relationships. I develop a typology of conventional weapons based on fieldwork, and show how different types of weapons lead to different foreign policy expectations. The next three chapters demonstrate the theory through case studies. Chapter 3 explains why Pakistan turned away from its chief ally, the United States, in the mid-1960s, and why war occurred between India and Pakistan in 1965. Chapter 4, on US, French, and Soviet transfers to the Middle East, offers an amended explanation for the June 1967 war by showing how signals sent by arms transfers fueled ambiguities about political relationships. Finally, Chapter 5 examines how the US used weapons transfers to develop its policy of strategic ambiguity in the Taiwan Strait in the 1970s. Chapter 6 flips the analysis to explain what happens when the receivers in the previous case studies develop their own domestic defense industry. I focus on the cases of Israel and India to address how, if at all, states' interest in arms transfers as signals changes once they can make their

own weapons. I conclude the dissertation by discussing how weapons transfers have, and continue to, make and unmake the relations that constitute world politics, and draw out avenues for future research.

Chapter 1. Conventional Weapons: Known Unknowns

States spent a combined US\$1.69 trillion on their militaries in 2016, much of which was devoted to acquiring arms. The top importers were India, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and China while the top exporters included the United States, Russia, China, and France.¹⁴ Despite the political power of states on this list, and the significant amount of resources states devoted to acquiring weapons, scholarship on the effects of conventional arms transfers remains limited, described by one scholar as “sparse and spotty.”¹⁵ When scholars have analyzed conventional arms, they generally do so with a narrow focus on immediate conflict outcomes, such as the duration or onset of war, or human rights violations. Others treat the arms trade as a *trade* and provide primarily economic explanations for the flows of weapons around the world. However, both conflict and economic models of the arms trade ignore – or assume away – the broader political relationships created, sustained, or severed, through arms transfers.

Drawing on new information about the logistics of the arms trade, this chapter shows that assumptions scholars make about how the arms trade works do not reflect the reality of the process. Existing scholarship paints the arms trade as a simple, straightforward, and unsurprising domain of international politics. To the contrary, I show that arms transfers are not easily explained as economic or conflict-related processes, and argue for a broader view of the political relationships affected by the arms trade. I proceed as follows. First, I

¹⁴ See the SIPRI Arms Transfer database, <https://www.sipri.org/research/armament-and-disarmament/arms-transfers-and-military-spending>.

¹⁵ Thurner, Schmidt, Cranmer, and Kauermann, 2015, 3.

provide an overview of existing literature, highlighting its divergent conclusions. Second, I explain the logistics of the arms trade, and point out where existing literature overlooks these important logistical factors, leading to problematic inferences. Third, I build a new dataset to try to correct for many of the inaccurate assumptions. I then turn to descriptive network analysis to highlight the *relationships* created by arms transfers, paying particular attention to the different patterns of relationships created by different types of weapons transfers. I conclude by suggesting a new approach to studying the arms trade, grounded in deep knowledge of the arms trade and the politics that are deeply infused in and affected by arms transfers.

EXPLAINING THE ARMS TRADE

Most existing literature on conventional weapons transfers is focused on the relationship between arms and conflict or takes an economics approach and suggests that states perform a bang-for-their-buck calculation. This literature is generally quantitative in nature, relying on data collected by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), and models *either* state decisions to export weapons *or* decisions to import them.

Where arms and conflict are concerned, some scholars suggests that conflict increases desire for arms, while others suggest there is no correlation between arms and conflict. Brzoska and Pearson find that arms transfers affected decisions to initiate war,¹⁶ Blanton finds that increased arms imports correlate with higher incidence of human rights

¹⁶ Brzoska and Pearson 1994.

violations,¹⁷ and Sislin and Pearson find that higher levels of weapons accumulated by ethnic groups are a good predictor of subsequent ethnopolitical violence.¹⁸ Others have added caveats to these findings. Kinsella shows that arms transfers allow the recipient to engage in diplomatic or military conflict, but that this behavior is tempered if the recipient is dependent on a single supplier for arms.¹⁹ Diehl and Kingston, on the other hand, do not observe any change in overall military spending based on conflict in the previous year.²⁰ Craft similarly found no relationship between weapons transfers and the duration of war,²¹ and Durch took it a step further to say that conflict itself can't explain the arms trade, and the arms trade can't explain conflict.²²

To a certain extent, scholars' focus on arms and conflict dynamics makes sense: conventional weapons are the most commonly used tools of war, and cause the majority of conflict-related deaths.²³ The contradictory findings about arms transfers and conflict might initially seem puzzling. However, even a simplistic understanding of general trade suggests why this literature has not yet reached consensus. The transfer or sale of anything involves two parties, but most models of the arms trade focus on the sender of the weapon *or* the receiver. Pearson's research, for example, looks only at the characteristics of the receiving state, not the policies or characteristics of the sending state. A dyadic process

¹⁷ Blanton 1999.

¹⁸ Sislin and Pearson 2001.

¹⁹ Kinsella 1998.

²⁰ Diehl and Kingston 1987, 810. The authors analyze military spending – a figure that includes both foreign and domestic arms purchases – but do not break out arms purchases separately.

²¹ Craft 1999.

²² Durch 2000.

²³ Erickson 2015, 8; Biddle 2010, 9.

cannot possibly be explained by focusing on the actions of one party. Kinsella draws his conclusions by studying arms transfers to nine countries, all in the Middle East or North Africa. Weapons transfers and conflict are so intimately tied to politics that it seems highly improbable that explanations based on one region could easily generalize to others.

A second problem concerns the artificial separation between the causes of arms transfers and their consequences. This separation might be because, as Jennifer Erickson notes, arms transfers are “a complex issue followed only by a small set of specialists, NGOs, and the defense industry.”²⁴ With the exception of Erickson, most scholars overlook the fact that the reasons states seek arms, and thus our explanations of arms transfers, are inherently tied to the effects of arms transfers.²⁵ As related work in the nuclear domain has shown, there is no single explanation for all states: motivations for seeking weapons are multi-causal, and can change over time.²⁶ Disentangling cause from effect in the relationship between arms and conflict is particularly difficult because the desire to engage in conflict is often a motivation for seeking arms; the anticipated effects of arms transfers are the cause. But most models of the arms trade are not equipped to capture this complexity and endogeneity.

While critical for existing literature, these two critiques don't require knowledge particular to the arms trade. The dyadic and endogenous nature of the arms trade means it

²⁴ Erickson 2015, 31.

²⁵ A related body of literature on the defense industry more explicitly incorporates a dyadic vision. See, for example, Gutterman and Lane 2017; Vucetic and Tago 2015; Kapstein 1992; Caverley and Kapstein 2012. Many of the critiques levied here do not apply to this work, since most of the scholars working on this topic have detailed knowledge about the defense industry.

²⁶ In the nuclear realm, see Bell 2015.

is particularly difficult to model quantitatively. Modeling difficulties increase exponentially with more accurate knowledge of the logistics of the arms trade. As the next section shows, the arms trade is far from a simple and straightforward process, and the assumptions scholars make about it – whether explicit assumptions or assumptions implicit by model choice – do not reflect the reality of the global arms trade.

NOT SO SIMPLE, AFTER ALL: OVERVIEW OF THE ARMS TRADE

Though scholars tend to assume that the arms trade is a rather straightforward process in international politics, the actual logistics of the arms trade are quite complex. As a result, scholars continue to make inferences based on wildly unrepresentative assumptions. Contrary to popular belief, the arms trade has only a tenuous relationship to conflict and to economic-based decision-making. I first present general trends in the arms trade over time, before explaining the long time-horizons, multiplicity of actors, and economic complications that affect the arms trade.

General Trends over Time

Between 1950 and 2016, the value of arms transfers has varied significantly. Data collected by SIPRI shows a spike in arms transfers in the early 1980s, after which the quantity of arms transfers decreased until the end of the Cold War. Though the arms trade has since increased, it has not hit the yearly high achieved during the Cold War. Figure 1, below, graphs arms transfers over time using a measure called the Trend Indicator Value (TIV).

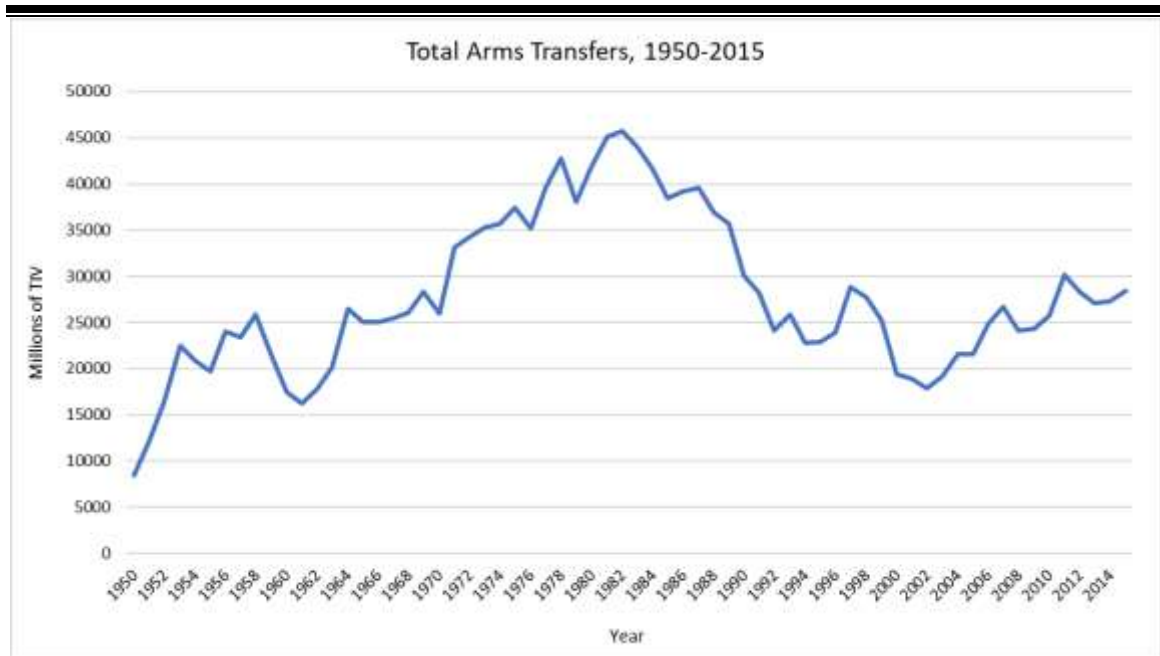


Figure 2: Arms Transfers Over Time

As defined by SIPRI, this is a numerical value “based on the known unit production costs of a core set of weapons and is intended to represent the transfer of military resources rather than the financial value of the transfer.”²⁷ The TIV represents characteristics and performance of the weapon, types of electronics, engine, and the year in which the weapon was produced. For example, SIPRI discounts the TIV if the transferred weapon has been in service in another country. Most scholarship relies on the TIV data, and while useful for comparison of *all* conventional arms transfers over time, the TIV is like a blunt knife, providing a crude and rather unnuanced look at the arms trade: it captures general trends,

²⁷ SIPRI background information for Arms Transfer Database, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/background>

but does not differentiate between types of weapons.²⁸ It is more similar to an analysis of military spending than an analysis of weapons and their effects.

Even using the crude TIV measure, it's possible to differentiate between types of weapons. Such differentiation makes intuitive sense, since a tank can enable a very different type of fighting than can a supersonic aircraft. And yet, most scholarship uses undifferentiated data, continuing to treat "conventional weapons" as a monolithic category. As Figure 2, below, shows, the assumption that all conventional weapons are the same is problematic. Figure 3 represents transfers of aircraft, air defense systems (such as surface-to-air missile and tracking systems), armored vehicles, artillery, missiles, and ships over time.²⁹ If scholars were genuinely interested in studying the relationship between arms transfers and conflict, they should use the differentiated TIV data. As Figure 3 clearly shows, there are differences in the types of weapons transferred over time. For example, from 1990 to 1998, air defense systems shrunk to well under half their Cold War totals, and yet the aggregate level of arms transfers increased. As this example illustrates, scholars would obtain different conclusions regarding arms transfers depending on the level of aggregation and arms type examined.

²⁸ See, among others, Kinsella 1998, 2002; Brzoska and Pearson 1994; Akerman and Seim 2014; Sanjian 1999.

²⁹ The gap between these categories and "total" is made up of engines, sensors, "other," satellites, and naval weapons.

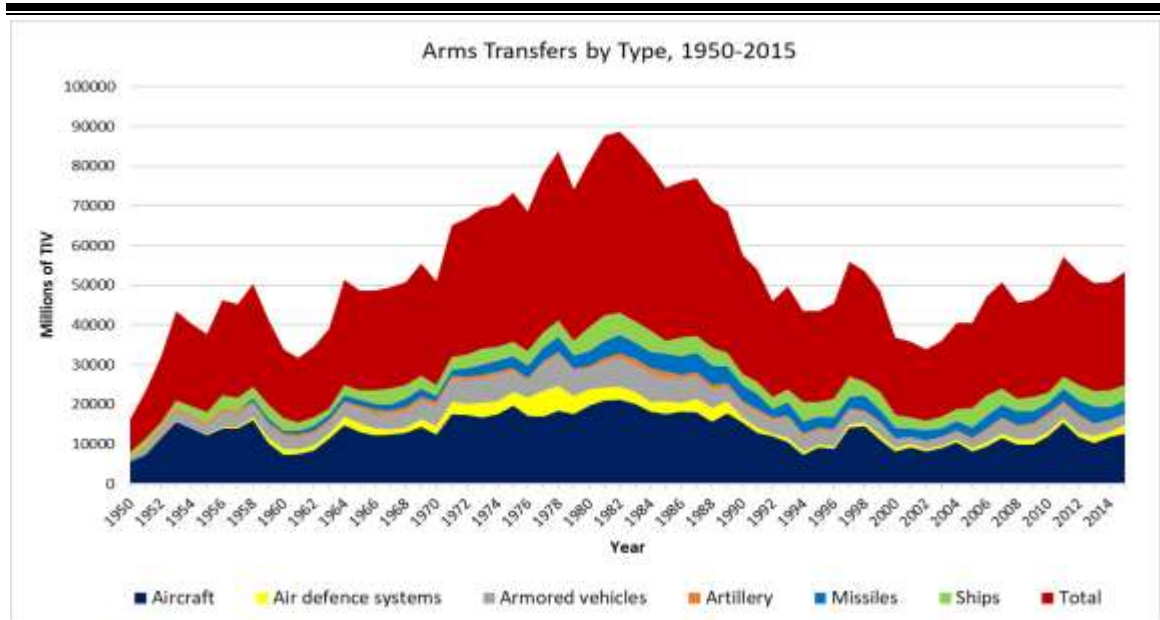


Figure 3: Arms Transfers by Type

Because different amounts of each type of weapon are transferred at different rates over time, inferences drawn about arms and outcomes of interest depend on the level of data aggregation. Further complicating the use of undifferentiated data, there are varying patterns of relationships created by different types of weapons transfers. Even though many states produce all types of arms (the US, for example, produces and exports missiles, armored vehicles, and aircraft), the network configuration for each type of weapon is very different, suggesting that *something* effects which weapons are available to which states.³⁰

Figure 4, below, shows missile, armored vehicles, and aircraft transfers for the period 1950-1961. The left panel (missiles) makes sense: it shows the expected Cold War clustering

³⁰ The network graphs included in this chapter were created using SIPRI's importer/exporter tables. I assessed the characteristics of the weapons using information from the weapon manufacturer or from defense industry staples like *Jane's Defense*. The nodes (red circles) are states, and the ties are directional, showing the transfer from sender to receiver. The ties are weighted based on the number of weapons transferred in the given period.

around the United States (top) and Soviet Union (bottom). Given the superpower rivalry, it seems appropriate that the US and Soviet Union each have their own distinct groups of states they transfer weapons to.³¹ Armored vehicle transfers, the middle panel, begin to question some of the assumptions about how the structure of the international system should be reflected in arms transfers. Though there are still distinct US and USSR clusters, there are states in the middle suggesting that bipolarity did not affect armored vehicle transfers as rigidly as it did missile transfers.

Aircraft transfers, the rightmost panel, refute such assumptions about the relationship between international structure and arms transfers. Perhaps states were too interested in making profits from high ticket items like aircraft to be constrained by Cold War politics. But why, then, were they not similarly unconstrained for missiles and armored vehicles? These differences cannot be explained by existing literature. The network graphs indicate that there is something about the type of weapon that matters – and though different types of weapons affect conflict differently, this remains undertheorized in exiting literature. One immediate explanation might be the offense-defense balance; that states receiving offensive weapons are more conflict-prone than states receiving defensive weapons. Yet all three weapons have offensive or defensive variants, and, more importantly, can be incorporated into offensive or defensive tactics.³²

³¹ The sole tie connecting the distinct clusters is a transfer from the Soviet Union to Yugoslavia.

³² On the futility of classifying weapons as offensive or defensive, see Lynn-Jones 1995; Glaser and Kaufmann 1998.

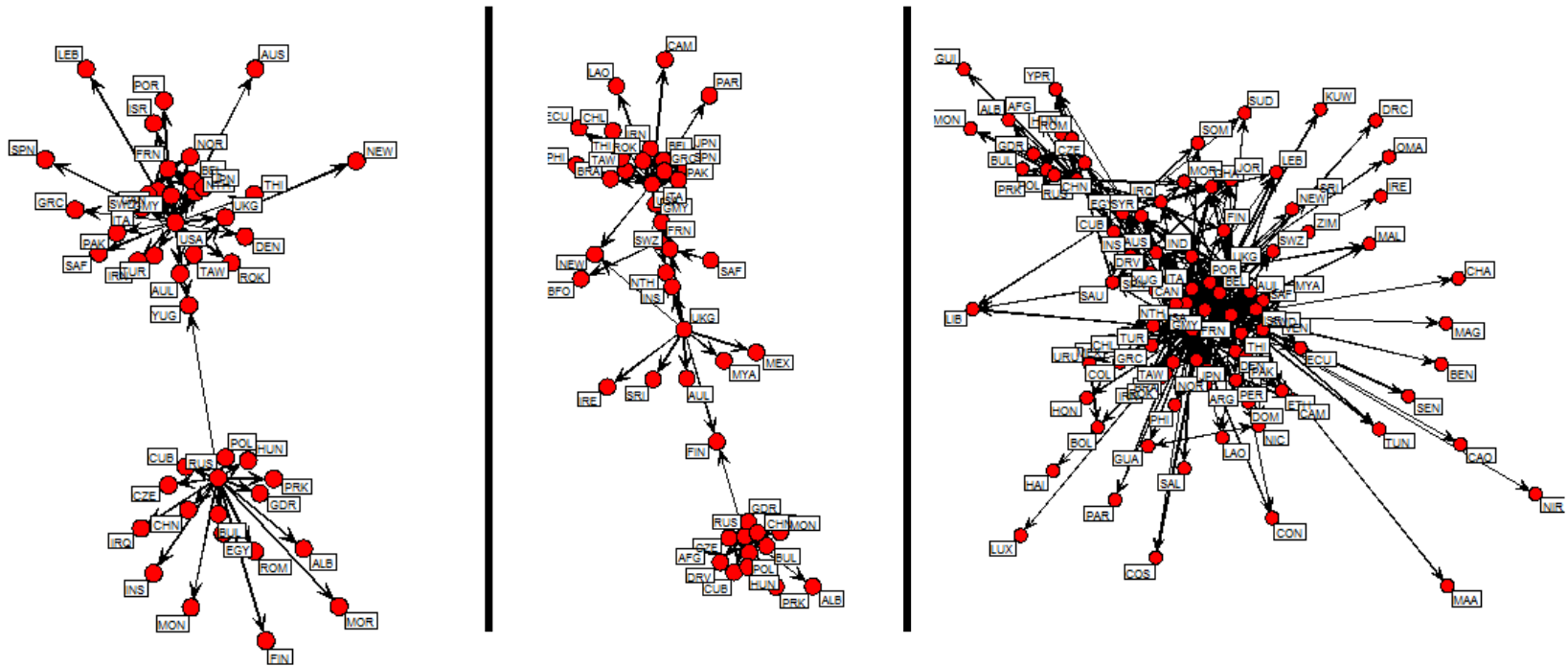
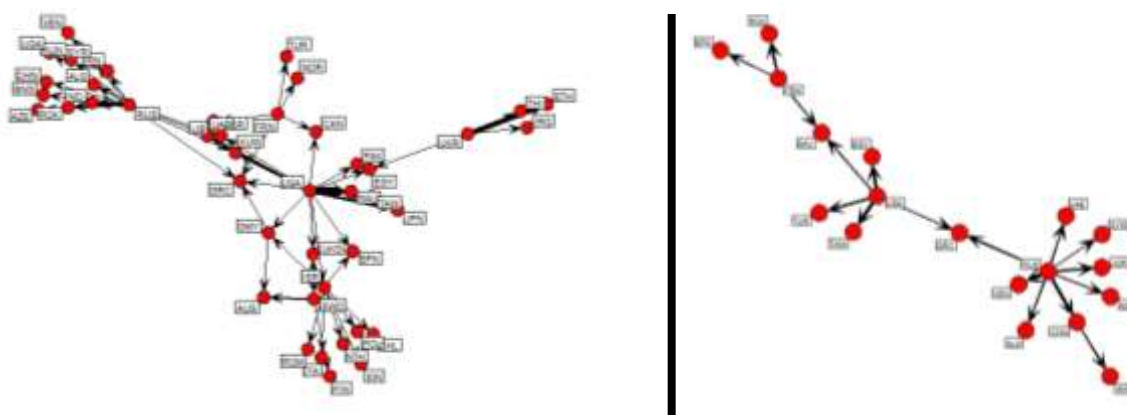


Figure 4: Missile, Armored Vehicle, and Aircraft Transfers, 1950-1961

The lack of a conflict-based explanation for the differences between weapons becomes even more clear when the type of weapon is further disaggregated. Figure 4 shows the different transfer patterns for surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs) and surface-to-air missiles (SAMs). Both figures are transfers between 1991 and 2015.³³

Figure 5: SSM vs. SAM transfers



The SAM network has 35% of the ties of the SSM network, and 44% of the number of receivers. It's not immediately obvious that SAMs are more offensive than SSMs, since they can be used tactically and strategically in both ways. And yet a difference in transfer patterns exists. Nor are there such significant cost differences between the types of missiles that an economic explanation would fit. Despite their differences, both missile networks show a degree of political clustering. In the SAM network, there are distinct clusters around the United States at the top and Russia at the bottom. In the SSM network, Russia has a cluster of states at the top, whereas the

³³ If anything, weapons transfers in the post-Cold War period should have similar structures, because of the end of the bipolar system structure and an increase in the number of suppliers.

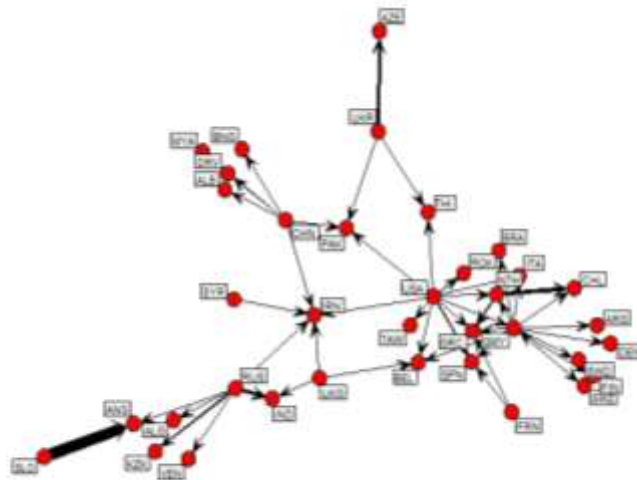
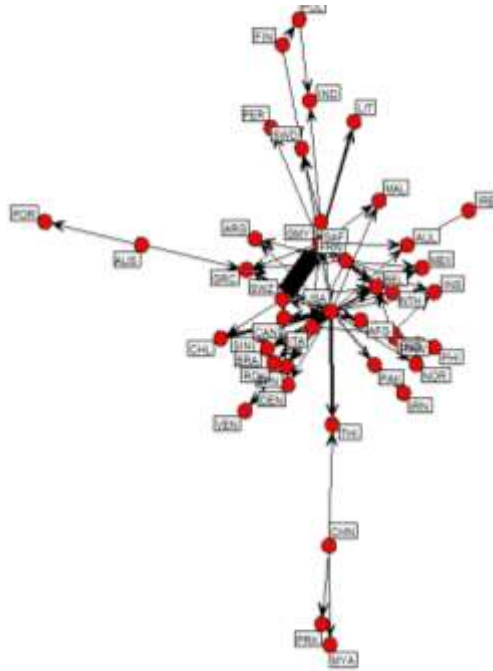
US, UK, and Israel anchor the more central cluster. There is clear differentiation between the US and Russian clusters. However, this differentiation is less obvious in the armored vehicle networks.

I classified armored vehicles into a support or offensive category as a final test of the offense-defense balance/conflict explanation for differences in transfer patterns. Armored vehicles (AVs) are easier to classify than missiles, since some AVs have firepower, whereas others are transport or support vehicles. The differentiation is more properly characterized as the difference between tooth (fighting vehicles) and tail (support vehicles).³⁴ Offensive armored vehicles, the right panel in Figure 6, have some clustering, though the network overall is denser and has more receivers than either of the missile networks. In the offensive AV network Russia, China, and the US/Western Europe each have their set of receivers, but there are a number of states in the middle that receive from all three groups, such as Iran and Pakistan. The network of support AVs (left panel), is much denser, with a group of interconnected central states that cut across traditional security blocs seen in the other networks.

The network graphs raise more questions than they answer. Why are there differences in transfer patterns? Why do these patterns change over time? Why are some states central in one network but peripheral in another? These questions are compounded by the actual logistics of the arms trade, particularly the time horizons, actors involved, and economic dynamics.

³⁴ Scholars strangely ignore the tooth-to-tail ratio, even though conflict will be short lived unless the state has the necessary support structures. A notable exception is Van Creveld 2004.

Figure 6: Support vs. Offensive Armored Vehicle transfers



Logistics, Part I: Time Horizons

Scholarship on the relationship between arms and conflict assumes that states seek, and obtain, weapons they need in a short period of time. While second-hand arms are usually available on a faster timeline than new weapons (or weapons still under production), there is often a multi-year gap between when weapons were ordered and when they were delivered. Just examining the SIPRI data, there was, on average, a 2.7-year gap between when artillery was ordered and when it was delivered, with a maximum gap of 27 years. For aircraft the average difference was 1.9 years, with a maximum period of 41 years. When aircraft are new, particularly supersonic and/or technologically sophisticated aircraft, the delay is significant. The F-35, Lockheed Martin's brand-new fighter jet, has been in development for 25 years. This means that states could technically have ordered the jet 25 years ago, and are still waiting on delivery. It would be rather prophetic if a state ordered the F-35 intending to use it for a specific conflict.

For cases where the gap between order and delivery is small, it might be plausible that states ordered the weapon in anticipation of future conflict. However, weapons purchases require long-term investments of resources and personnel, so various levels of state bureaucracy are involved in the decision-making process. Budgets have to be allocated, and purchasing weapons often requires decisions about strategic priorities, increasing the stakes for each purchase and the number of veto-players and stakeholders involved. Weapons purchases are therefore planned many years in advance of actually placing an order. The Indian government, for example, has a fifteen-year cycle for acquisitions, which government representatives noted was a short time period compared

to other states.³⁵ It would indeed require some sort of crystal ball for states to be able to predict conflict fifteen or more years in advance.³⁶

The issue of timing becomes even more complicated from the perspective of the state that receives the weapon. Just because a weapon has been delivered does not mean it is available for use. First, service members need to be trained to use the weapon, which can include flight school, mock battles, or combined arms training. Second, weapons cannot be used for any sustained period without spare parts and support equipment. Tank tracks often need to be replaced; aircraft need engine and wing maintenance; and artillery requires a large supply of shells. This can further lengthen the time between when a weapon is delivered and when it is operational. A 1984 RAND report, for example, stated that while the US could deliver an F-16 fighter jet within about two years of it being ordered, the *initial* set of spares and support equipment required three to four years for delivery.³⁷ Without spares and support equipment, the weapon has little operational use, and therefore should have a limited effect on conflict.

These logistical insights complicate the usual stories about the arms trade. States rarely get what they want when they want it. The necessity of spare parts, maintenance, and training mean that arms transfers often result in long-term relationships between sender and receiver. The sender can decide to withhold spare parts, or can provide advanced training, all actions that should affect

³⁵ Fieldwork, DSEI, September 2015.

³⁶ Cases such as enduring rivalries are one of the few situations when states anticipate regular conflict with their rivals. For this reason, enduring rivalries should be a *most likely* case for states acquiring arms for conflict-related reasons. I take this into account in my case selection, described in further detail in the next chapter.

³⁷ Smith, Moore, Petruschell 1984, 1.

conflict. Yet these dynamics – particularly the relationships that are created – are absent from existing analyses.

Logistics, Part II: Actors Involved

The previous section put forward a dyadic critique: theories of the arms trade need to account for the political agency of the sender and receiver. Even within the same dyad, there are different rules for different weapons. Consider, for example, Lockheed Martin's F-22 Raptor fighter jet. Japan and Israel are among the many US allies that would like to buy the plane, but the US prohibits the export of the plane, even to friends and allies.³⁸ Other times a state can rebuff one type of weapon, but will happily accept another. During the 1960s, Pakistan wanted the F-104 fighter jet from the US, but rebuffed offers of similar jets, including the more capable F-5 jet.

Adding an additional layer of complication, states think more broadly about the actors and relationships affected by each weapons transfer; political and military leaders are not satisfied with a dyadic approach. The US, for one, explicitly accounts for “the impact [of the transfer] on the preconceptions and the actions of the buyer’s neighbors.³⁹” In other words, even though two states are *directly* involved in the transfer, states consider the effect of the weapon on the perceptions of its friends and adversaries.

³⁸ James Simpson, “America’s F-22 Raptor: The fighter jet Japan desperately wants (but can’t have),” *The National Interest*, 10 July 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/americas-f-22-raptor-the-fighter-jet-japan-desperately-wants-16913>; Robert Farley, “Imagine: F-22 Raptors for export,” *The Diplomat*, 8 May 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/05/imagine-f-22-raptors-for-export/>.

³⁹ Military Assistance and Sales Manual, 1973, F-2.

States receiving weapons perform similar calculations. In 1961, the Soviet Union offered India an attractive deal for MiG-21 fighter jets, including assistance with India's indigenous production facilities. However, India rejected the offer because it did not want other states – notably Pakistan and the US – to think that it was in the pocket of the Soviet Union. The anticipated reaction of states beyond the seller-buyer dyad can thus affect decisions to transfer weapons, which demonstrates the endogeneity of arms transfers: if anticipated reactions constrain or enable the sending of weapons, then cause and effect are not independent. However, most standard models of the arms trade are predicated on the absence of this type of endogeneity.

There are now two confounding factors to existing scholarship: the long-time horizons and resulting complex causal chain, and the inclusion of actors beyond the dyad, introducing complicated relationships and further endogeneity. An examination of the economic dimensions of the arms trade is the final complicating factor.

Logistics, Part III: Economics

Though scholars and policy makers often discuss weapon “sales,” it is more accurate to refer to weapon “transfers.” The latter encompasses sales, gifts, credit financing, and loans. Though economic profit – or the minimization of cost and the maximization of benefit – is often considered a key factor in explaining the arms trade, states quite frequently engage in economic behavior that is not profit-maximizing.⁴⁰ Grant-in-aid programs, military assistance programs, and offset

⁴⁰ GDP is often included in quantitative models, though its relationship to arms transfers is rarely explicitly theorized. Further, GDP is correlated with almost anything, making its presence in the absence of explicit theorization problematic.

agreements all complicate this economic assumption. In some extraordinary cases, a third party will finance the transfer. Some of the more notable examples of this arrangement include:

- A marine patrol aircraft transferred from Australia to Thailand in the 1980s, financed by the UN High Commission for Refugees;
- A combat helicopter transferred from Belarus to Cote d'Ivoire in 2002, financed by the United Kingdom;
- French aircraft transfers to West Germany in 1965, financed by NATO; and
- Numerous transfers of French aircraft to Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, in the 1970s and 1980s, financed by Saudi Arabia.⁴¹

These arrangements further complicate the dyadic story about which states matter in explaining weapons transfers. In an even more complex case, in 2008 Germany transferred a helicopter to Panama, though the deal was believed to be financed by Taiwan, and the helicopter itself came from the US. Even if these complex deals were only a minority of all arms transfers, existing literature doesn't have a way to account for states foregoing profit, or weighting political considerations over economic ones.

Assistance programs are more common than third-party financing. These programs significantly reduce the economic cost of weapons transfers. During the Cold War, the US had a Military Assistance Program, which provided weapons at little to no cost to its friends and allies. The program generated no profit for the US Government.⁴² Such programs continue today. In 2007, the US gave Israel a \$30 billion dollar grant so that it could buy US weapons, and in 2013

⁴¹ Examples included in SIPRI arms transfer database.

⁴² Kemp and Miller 1979, 39-40.

Russia gave Bangladesh \$1 billion for the same purpose. These grant-in-aid programs provide funding so that states may purchase weapons from the state giving the money, effectively reducing any profits that would have otherwise been made.

Finally, offset agreements in procurement contracts require the seller to re-invest some of its profit in the purchasing state. These concessions can take a variety of forms, from allowing the buying state to produce a component of the weapon, sponsoring PhD students, or investing in green industry and healthcare.⁴³ In recent years, many states have had an offset requirement of 100% of the procurement cost and there are some extraordinary cases that have required 400% of the procurement cost to be re-invested as an offset.⁴⁴ Offset agreements complicate models of the arms trade in two ways. First, they question the assumption that arms transfers always result in profit for the seller, and a cost for the buyer/receiver. Second, they question assumptions about why states want arms. If a state can extract rents for domestic projects, then weapons transfers can become a means to economic development ends.

These three logistical issues cast doubt on the likelihood that the arms trade can be studied quantitatively. At the very least, existing models are poor representatives of the actual arms trade. I constructed a new dataset of US arms transfers, 1950-2015, to attempt to correct for many of these issues. However, models estimated with the new data remain fragile, and inferences are difficult to make. Ironically, the finding that existing models are unrobust is, well, robust. The

⁴³ Fieldwork DSEI

⁴⁴ Petty 1999, 4.

following section outlines the new data collection and models, highlighting the continued difficulty of quantitative approaches.

NEW DATA, STILL POOR MODELS

In an attempt to address some of the issues raised above, I constructed a new dataset of arms transfers and potential explanatory variables. The new dataset uses the number of arms transferred between each dyad as the dependent variable, which captures real changes in transfers. The dataset includes dyadic and unit-level factors designed to better capture factors that affect arms transfer decisions. I restricted the dataset to US arms transfers, 1950-2012, for two reasons. First, US transfers are useful for reasons of case selection. The US has been the top exporter of conventional weapons, and far outpaces other transferrers.⁴⁵ Since the US transfers weapons to all regions of the world, results should not be biased due to the omission of an entire region or time period from the resulting models. Second, focusing on US transfers allows me to account for qualitative changes within US policy that could explain changes in transfers over time. I conducted a review of US documents that set weapons transfer policy to ensure that changes at the level of US national policy were not driving any of these results. Fuller descriptions of models and data are available in Appendix A, but all results show the continued difficulty of incorporating the logistics of the arms trade into a large- n approach.

⁴⁵ **footnotes on US as top exporter

Even simple scatterplots show the lack of correlation between variables usually used in explanatory models and the arms trade. The graphs below show independent variables along the x-axis, and the volume of arms transferred between the US and recipient states on the y-axis.⁴⁶ The value reported in each graph is the Pearson's pairwise correlation (r), which is a measure of the strength and association between the two variables. The closer this value is to -1 or to 1, the stronger the relationship between the variables. As both the graphs and the Pearson's value demonstrate, there is no strong or directional relationship between any of these variables and the weapons a state receives from the US. For example, it is not the case that states that share similar UN voting patterns with the US (Affinity Index) get more weapons than states that are more distant from US policy positions. The receiving state's military expenditure is not correlated with weapons transfers, nor is the amount of trade with the US. These graphs indicate that other factors affect the arms trade, but cannot indicate what those other factors are.

⁴⁶ Note that the following variables are logged: Military Expenditure, US exports to Receiver, and Receiver GDP.

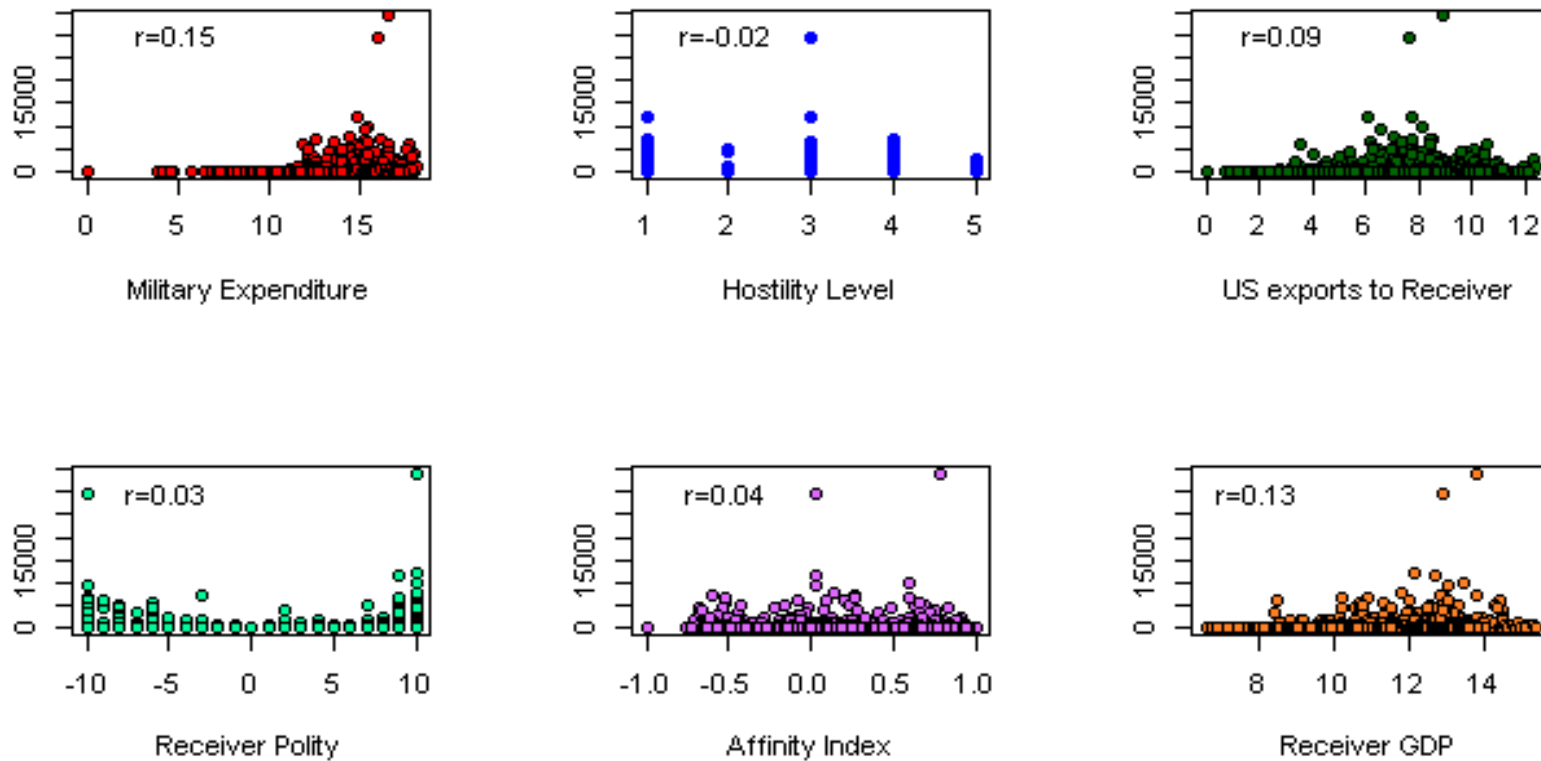


Figure 7: Arms Transfer Correlations

To test for statistical and substantive relationships in a multivariate context, I ran fixed effects panel models on the new dataset, and used country-level fixed effects to hold constant any corresponding time-invariant country specific (and US-specific) factors. As described in further detail in the appendix, these models raised more questions than they answered. The dataset I constructed includes most plausible independent predictors for the amount of arms a state should receive from the United States, including military/defense, economic, and political variables. The military variables that I included (all for the receiver) are: military expenditure, number of military personnel, whether or not the state has a defense pact with the US, fatalities during conflict in the previous year, and the highest hostility level of conflict in the prior year.⁴⁷ Economic variables include imports from and exports to the US, and the receiver's GDP. Finally, I included the receiver's polity score and a measure of UN voting similarity between the US and the receiver.⁴⁸ In each model, I also included a lagged variable of the previous years' arms transfers.

The models did not provide clear answers to explain the arms trade. The only variable that was statistically significant in any of the models was the lagged arms transfer variable. Variables that were not statistically significant were often correlated with arms transfers in the opposite way from expected. For example, in the full model, including economic, conflict, and diplomatic variables, US imports from the receiver are negatively associated with arms transfers. Higher polity scores are correlated with higher levels of arms transfers. Neither the import or the polity variable is

⁴⁷ Because of high correlation, military personnel and military expenditure, and hostility level and fatalities cannot be included in the same model. For robustness, I swapped the hostility variable with the variable that codes the number of fatalities, and military personnel for military expenditure in some models.

⁴⁸ In the analyses, I took the log of the following variables: military expenditure, military personnel, GDP, imports, and exports.

statistically significant. Though the previous years' transfers are strongly correlated with the next years' transfers ($p < 0.001$), the substantive import of the variable is minimal.

When I split the data into Cold War and post-Cold War time periods, variables change direction in their relationship to arms transfers. The previous years' transfers remain significant, though of marginal substantive meaning. During the Cold War there is a positive relationship between the receiver's polity score and arms transfers: more democratic countries received more arms. In the post-Cold War period, that relationship flipped to be negative: less democratic countries received more arms. Though the variable is not statistically significant, the changes suggest larger political forces at work. Perhaps during the Cold War the US was more concerned about propping up (nominally) democratic states than in the post-Cold War period. Similarly, having a defensive alliance with the US was positively correlated with receiving arms during the Cold War, but negatively correlated during the post-Cold War period. This finding is even harder to explain, since alliances have largely remained constant over that time period. Again, the only variable with statistical significance is the lagged arms variable. The differences between the Cold War and post-war period suggest that some larger process – whether the structure of the international system, some qualitative change to political relationships, or some unknown variable – explain the differences between the Cold War and post-Cold War period.

Some of the country-level fixed effect indicator variables have statistical and substantive significance. That is, something about being Kuwait, rather than being Switzerland, is a powerful explanatory variable. This makes sense: Kuwait is of greater strategic value to the United States than is Switzerland, and is in an area of higher tension and higher likelihood of experiencing

regional conflict. Yet based on the models, these differences appear to be attributable to time-invariant country-level traits that are distinct from the typical independent variables considered in quantitative arms studies. While we could attempt to assign a number to each country to represent its strategic value, or to try to capture regional tensions, such an endeavor would require significant case work and would ultimately depend on subjective judgments. All this suggests that arms transfers are irreducibly linked to different qualitative relationships between states, and that such relationships are not picked up in large- n analysis.⁴⁹

Since the earlier network analysis showed differences in transfer pattern by weapon type, I also compare the arms networks to the alliance network, a recurring explanation in existing literature. This comparison shows that the structure of the arms trade is distinct from other networks, and suggests more work needs to be done to explain *why* alliances are thought to be predictors of an arms transfer relationship.

A rather intuitive explanation for the alliance-arms relationship is that states will transfer arms to their friend and allies, but not to states they are not allied with. Evidence from the 1950s, at least where missiles are concerned, seems to provide some initial evidence for this hypothesis (e.g., Fig. 3). There is another reason to expect the arms network to look like the alliance network: interoperability and standardization. US-produced and Soviet-produced arms are not compatible with one another, but weapons produced within the same alliance structure are usually

⁴⁹ Though there are models to quantitatively test relationships – ERGMs and TERGMs – the values that result from these models cannot be easily incorporated into standard regressions because their assumptions about endogeneity are not compatible.

interoperable. This means that the arms transfer relationships established in the early 1950s should be reinforced over time – not only because of alliances, but because there is a type of lock-in effect. States that receive weapons from the US are unlikely, for practical reasons, to turn around and seek arms from the Soviet Union.

Comparing the post-Cold War networks of different types of arms (Fig. 8) with the alliance network (Fig. 9) for the same period shows that this is not the case. Each of the weapons networks is like a tangled ball of yarn: there is no obvious clustering within these dense networks.

The alliance network has distinct clusters representing the different alliance pacts. Note that this network is composed only of alliance treaties that have a provision for mutual defense, that exist in the post-Cold War period. There are no similarities between the structures of the weapons network and the structure of the alliance network. The dissimilarity between these networks means that it remains to be seen how and why alliances might have a relationship to arms transfers. Perhaps it is the case that alliance relationships were more important during the Cold War than after, but in that case I would expect to see the existence of a defense pact have a significant and substantive relationship to arms transfers in the post-Cold War period. The quantitative results reveal that alliances are not significant.

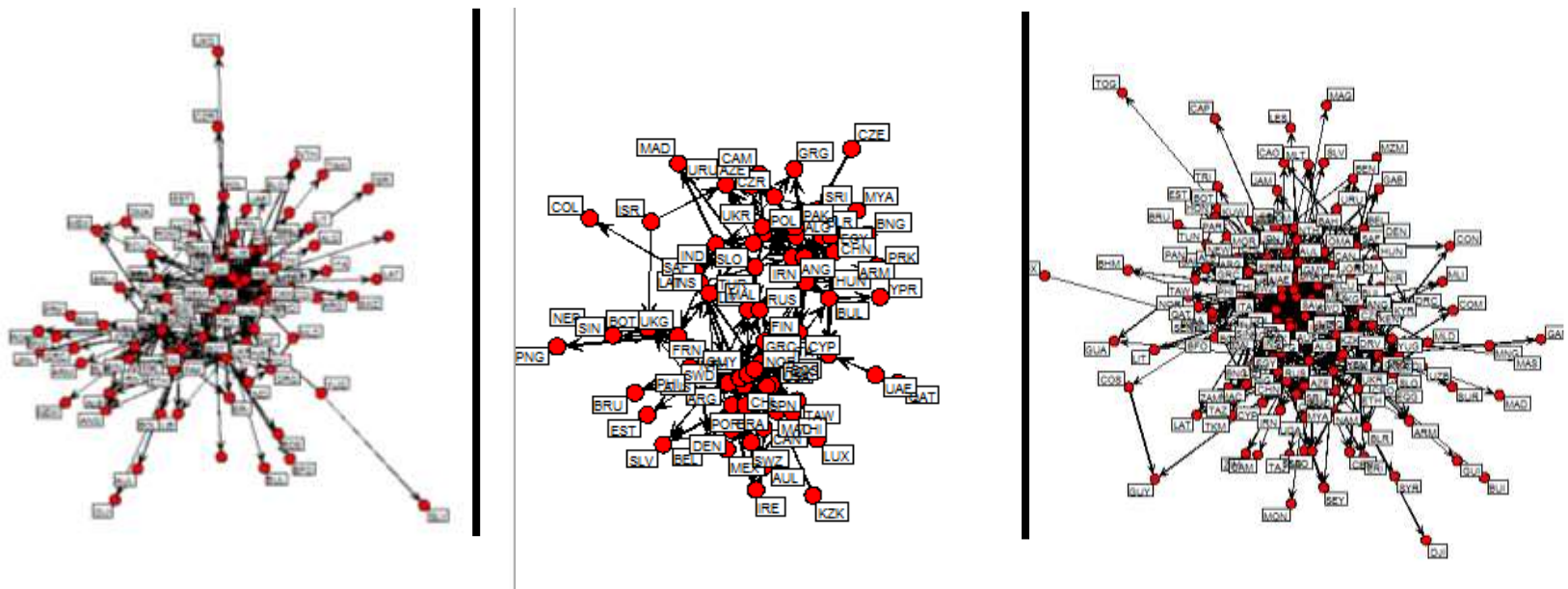
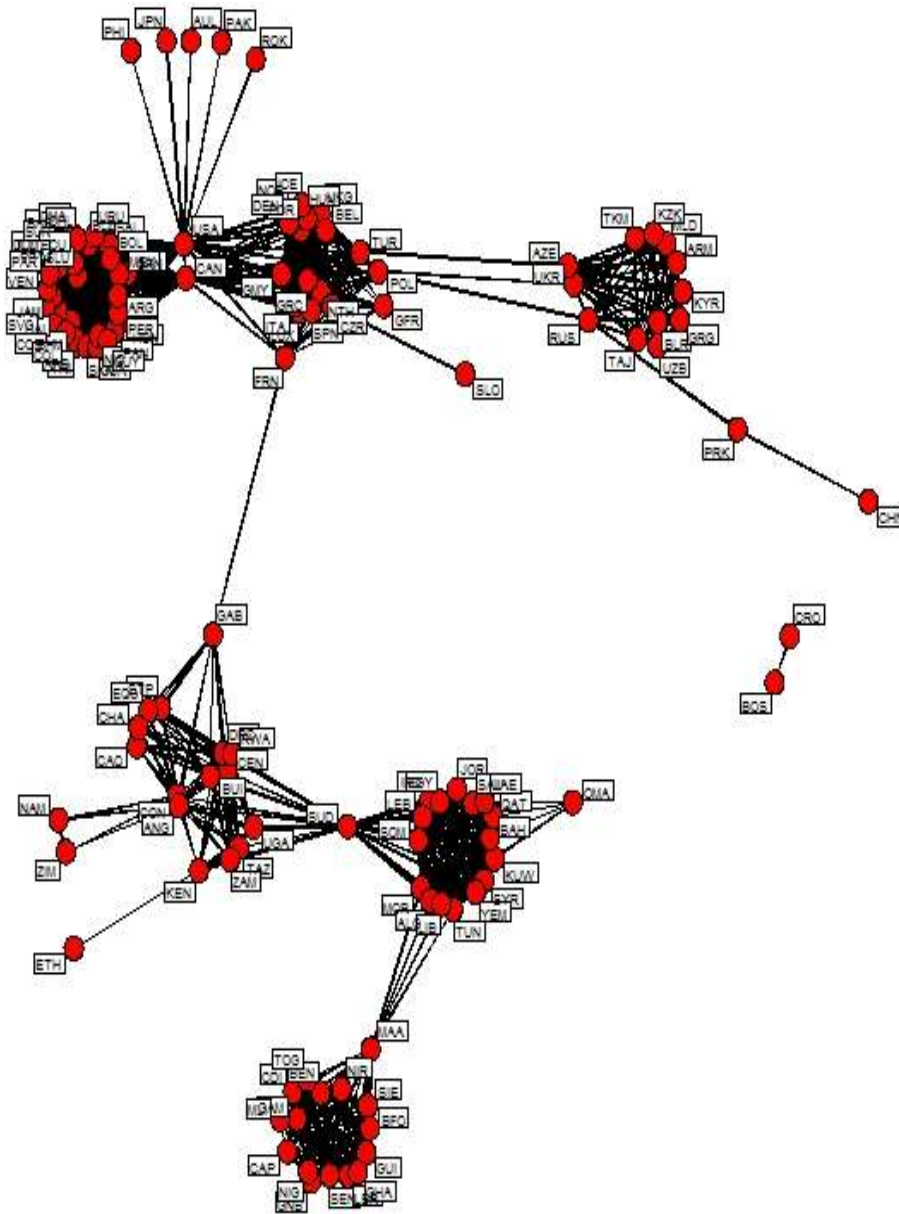


Figure 8: Missile, Armored Vehicle, and Aircraft Transfers, 2001-2012

Figure 9: Post-Cold War Mutual Defense Pacts



It might also be the case that there are relationships between these variables and arms transfers, but that current methods of data collection are not fine-grained or nuanced enough to capture these

relationships. What would “good” data or models look like? First, we would need to address the concerns raised in the logistics section of this chapter. To address the issue of timing, we would need to collect data on each state’s planning cycle. Variables concerning India, for example, would have to be lagged fifteen years (to reflect its acquisition cycle). It is highly unlikely that such information could be collected for each state, especially since state policies change over time. To address the fact that states consider actors beyond the dyad, we would need to know: (a) which states “count” in each weapons transfer, whether geographic neighbors, other alliance members, and/or adversaries; (b) the views of the states that count; and (c) how those views affect the decision-making process. Acquiring this information would require in-depth case knowledge, after which a large-*n* analysis would seem offensively reductive. Finally, to address the economic issues, we would need data on the financing of each deal. States and weapons manufacturers are likely to hold this evidence tightly, fearing that recipients might compare deals and try to change the terms for future sales.⁵⁰ Even if this data were available, collecting it and matching it to each transfer would be a laborious undertaking.

There are additional issues raised by the new quantitative analyses presented here. Why do alliances seem to have mattered during the Cold War, but matter less so in the contemporary period? The network analysis highlights the absence of theorization about alliances: are they proxies for something else? do they mean the same thing over time? are they conditional on other

⁵⁰ There is, in fact, evidence that states are extremely reluctant to discuss elements of financing and aid. During the Cold War, the US was reluctant to release details of its financing agreements with states receiving its weapons. See, for example, Johnson 1994.

things? how would we know? States may want to restrain some allies, bolster others, and quietly pull away from others. An initial insight of this chapter was that not all states are the same – it is questionable to treat Argentina’s motivations for receiving arms as the same as Bulgaria’s, for example – and similarly, not all relationships are the same. Alliances can function, mean, and represent different things. Alliances are also sticky; few alliances are outright dissolved, which means that alliances that exist on paper – our usual method for “measuring” them – often manifest in wildly different ways. To wrangle with the alliance problem, scholars would need deep knowledge about each alliance, which is again a daunting undertaking.

Because current quantitative models are not well equipped to deal with the insights about the arms trade presented here, I suggest a new approach for scholars interested in this research area. Qualitative case analysis, specifically process tracing, can account for the long time horizons and multiple actors involved in each transfer, and is well suited to studying the broader political relationships that are created through the transfer of arms.

A PATH FORWARD

Building on the problems identified in this chapter, I suggest two conceptual moves that should be made to continue studying the causes and consequences of arms transfers. First, the broad category of “conventional” is not analytically or theoretically useful. A tank is not a supersonic jet. A rifle is not a nuclear-capable missile. Even if we were solely interested in explaining conflict outcomes, it would make sense to differentiate between tanks and jets, since each weapon can enable very different military strategies and tactics. Network analysis shows that there are different sets of

relationships created by different types of weapons. Even when a state produces all types of weapons – the US and UK each produce ships, missiles, armored vehicles, aircraft, etc. – they transfer different arms to different states. Differentiating between types of arms should aid theorization about arms transfers, because it will explicitly recognize different patterns of transfers for different weapons.

Second, politics need to remain at the forefront of analysis. If, as Clausewitz famously said, war is the continuation of politics by other means, then an analysis of the tools of war needs to account for the political decision-making and political context surrounding arms transfers. Put more crudely, weapons don't make war; people do. It is deeply puzzling, and ethically troubling, that analyses of the relationship between arms transfers and conflict do not account for state goals, leaders' opinions, or other international or domestic processes that affect decisions to go to war. War is a *decision*, not the inevitable outcome of an (im)balance in military power.

These two conceptual moves also demand a new approach to research. I thus turn to qualitative case analysis and process tracing to determine the motivations for, and outcomes from, weapons transfers.⁵¹ The following chapter builds a theory of arms transfers that builds on existing work and accounts for the issues identified here. It provides a systematic way to distinguish between types of weapons, as well as the theoretical scaffolding to incorporate broader political and social relations between states.

⁵¹ See Zaks 2017; Tannenwald 2015; Bennett and Checkel 2014.

Chapter 2. Put a Ring on it: Foreign Policy Effects of Weapons Transfers

“[You] do not sell arms without saying, in effect, ‘In light of the receiving country’s known policies, friends, and enemies, we anticipate that, in the last resort, we will be on their side in the case of any conflict. We shall want them to defeat their enemies.’”

- Julius Nyerere, former President of Tanzania, 1971⁵²

“I do not share the opinion that the one who sells arms expresses a sympathy already by this act. It would become very difficult if we would adopt this principle.”

- King Fahd, Saudi Arabia, 1982⁵³

Weapons transfers are intimately linked to foreign policy and grand strategy because they reveal information about the political relationship between the sender and receiver. To actors in the international system, weapons are credible signals of alignment and intentions, even when the weapon does not affect the relative balance of power. State leaders and policymakers have long observed that weapons transfers have effects beyond the military balance. Scholarly assessments of the consequences of arms transfers have not incorporated this insight, and thus reaches contradictory conclusions: arms might increase the likelihood of conflict, or decrease it; arms might build alliance trust, or they might undermine it; or, they might have no independent effect on state behavior whatsoever.⁵⁴ I argue that weapons affect a state’s military power and send signals about the relationship between the sending and receiving state. The signals sent by weapons transfers help states

⁵² Quoted in Catrina 1988, 13.

⁵³ Quoted in Catrina 1988, 14.

⁵⁴ See, Diehl and Kingston 1987; Brzoska and Pearson 1994; Pearson, Brzoska, and Crantz 1992; Kinsella 1994.

differentiate between close friends, acquaintances, and opponents in a manner that is clear and comprehensible in an otherwise noisy international system. These political signals have observable effects on a state's foreign policy behavior.

Weapons are intimately linked to grand strategy and foreign policy because they create *two* types of power.⁵⁵ Weapons most clearly provide material power, enabling a state to more credibly make coercive threats or undertake forceful diplomatic actions because of increased capabilities. Weapons transfers are also signals of political ties, which creates a more diffuse, relational power. Weapons transfers signal the extent and depth of states' political alignments, and can even sort states in intra-group status hierarchies.

Weapons transfers are bright lines against the noisy (and sticky) background that is state's broader political networks. They affect the shape of and tensions in the network. State leaders use the ties created by weapons transfers as a convenient shortcut for understanding how states are related to one another, where the center of power is located, and the relative power of one group of states compared to another.

In focusing on the signals sent by weapons transfers, I show, for example, that some transfers facilitate cooperation, while other transfers incentivize prevention or aggression. These foreign policy outcomes, determined by the signal sent by weapons transfers, more generally show the importance of the symbols and signals that make and unmake relations that constitute world politics.

⁵⁵ On grand strategy, and its connections to foreign policy, see Freedman 2013, 607; Posen 1986, 13; Bell 2015, 88; Gray 2013, 3.

As the following empirical chapters show, without an analysis of the *political* effects of weapons transfers, explanations of international political outcomes are incomplete. Chapter three, on India and Pakistan, shows how weapons transfers can moderate a revisionist state's impulses to take advantage of its weakened neighbor. The chapter on the Middle East offers a revised explanation for the 1967 war, focusing on the arms transfers that fueled uncertainty about political relationships. Chapter five demonstrates how weapons transfers expand foreign policy options available to states by allowing them to hold on to otherwise contradictory relationships. The US used transfers to simultaneously reassure Taiwan and deter China – the foundation of the policy of strategic ambiguity. Finally, chapter six shows that states remain sensitive to and interested in arms signals even when the state can produce its own weapons. These cases are specific instances of more general patterns in which weapons transfers have a causal effect on state behavior. It is these political effects, and how they explain foreign policy decisions, that are the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

This chapter develops an explanation of foreign policy behavior based on signals sent through international conventional weapons transfers. First, I situate my discussion of arms as signals within existing scholarship. Second, I go beyond existing literature by explicitly and systematically building a theory of the political effects of weapons transfers. Third, I discuss scope conditions for this theory. Fourth, I show the broader theoretical significance of this theory with respect to foreign policy, signaling, and hierarchies in international security. I conclude with a discussion of case selection and concept analysis.

POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS AND ARMS TRANSFERS

What do weapons do for a state? While existing literature acknowledges that states can seek weapons for purposes beyond relative capabilities, there is not yet a coherent description of the political effects of arms transfers. Scholarship generally treats “conventional weapons” as a monolithic category, overlooking differences between planes, tanks, and ICBMs. Any first step toward creating a typology of weapons must therefore take into account the different functions and perceptions of weapons.

Weapons quite obviously affect relative capabilities. Greater capabilities give a state increased ability to coerce its adversaries or to conduct military operations. However, the effects of capabilities are not universal. A tank enables a very different type of fighting than long-range bombers; a refueling plane is quite different from a submarine. A logical first cut for differentiating among types of weapons is based on their military utility.

Second, scholars have a sense that weapons can be acquired for reasons other than relative capabilities, but have not explored these purposes. With the exception of ambiguous statements that some weapons are more “symbolic” than others, non-military reasons for weapons acquisition are, in the conventional realm, largely ignored. Linguistic politics approaches suggest the salient point of information is the name of the weapon,⁵⁶ whereas others have argued the weapon itself is a symbol, and that supersonic aircraft are particularly notable because they are “expensive, visible, and get a great deal of attention

⁵⁶ Buzan and Herring 1998, 180. However, states often re-name weapons when they purchase them, and not all weapons have word names. For example, Egypt renamed its German “Bestmann” trainer aircraft the “Gomhouria,” (“the republic”) and Sweden renamed its Finnish “XA-200” armored personnel carriers the “Patgb-202.”

in the policy-making process.”⁵⁷ Other weapons thought to receive significant attention are submarines and main battle tanks.⁵⁸ It’s not clear, though, why submarines, supersonic aircraft, and tanks are conceptually distinct from other types of weapons.

There is, however, a sense that weapons can be used as political signals. Arms can be part of a reciprocal agreement for some other good, or they can be a means of gaining influence in the receiving state.⁵⁹ As I show later, weapons are long-term investments and providing (or denying) new technologies to a state is a central process in the development of status hierarchies. Unlike iPads, new fighter jet models are not released every year. The transfer of high-tech weapons thus creates durable status hierarchies between and within groups of states. Additionally, arms can send signals ranging from “gestures of political support,” to friendship and trust, to signals of technological modernity.⁶⁰ In sum, arms can do things, but there is no consensus about which arms or what things.

There is also a startling lack of attention to the decision not to sell arms, even though withholding arms can be an act of great political import. Freedman is a rare exception, accurately observing that, “though only limited political benefits can normally be expected from agreeing to sell arms, since this is seen in commercial terms, *refusing to sell* arms is a major political act. It appears as a calculated insult, reflecting on the

⁵⁷ Laurance 1992, 38. These weapons may also signal a long-term relationship because of maintenance contracts and continued need for spare parts. These “lifetime costs” are an essential, but oft-overlooked, aspect of the weapons trade.

⁵⁸ Durch 2000, 14; Yarhi-Milo, Lanoszka, and Cooper 2016, 96. includes “offensive weapons” as signals, but, as the authors themselves acknowledge, and as will be shown later, there are problems in determining the offensive or defensive character of various weapons.

⁵⁹ Kemp and Miller 1979, 46.

⁶⁰ Catrina 1988, 12; Erickson 2015, 6.

stability, trust, and credit-worthiness, or technical competence of the would-be recipient.”⁶¹ However, other researchers have not pursued this line of thinking, perhaps because the usual databases focus on the arms transfers that come to fruition. Since withholding arms means a transfer does not appear in these databases, the act is usually ignored.⁶²

CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS AND SYMBOLIC SIGNALING

To understand the political effects of weapons, scholars need a way to talk about similarities and differences between and among types of weapons; the *content* of ties between states is just as important as the existence of one. This section develops a theory to explain the effects of weapons transfers on foreign policy by making two moves. First, I unpack the umbrella category of conventional weapons along the dimensions of prestige and military utility. This lets me discuss differences between weapons and the different conditions under which they will be transferred. Second, I explain the signals that weapons transfers send, and connect these signals to distinct foreign policy behaviors.

Weapon Typology

Weapons have dual functions: they most obviously affect capabilities, enabling actors to wage war and deter aggression. But there is also a symbolic dimension: states share

⁶¹ Freedman 1978, 389-90.

⁶² There is, of course, the problem of the dog that does not bite. While there are sometimes widespread reports about transfer denials, there are likely many such denials that simply are not known. Excluding non-transfers makes sense as a methodological choice in quantitative analysis. But these models do not even acknowledge the possibility that a non-transfer is an active decision. It is possible, through archival research, to gain a sense of the frequency of denials, and the given reasons. In the following chapters, I use cases of denial to provide an initial empirical analysis of this action.

understandings of prestigious and non-prestigious weapons. I create a typology of weapons by contrasting the prestige of weapons with the more familiar dimension of military utility, which provides the first step toward analyzing the political effects of weapons transfers. This typology draws on existing literature, as well as fieldwork at two international weapons exhibitions, where I observed the importance of prestige for the way different actors talked about, and purchased, weapons.

Dimension 1: Prestige

Prestige captures the symbolic dimension of weapons, the shared understanding that some weapons are *more* than others. This dimension builds on insights from other disciplines that have long recognized a difference between prestige and “functional” goods. Functional goods accomplish basic necessary tasks, whereas prestige goods are kept for use and displayed periodically to indicate wealth, success, and power.⁶³ This distinction between prestige and functional goods needs to be modified to fit weapons transfers, since high prestige weapons are not simply for display, periodically dusted off for a military parade or two. Further, even relatively useless weapons are qualitatively distinct goods because they have the ability to harm, and are thus not directly comparable to regular gifts given between individuals, such as a vase or a ring.⁶⁴ Prestige weapons are usually those with a high level of offensive striking power or technological sophistication. These weapons do more than the basic functional task of territorial defense, though I note that

⁶³ Hayden 1998, 13; Plourde 2009. Prestige has similarities to the conceptual family that includes honor, status, and reputation.

⁶⁴ In some cases, a state may not have the ability to fully deploy weapons, making them entirely symbolic goods. Even in these cases, however, partial deployment or use still makes weapons qualitatively distinct goods.

firepower or technological sophistication is necessary, but not sufficient, as a cause of prestige.

One insight that does carry over concerns reciprocity. On the level of the individual social relationship, giving a gift incurs a mutual obligation from the receiver to the giver, and the possession of prestige goods is a way to get others to recognize your importance.⁶⁵ At the level of interstate relations, there is still an implied mutual obligation – State A gives State B a weapon and expects state B to behave “properly”, however defined. Equally important, the *transfer* of prestige weapons is a statement about the type of relationship the states have. Just as diamond rings are usually exchanged between committed couples, prestigious weapons are usually exchanged between similarly committed/aligned states.

Though nuclear weapons are recognized as prestigious weapons,⁶⁶ prestige is not the privilege solely of the nuclear realm: there is a hierarchy of prestige in conventional weapons, too. Existing literature considers three types of weapons prestigious – supersonic aircraft, main battle tanks, and submarines.⁶⁷ The criteria this implies for assessing prestige is unclear, since the three weapons are very different in use, firepower, and technological sophistication. Though highly capable and technologically sophisticated, supersonic aircraft are usually defensive weapons designed to quickly intercept an opponent’s aircraft.

⁶⁵ Wolfenbarger 1990. Gift-giving can also be involved in rituals that represent accepting an individual into a larger group, or into a particular role. Weapons are often given as gifts – through military aid or mutual assistance programs – or at significant discounts to friends and allies. When weapons are traded without such discounts, they still incur a mutual obligation because of the power of weapons to hurt. The state that receives the weapon determines what to do with it; transfers thus tacitly endorse the receiver’s behavior, and the receiver will usually not want to act in a way that betrays that endorsement.

⁶⁶ Sagan 1997; O’Neill 2001.

⁶⁷ Durch 2000, 14; Craft 1999; Kinsella and Chima 2001; Laurance 1992, 38.

Submarines, on the other hand, enable stealthy offense, have high capabilities and technology, and can be nuclear-capable. Main battle tanks are considered a prestigious weapons platform even though their offensive firepower is limited in both range and caliber, and their level of technological sophistication is significantly below that of fighter jets and submarines. By all of these measures, main battle tanks are an outlier on the list of prestigious weapons platforms.

Clearly, the correlation between prestige and offensive power or technological sophistication is not determinative. I propose that perceptions play a large role in determining what types of platforms are prestigious, and that these perceptions usually cue on superpower actions. Main battle tanks are considered prestigious because of their association with the great power wars of the twentieth century.⁶⁸ Similarly, intercontinental ballistic missiles are a prestigious platform because of their perceptual association with nuclear weapons,⁶⁹ even though there are many weapons within this platform that are universally ineffective because they have poor targeting capabilities and poor construction.⁷⁰ The opposite relationship holds, too. Refueling planes stand out as weapons that have extremely high levels of technology – from the sensors to detect how close it is to the plane taking on fuel, to the in-air delivery system, to an engine able to give lift to a massive plane, to all of the associated safety mechanisms – and that require an extraordinary level of skill to pilot, but these weapons are not considered prestigious. Though there may be a minimum baseline of either technological sophistication or

⁶⁸ Eyre, Suchman, and Alexander 1986, 10; Wendt and Barnett 1993, 336-37.

⁶⁹ Payne and Rudney 1998.

⁷⁰ Lynn-Jones and Miller 1992, 368.

offensive power necessary to be a candidate for a prestige weapon, these factors are not determinative. Rather, prestige is determined by perceptions.⁷¹

I observed the importance of perceptions in creating prestige during fieldwork at two international weapons shows. Many manufacturers tried to portray their weapons as particularly important by unveiling them at a designated time during the show, drawing significant crowds and creating an air of excitement by pumping music through nearby speakers, or using security ropes to allow only important visitors – usually in military uniforms or other official-looking attendees – nearest to the weapon. During an outdoor demonstration of a number of weapons, the “coolness” factor of an armored vehicle was enhanced through a hard rock soundtrack. The tempo of the music was used to manipulate the audience’s perceptions of the weapon on display, and varied based on how much perceptions of different weapons needed to be manipulated.⁷² More mundane weapons, like a firetruck and a fueling vehicle, were accompanied by explosions, to get the audience to pay attention and to associate these weapons with the battlefield, rather than support roles. Throughout the convention halls, brochures touted specific capabilities or linked a particular weapon to a known prestigious weapon. For example, Finnish arms company Patria emphasized its integration of weapons systems in its Armored Modular Vehicle as providing “the digital backbone for 21st century soldiers,” perhaps trying to portray this

⁷¹ *How* weapons become prestigious is an important and interesting question; answers will likely draw on feminist and critical work, to examine narratives and discourses surrounding different types of weapons (see Enloe 2000). But in the interest of making a tractable project, this project begins from the position that some weapons are prestigious and some are not. It takes prestige from extant literature as well as statements made by actors at the time. Future work will draw more heavily on my fieldwork at weapons exhibitions to investigate how prestige is coupled to different weapons. See Appendix B for a more in-depth discussion of the weapons shows as field sites.

⁷² See Appendix B for greater detail.

armored vehicle – usually not very technologically sophisticated – as at the technological cutting edge, and thus prestigious.

The concept of prestige is not reducible to the economic cost of the weapons transfer. First, states often give weapons at free or significantly discounted rates to friends and allies. Second, there is no agreed upon way to calculate cost. For example, the AGM-154 Joint Standoff Weapon, produced by Raytheon, has an acquisition cost of \$3.3 billion. But because the Navy and Air Force ordered 12,000 missiles the per-unit production cost is \$246,585.⁷³ By contrast, General Dynamic's M1A1 Abrams Tank has a per-unit cost of \$2.38 million.⁷⁴ The Abrams tank, though a useful main battle tank, was first produced in the 1970s, where as the JSOW is a brand-new missile. Determining prestige based on cost would be misleading in this case. Further, some transfer agreements include contracts for maintenance and/or spare parts. This would increase the *value* of the transfer, but would not indicate anything about prestige.⁷⁵

Prestige is a heuristic used by a variety of actors to make inferences about the future relationship between the sending and receiving states. This heuristic suggests that higher prestige weapons signify a greater relationship to come; states woo one another with the prettiest, most attention-grabbing weapons. Different types of weapons – like gifts between

⁷³ "AGM-154A Joint Standoff Weapon," *Federation of American Scientists*, 2000, <https://fas.org/man/dod-101/sys/smart/agm-154.htm>.

⁷⁴ "General Dynamics awarded \$358 million for 150 M1A1 SA Abrams Tanks for Morocco," 30 September 2015, <http://www.generaldynamics.com/news/press-releases/2015/09/general-dynamics-awarded-358-million-150-m1a1-sa-abrams-tanks-morocco>.

⁷⁵ The US GAO calculated that in 1991, the M1A1 tank had an operations and support cost of \$159.74 *per mile*. United States General Accounting Office, "Abrams Tank: Operating Costs More Than Expected," Report Number NSIAD-91-114, 1991, p. 4, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/220/213784.pdf>.

two individuals – reflect the weight of the relationship, and change in type and/or amount as the closeness between the states changes.⁷⁶ Weapons are certainly valuable for their military functions, but the symbol of prestigious weapons is a way of distinguishing allies from non-allies,⁷⁷ can be an invitation to a closer relationship,⁷⁸ and is an expression of the sender's perception of the receiver.⁷⁹ Prestigious weapons are a visible signal of commitment and interest, and states are therefore more circumspect in transferring these weapons. Less prestigious weapons are more likely to be transferred because they don't signal a deep commitment; they are one of the means states have for expressing potential interest. Low prestige doesn't mean that the weapon is devoid of use: support weapons like transport aircraft or armored personnel carriers are essential for both offensive and defensive operations. But because every state that has a functioning military needs to pay attention to the "tail" in the tooth-to-tail ratio, the transfer of low prestige weapons is not nearly as noticeable and does not constitute a political relationship in the same way as high prestige weapons.

Treating prestige as a heuristic is in line with the cognitive psychology literature that reminds us that individuals use heuristic principles to reduce the complex task of assessing probability and predicting outcomes, especially in situations of high uncertainty.⁸⁰ Weapons prestige functions as a representative and an availability heuristic: it is the cue by

⁷⁶ Shurmer 1971.; Johnson 1974.

⁷⁷ Wolfinbarger 1990, 702.

⁷⁸ Sherry Jr 1983, 158.

⁷⁹ Wolfinbarger 1990, 699.

⁸⁰ Tversky and Kahneman 1974, 585; Downs 1957, 145; Lau and Redlawsk 2001, 925.

which states reduce complex inputs about the future.⁸¹ In this case, cognitive psychology applies as much to the state as to individuals. States are composed of individuals, and we know that people reflect on their lifetime of experiences in making associations between particular actions as part of a larger class of actions.⁸² This process should be compounded in states because of both institutional and national memories: while an individual will rely on events from her lifetime, states institutions and bureaucracies effectively increase the “lifetime” of events on which individuals can rely for making these judgments. Further, the actors involved as the individual, bureaucratic, and state-level decision-making process are especially attentive to signaling and intentions, increasing the salience of this heuristic.

Prestige, then, is a perceptually determined assessment of weapons, that draws on technology, firepower, and the status of states that use the weapon.

Dimension 2: Military Utility

Military utility captures the ways in which a weapon affects a state’s relative capabilities. My use of the concept draws inspiration from Glaser and Kaufman’s call to broaden the conceptualization of the offense-defense balance.⁸³ Military utility may incorporate appraisals of versatility, efficacy, reliability, portability, or maintenance. For example, there are a number of medium-range or intercontinental missiles that – because of targeting issues – cannot hit the broad side of a barn. Compared to similar types of missiles, these specific ones, such as the Chinese-made DF-3 missile, popular in the 1980s,

⁸¹ Tversky and Kahneman 1974, 585; McDermott 1988, 6-7.

⁸² Tversky and Kahneman 1974, 594.

⁸³ Glaser and Kaufmann 1998, 48.

are rather useless.⁸⁴ Similarly, Lockheed Martin's F-35 Joint Strike Fighter may initially be read as a capable weapons because of its technological sophistication and advanced engineering: it is a stealthy plane with vertical take-off and landing functions. But it has performance issues that include impaired aerial combat capabilities, a limited payload, and the tendency to decapitate pilots when making high-G turns. The F-35 is designed to be a single node in high-tech networked warfare, but for most states at most times it is not a militarily useful plane. I compare weapons produced within the same time frame so that vastly different levels of technology are not directly compared.

Even if a weapon meets a baseline level of military utility, different strategic environments, skill level of militaries, or state infrastructure can reduce the usefulness of certain weapons for certain states. Some weapons can be more militarily useful for one country but not for another. An extreme example of this is Singapore's recent obsession with Cold War-era German tanks. As an island city-state, it is unclear how Singapore would make use of the tanks, but it purchased nearly 200 Leopard Tanks and even built an underground storage facility for them.⁸⁵ Tanks don't make strong military sense for Singapore.

As discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter, military utility compares weapons produced in the same time period and results in a relative measure of capabilities.

⁸⁴ Nuclear Threat Initiative, "Saudi Arabia: Missile," August 2015, <http://www.nti.org/learn/countries/saudi-arabia/delivery-systems>. Unless, of course, the state has a nuclear warhead to put on the missile.

⁸⁵ DSEI Seminar, London, UK, September 2015.

It parses out differences in use so that not all weapons are assumed to have an equal effect on a state's ability to wield power.

Contrasting these two dimensions gives four types of weapons, shown in Table 2. Boom weapons are prestigious and highly capable. Contemporary examples include the F-15 fighter jet, submarines (especially nuclear powered), and the S-300 missile defense system.⁸⁶ Bling in the world of armaments are weapons that are significantly less effective than others of the same type. Historical examples include the F-104 fighter jet – a very fast and literally shiny plane that was ineffective as a defensive interceptor or mid-air fighter— as well as the DF-3 missile, a medium-range intercontinental ballistic missile that has significant targeting issues that reduce its ability to be militarily effective. Backbone weapons are low in prestige and capabilities, include weapons like the KC-46 Pegasus tanker plane, mundane vehicles like Jeeps, and transport and training aircraft. These weapons are often ignored in analyses of the offense-defense balance, but backbone weapons are the unsung heroes of the military: they are essential for enabling most operations, but never get any of the credit. Finally, blip weapons are those low in prestige and low in capabilities. This category includes ammunition, firearms, and small bombs. Though all of these weapons *do* have military use, they need to be used in large quantities, and usually in conjunction with other weapons, in order to be useful; the scope of their usefulness is much more limited compared to other weapons. However, contexts of civil war or armed group movements can change the salience of blip weapons, and they can

⁸⁶ *NB*: Russia's transfer of this system to Syria was notable because the weapon is capable *and* prestigious.

become important intra-war signaling devices. For example, in some contexts having new M-4 rounds signals support from one individual/group to another, but AK-47 rounds do not.⁸⁷

		Military Utility	
		High	Low
Weapon Prestige	High	Boom (Type I)	Bling (Type II)
	Low	Backbone (Type III)	Blip (Type IV)

Table 2: Weapon Typology

While this typology is an important first step in breaking apart the diverse category of conventional weapons, on its own it does not provide any guidance about what weapons should be transferred between different states, or what types of transfers send what type of signal. For that, I shift to a relational lens, and explain how existing relationships generate expectations of different types of weapons transfers.

Weapons Transfer Expectations and Signal Type

Intuitively, the quality of states' relationships should matter: closer states should transfer different types of weapons than states that have less in common or that do not share strategic goals. This is why, as explained in the Introduction, Turkey's choice of China as a missile supplier caused such outrage among its NATO allies. Similarly, the routine transfers among NATO allies are less notable for their political signaling than they are as

⁸⁷ Thanks Sarah Parkinson for clarifying this for me.

evidence of standard operating procedure within the alliance, building inter-operability, bolstering the capabilities of the alliance, and reinforcing NATO as a political institution. The proposed transfer from China to Turkey was unexpected, whereas transfers among NATO allies are routine and expected.

This relational dynamic has long been recognized by policymakers. Take, for example, United States Military Sales and Assistance Manuals, which all state: “The willingness of the U.S. Government to sell military equipment varies country by country in accordance with the military requirement, ability to maintain and use, compatibility with existing inventory, and *impact on the preconceptions and the actions of the buyer's neighbors.*”⁸⁸ In other words, states do not act in a dyadic vacuum: the relationship between the sender and the receiver and the receiver’s neighborhood affect which transfers are expected or unexpected.⁸⁹ For example, US transfers to Saudi Arabia are not a dyadic process: US law prohibits the transfer of weapons that would make any Middle Eastern state qualitatively superior to Israel.⁹⁰

I generalize these relational patterns through the concept of strategic interest, which captures the extent to which states’ interests and ideologies align or conflict. This concept allows me to differentiate between weapons transfers that accord with existing ties and those that are more surprising, which is an important interim step in determining which transfers send different signals.

⁸⁸ Military Sales and Assistance Manual, 1973, p. F-2, emphasis added. <http://www.samm.dsca.mil/samm-archive/1973-masm-archive>.

⁸⁹ See Jervis 1997, 17; Waltz 1979, 74; Gilpin 1981, 85.

⁹⁰ US Code Title 22 § 212.

Strategic interest is a concept central to bargaining and deterrence theory, two bodies of literature that have addressed ways to send signals,⁹¹ and encompasses both instrumental reasons for alignment, such as common foe, natural resource or economic dependence, as well as diffuse or ideational reasons like shared worldview or cultural affinity.⁹² The degree of shared strategic interest between states can often be determined by threat perceptions and national security narratives, whether the states identify the same foe(s) and the threat posed by them, or whether states have similar ideas about how the world should work.

Depending on the degree of shared interests between states, different types of arms are expected (because they confirm or cement existing relations) or unexpected (because they constitute a *new* relationships). Expected arms reinforce ties between the sender and receiver, and generally have a readily-apparent balance of power logic to them: states transfer weapons to bolster the relative capabilities of their friends, and refrain from bolstering capabilities of their opponents or of their friends' opponents.⁹³

Table 3, below, summarizes the expected and unexpected transfers based on the degree of shared strategic interest. The following sub-sections explain why certain types of weapons are expected or unexpected in different contexts, and connects the (un)expectedness of the transfer to different signals.

⁹¹ Schelling 1980, 6; Jervis 1979, 316. See also Fearon 1994.

⁹² See Snyder 1984b, 464-465, 472. for a discussion of strategic versus particular interest. My use of the term subsumes both.

⁹³ Yarhi-Milo, Lanoszka, and Cooper 2016, 92.

Shared Strategic Interest	Expected Transfers	Unexpected Transfers
Substantial common	All, especially boom and backbone	Denials, mismatched
Mixed	Backbone, blip	Boom, bling
Substantial conflicting	None	All, especially high prestige

Table 3: Expected vs. Unexpected Transfers

Expected transfers: Reinforcement Signals

Expected arms transfers accord with and support the status quo; they send a *reinforcement signal*. Oftentimes, these transfers become so routine and ingrained in relationships that the reinforcement signal goes unnoticed; it is part of standard operating procedure and only noticeable when there is an interruption to the reinforcement signal.

Most types of weapons transfers are expected when states have substantial common interests. Prestigious and capable boom weapon transfers are expected for reasons of interoperability— facilitating joint operations – and because of bureaucratic standard operating procedure.⁹⁴ Again, it’s not surprising that the NATO allies have remarkably similar arsenals, nor that these states engage in cooperative development of advanced weapons in order to reduce costs and share knowledge.⁹⁵ Boom weapons transferred between states that share close ties reinforce and maintain these ties. Bling weapons – those that are highly prestigious but less militarily useful – are useful for reinforcing ties among states that share interests as well.

⁹⁴ Long and Leeds 2006; Morrow 1993.

⁹⁵ Lorell and Lowell 1995; Fast 1981.

Backbone weapons are expected transfers when states have substantial common interests, or when they have a mix of interests. When states have similar goals and policies, these weapons are desired for their military use. The workhorses of modern militaries, backbone weapons are essential for moving troops and materiel. When states have a mix of interests, these weapons are desirable because of their low prestige. The arms are useful, but don't signal a deep political relationship, so the sender can transfer the weapons without fear of emboldening the receiver, and the receiver can accept the weapons without fear that it is signaling alignment with the sender. Blip weapons are also expected when states have a mix of interests. Though all of these weapons do have military use, they can be transferred without any signaling consequences because of their low prestige.

Unexpected Transfers: Upgrade and Downgrade Signals

Transfers can be unexpected in either a positive or negative way, which correspond, respectively, with upgrade and downgrade signals. An absence of transfers between states that have substantial common interests is unexpected. To rely on the familiar example of the NATO allies, it would be very surprising if a NATO ally was denied the transfer of a weapon other allies possessed, or if a NATO ally decided to seek weapons from outside the alliance. The lack of transfer sends a *downgrade signal*: it is a visible interruption to the shared ties between the states.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Some might argue that the lack of a transfer in this condition is epiphenomenal to a larger strategic interest shift (e.g., the US pivot to Asia might lead to fewer transfers to Europe). While it is plausible that the lack of a transfer might signal a downgrading of the states' relationship, this should be a very rare case. States, even if undertaking a strategic shift, will still want their friends and allies to have advanced weaponry. Being seen to draw away from or downgrade the relationship with states with whom you share significant strategic interests could undermine the sender's reputation as a reliable ally.

Downgrade signals can also come if the transfer is a mismatch with the receiver's expectations. This can be caused by receiving a lower quantity or lower type of weapon, such as expecting fighter jets but receiving cargo planes. Mismatched transfers indicate a growing rift between the sender and receiver. Jordan, for example, expected to receive the F-104 Starfighter jet, a bling weapon, from the United States in 1967. It was instead sent a small number of backbone and blip weapons, including rifles and utility trucks, leading King Hussein to reconsider what he thought was a close US-Jordanian relationship. Importantly, a downgrade signal can be initiated by the sender or the receiver of a weapon. The sender can choose to prevent the receiver from acquiring a weapon, or the receiver can rebuff offers. The downgrade signal is sent regardless. For example, in March 2015, Sweden decided not to negotiate a new defense agreement with Saudi Arabia, a move that signaled new tensions and disputes between the two states.⁹⁷

Transfers that are unexpectedly positive – such as receiving a higher quantity or better type of weapon than expected – send an *upgrade signal*. These transfers represent a growing closeness between states. Where states have a mix of common and conflicting interests, the upgrade signal is primarily due to the prestige of the transferred weapons: boom and bling weapons send an upgrade signal. Because these states are equally at odds as they are in congruence, the transfer of a high prestige weapon signals a positive change in their future relationship, and the possibility of closeness and mutual support. The

⁹⁷ Gerard O'Dwyer and Awad Mustafa, "Sweden may lose Gulf allies over Saudi Spat," *Defense News*, 15 March 2015, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2015/03/15/sweden-may-lose-gulf-allies-over-saudi-spat/>; David Wearing, "Sweden's stopped selling arms to Saudi Arabia. Why can't the UK follow suit?" *The Guardian*, 12 March 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/12/sweden-stopped-selling-arms-to-saudi-arabia>.

Turkish-Russian missile defense deal signaled an upgraded relationship between those two states, since the S-400 missile is prestigious and very capable. Bling weapons are flashy and attention-grabbing; their transfer in cases of mixed strategic interest signals potential new points of agreement between the states. Even though it doesn't have much operational use, the bling weapon is like an engagement ring: a promise of future political support based on mutual understandings, and is visible and comprehensible to observing states.

Boom weapons are doubly unexpected because of the convergence of high prestige and high capabilities. Boom weapon transfers are a stronger signal of future political support than bling weapons. The capabilities dimension enables the receiver to make use of the weapon, and is thus an expression of confidence from the sender that the weapon will be used in line with their common interests, if it is used at all. Additionally, the number of weapons transferred matters for the strength of the upgrade signal. The transfer of a handful of capable and prestigious fighter jets is a weaker signal than is the transfer of a full squadron (or multiple squadrons) of the same jets.

When states have substantial conflicting interests, the transfer of any type of weapon will send an upgrade signal, but again prestige is particularly important. Boom and bling weapons send stronger upgrade signals than backbone weapons. Lacking congruence of goals, these states would not find it advantageous to increase the relative capabilities of the other, and would not want to signal any type of relationship between them. The increase in capabilities and the attention given to prestige weapons is puzzling when the states do not have similar goals. The recent US lifting of the arms embargo on Vietnam is one example. Sending arms to Vietnam is not going to make the US a lot of money and will not change

the balance of power; experts predict that Vietnam's arms requests will be minimal.⁹⁸ Further, the US and Vietnam are often at odds over the latter's human rights record. It is therefore surprising that the US would lift its arms embargo and allow Vietnam to buy weapons. But under a symbolic signaling logic, this makes more sense: US arms sales to Vietnam are a signal to China about Chinese aggression in the South China Sea, and are potentially the start of a balancing coalition against China.⁹⁹ The transfers constitute a new relationship, united in purpose to oppose China. This is also a case where the transfer does not make sense unless the states are placed in the broader relational context: it is only when considering Vietnam's tensions with China that the US lifting of the arms embargo makes sense.

The exposition of expected and unexpected transfers above describes general patterns and explains most cases. But states—and relationships between them—are not static, and so states' expectations of what counts as an appropriate weapons transfers will change over time. The transfer of main battle tanks is unexpected when states have minimal shared interests, but if the states grow closer over time, those same tanks will be an expected transfer. Thus, as time goes on, I expect transfers to increase in intensity and content in order for states' relationships to be maintained and not deteriorate.¹⁰⁰ Relationships require

⁹⁸ Phillip Orchard, "The US opens its arms to Vietnam," *Stratfor*, 26 May 2016, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/us-opens-its-arms-vietnam>.

⁹⁹ Prashanth Parameswaran, "Exclusive: US may lift Vietnam arms embargo for Obama visit," *The Diplomat*, 12 April 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/04/us-may-lift-vietnam-arms-embargo-on-obamas-asia-trip/>; Nga Pham, "Why Vietnam wants US weapons," *BBC News*, 23 May 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36360005>.

¹⁰⁰ Parkinson 2013, 7. See also Emirbayer 1997, 289; Jervis 1997, 17. States, will, of course, still find need for non-boom weapons. Just because states have reached boom status doesn't mean that bling weapons lose their signaling function. Gaps in transfers, slowdowns, or delays, can all make bling weapons meaningful

constant maintenance; continuity in relationships is hard work, and breeds increased expectations over time. Just like the children's book, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, states want more, larger, and more delicious cookies as time goes on.¹⁰¹

Foreign Policy Effects of Signals

Signals sent through weapons transfers have both long- and short-term effects. In the short term, the signal affects the receiver's foreign policy, and has implications for the likelihood of regional conflict. In the long-run, the signals produce and communicate status hierarchies, allowing states to compare themselves to others in a group. This can also have implications for the likelihood of conflict, though the chain of events is longer, and outcomes are multi-causal.

Foreign policy outcomes depend on the receiver's general strategic orientation. Weapons transfers affect foreign policy, but do not radically change whether a state is status quo or revisionist; weapons are tools that affect when and how states pursue their goals.¹⁰² Changes in foreign policy behaviors come from unexpected weapons transfers, and the resulting downgrade or upgrade signal. Reinforcement signals, sent by expected weapons transfers, lead to foreign policy continuity. Because these transfers are generally in line with existing political relationships, states should not change their foreign policies.

symbols of a relationship, even after the relationship has progressed to include large numbers of boom weapons.

¹⁰¹ Thanks to Ron Krebs for making this point so clearly.

¹⁰² Glaser 1997.

Upgrade Signals: Bolstering or Aggression

Upgrade signals facilitate bolstering behavior in status quo states, and aggression in revisionist ones. Status quo states want to build on their newly upgraded political relationship, and should take actions that include formalizing defense relationships, coordinating foreign or defense policies, or providing additional resources to their ally.¹⁰³ The status quo state's goal is to use the upgrade signal to secure its position in regional affairs. For example, the US agreed in 1968 to provide F-4 Phantom jets to Israel, a move that "signaled an enhanced American commitment to Israel's security."¹⁰⁴ This upgrade signal led Israel to more deeply coordinate its policies with the United States, and therefore exercise greater restraint in 1973 than it did in June 1967. While some of this restraint was surely due to feelings of military superiority stemming from Israel's military victory in June 1967, the restraint was also due to the upgrade signal sent by the Phantom transfer. In stark contrast to June 1967, when Israel broke with both US and French policy desires, Israel in 1973 was willing to bolster its newly upgraded relationship with the US through deeper policy coordination and consultation.

Revisionist states, on the other hand, should exhibit an aggressive foreign policy toward their adversaries. Following Mark Bell, I consider aggression "the more belligerent pursuit of goals in preexisting disputes or in pursuit of previously articulated interests."¹⁰⁵ This aggression can take a wide range of forms. For example, a state might try to provoke its

¹⁰³ Bell 2015, 97. Here I'm using "ally" informally, to include both formal pacts and more informal friendships/alliances.

¹⁰⁴ Rodman 2004b, 130.

¹⁰⁵ Bell 2015, 92-93.

adversary into attacking, thus allowing the state to invoke mutual defense agreements.¹⁰⁶

Alternately, the state might be more aggressive in negotiations, refusing to compromise and trying to extract greater concessions from its adversary. Regardless of form, this aggressive foreign policy stems from the upgrade signal, which indicates that the receiver has the political support of the sender.

It is also possible that the sender does not know just how aggressive the receiver will become, or how aggression will manifest. For that reason, upgrade signals should be the least common type of signal: senders do not want to endorse aggression or risk being dragged into conflict. For example, in 2014 the Canadian government approved a US\$15 billion deal with Saudi Arabia, for arms including advanced light armored vehicles.¹⁰⁷ This transfer is seen as endorsement of Saudi Arabia's repression of human rights, within Saudi Arabia and in Yemen.¹⁰⁸ Opponents of the deal believe that it has signaled tacit support for the Saudi government, has contributed to increased abuses against civilians, and will ultimately damage Canada's international reputation.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Few partnerships commit a state to support aggression by another. This strategy of an assertive foreign policy designed to provoke would allow the state to invoke any mutual defense pacts.

¹⁰⁷ Ramesh Thakur, "Canada's thorny arms deal," *The Japan Times*, 8 May 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2016/05/08/commentary/world-commentary/canadas-thorny-arms-deal/>.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Justin Ling, "Canada will sell weapons to Saudi Arabia, but says it might cancel deal after they're sold," *Vice News*, 13 April 2016, <https://news.vice.com/article/canada-will-sell-15-billion-in-arms-to-saudi-arabia-but-might-cancel-the-deal-after-theyre-sold>; David Pugliese, "After Saudi executions, new Canadian leaders still back \$15 billion vehicle deal," *Defense News*, 16 January 2016, <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2016/01/16/after-saudi-executions-new-canadian-leaders-still-back-15b-vehicle-deal/>.

Downgrade Signals: Re-alignment, Compromise, or Prevention

Downgrade signals worry the receiver about the future health of its relationship with the sender, and again lead to foreign policy changes. I first expect both revisionist and status quo states to attempt to re-align with an alternate partner. Whether a feasible alternate exists depends on how tightly a state is tied to a particular group. States that are loosely incorporated into a group of states should find it easier to seek an alternate partner than states that are more tightly tied. For example, during the Cold War, Pakistan was loosely incorporated to the West – all of its ties ran through the United States. This made China a feasible partner, especially because of previous conflict between China and India. The shared rival (India) and flexibility in Pakistan's relations presented China as a feasible alternate. Israel, on the other hand, was, by the 1960s, squarely incorporated into the Western bloc. It had received arms from the US, France, the UK, and West Germany, and was interested in joining the NATO alliance.¹¹⁰ These stronger ties made pursuing alignment with China and Russia a non-starter.

Re-alignment is also more feasible if multiple states produce the same type of weapons. Saudi Arabia in part turned to Canada in 2014 because both Sweden and the United States had decided to suspend arms sales. Though in this case Saudi Arabia has not re-aligned – it remains a Western ally – the case shows that re-alignment can be affected by patterns of weapons production, and is not strictly due to polarity in the international system. If re-alignment is possible, states will adjust their foreign policies in line with the signals coming from their new partner. If re-alignment is not an option, then I expect status quo states to

¹¹⁰ Dobell 1964, 293; Wolfenbarger 1990; Rodman 2007; Evron 1970, 83.

pursue a policy of compromise with their adversaries, and revisionist states to pursue prevention.

Status quo states will seek to guarantee as much of the status quo for as long as possible, and will therefore seek to make a deal before they become more vulnerable to an adversary's coercion. US signals of downgrade – including, in this case, the removal of US troops – to West Germany in the late 1960s facilitated *ostpolitik* as a strategy of compromise. Though West Germany wanted to pursue reunification with East Germany, the downgrade in its relationship with the US led West Germany to normalize relations with the Eastern bloc to ensure it did not become the target of Soviet or East German aggression.¹¹¹

Revisionist states should pursue prevention toward their adversaries. Instead of waiting for new political relationships to solidify, revisionist states will seek to act before they lose the ability to make changes to the existing state of affairs. This should especially be the case if revisionist states feel their adversaries are rising in power. The figure below summarizes the foreign policy effects of conventional arms transfers.

¹¹¹ Granieri 2009, 95; Griffith 1978.

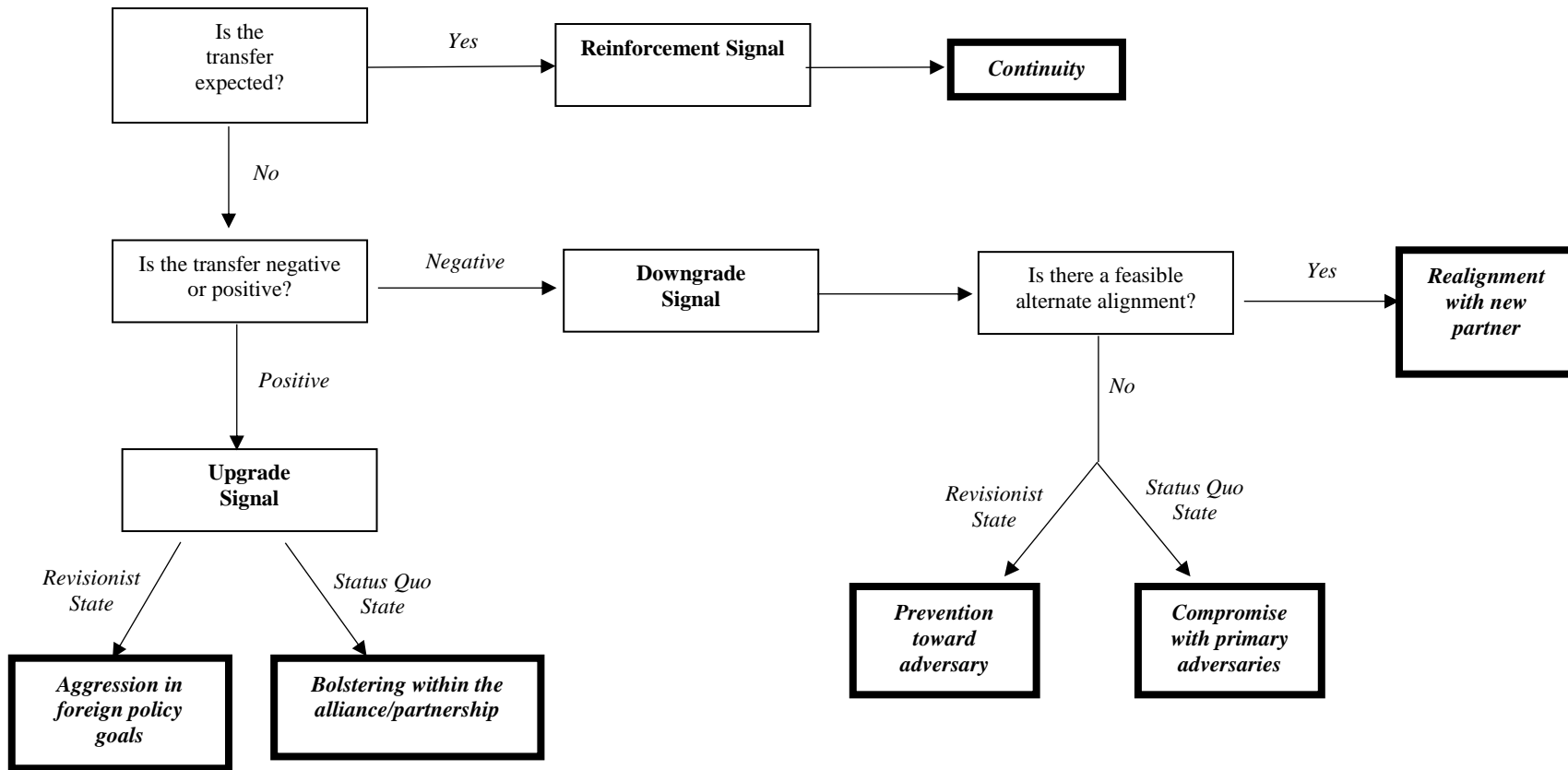


Figure 10: Theory of Arms Transfers and Foreign Policy

The first transfer(s) between states are a special case, because it makes evident ties that existed informally or just on paper. The first transfer establishes a baseline against which future transfers will be measured. The first transfer demonstrates the credibility and sincerity of ties and interests and is often preceded by years of economic aid (another indicator of shared interests), but the first transfer signals a new stage in the relationship. Unlike other goods, arms are unique in their power to constitute—or destroy—relations between states. This is clearly seen when the US transferred arms to Vietnam in late 2016. The US gave Vietnam US\$58.9 million in foreign aid in 2015, but it was the lifting of the arms embargo that sent a signal about new diplomatic ties, and sent a signal to China about aggression in the South China Sea.¹¹² The newness of these transfers – whether expected or unexpected – sets expectations for future transfers, but should not immediately enable aggressive foreign policy behaviors, because of the newness of the relationship. Similar to the expectations of realignment, states act cautiously following this first transfer, and policies will change after subsequent transfers.

Receivers Exercise Agency, Too

Much of the foregoing has implied that the receiver’s foreign policy is predetermined by the type of signal it receives. Readers are forgiven for coming away with the impression that this theory treats receiving states as non-agentic. The receiver exercises agency in two important ways. Receiver’s interpretation of events can differ from the sender’s, which results in “unexpected” foreign policy outcomes.¹¹³ For example, though US leaders

¹¹² On foreign aid, see: <http://us-foreign-aid.insidegov.com/q/190/1590/How-much-money-does-the-U-S-give-to-Vietnam>

¹¹³ See Padgett and Ansell 1993, 1263. for a discussion of how single actions can be coherently interpreted from multiple perspectives at the same time.

thought its negotiations to denuclearize Iran would be well received in the region, Saudi Arabia, a US ally, objected to new ties between the US and Iran. The US thought Saudi Arabia would welcome a non-nuclear Iran, but Saudi Arabia feared a new relationship between the US and Iran might jeopardize the Saudi-US relationship. In response, Saudi Arabia began diversifying its weapons suppliers, and bought prestigious weapons including the British Tornado and Hawk aircraft.¹¹⁴ Saudi Arabia also began showing off its non-US weapons, including the ineffective, but still prestigious DF-3 missile from China. This bling weapon, which Saudi Arabia purchased in the 1980s, was a central feature of military parades in the country.¹¹⁵ Experts remarked that Saudi Arabia's display of the missiles "was intended to signal to Washington its current discomfort with the way the US has handled Syria, the Arab Spring, and the Iranian nuclear issue."¹¹⁶

Second, receivers can try to move senders into structurally central positions, thus binding the sender to the receiver. The history of US-Israeli arms transfers is instructive. Despite efforts to portray its transfers to Israel as one-off transfers devoid of signaling content, the US became widely identified as Israel's primary weapons supplier by 1966. Repeated Israeli requests for bling and boom weapons, including M-48 Patton tanks, A-4E Skyhawk jets, and F-4 Phantom nuclear-capable jets, resulted in multiple US transfers to Israel – some made for the sole purpose of forcing Israel to temporarily pause its demands

¹¹⁴ Sorenson 2014.

¹¹⁵ Rachel Oswald, "Saudi Arabia unveil ballistic missiles in military parade, but why now?" *Defense One*, 30 April 2014, <http://www.defenseone.com/threats/2014/04/saudi-arabia-unveils-ballistic-missiles-military-parade-why-now/83530/>.

¹¹⁶ Aaron Stein, "A Gordian Knot: Missiles in the Gulf," *Arms Control Wonk*, 30 April 2014, <http://guests.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/4372/a-gordian-knot-missiles-in-the-gulf>.

on the US. As weapons transfers increased in type and number, the US found itself structurally central to relations in the Middle East, and unable to disengage, showing that receivers can exert significant influence over senders, too.

Long-Term Effects on Hierarchy and International Order

In the long-term, the signals sent through weapons transfer affect foreign policy is through the production and communication of status hierarchies within groups. Receiving one type of fighter jet instead of another type is one way that senders can draw boundaries around groups of states, marking some as closer allies than others, for example. This type of intra-group signaling is a common feature of international politics, and also affects state foreign policy choices. As shown in the following empirical chapter, giving or withholding particular weapons was one way the US and USSR signaled where receivers fit into alliance hierarchies.

Today, the F-15 Eagle fighter jet plays this role. It one of a number of highly capable and prestigious fighter jets in the US arsenal, such as the F-16 Fighting Falcon jet. But the F-15 is used to distinguish significant non-NATO US allies from other US allies. It is used by Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. By contrast, the F-16 Fighting Falcon is used by twenty-six states, including Chile, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey. Though the F-16 has some European operators, such as Norway, the Netherlands, Greece, and Belgium, the plane is more widely distributed than the F-15. The spread of fighter jets is one key way of establishing status hierarchies, though states usually reserve the best for themselves. The

F-22 jet is only used by the US, and the Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft is only used by six states: the UK, Germany, Italy, Spain, Austria, and Saudi Arabia.¹¹⁷

Establishing or clarifying a status hierarchy is often a deliberate motivation for sending (or denying) certain arms. States that feel they are in the core alliance or friendship of another state might act more aggressively than a state that sees itself as a more peripheral friend or ally. Once established, a status hierarchy feeds back into receivers' expectations of what weapons they should receive. A US NATO ally would expect to receive the same weapons as other NATO allies, and would be surprised if it was excluded from receiving a high-status plane like the F-35. Similarly, when non-NATO allies like South Korea are included in the production process of the F-35, this can contribute to their status position as a major non-NATO ally.¹¹⁸ A state's position in a status hierarchy also affects its perceptions of relative power, and feeds into the foreign policy choices a state can make.

It is not possible to identify which weapons are used for status creation based on the capabilities or signal of the weapon alone. Status creation weapons are empirically determined, based on the discourse about the weapon(s). For example, the F-104 Starfighter produced a US alliance hierarchy among US allies in Asia and the Middle East, but it's not immediately obvious that the F-104 would serve this purpose rather than other, similar aircraft.

¹¹⁷ This general trend makes the F-35 stand out even more. The states involved in producing the plane—Australia, Canada, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Turkey, the UK, and the US, with Israel, Japan, and South Korea as planned purchasers from the outset—don't fit any of the usual patterns of fighter jet transfers or co-production ventures.

¹¹⁸ See "Global Participation: The centerpiece of 21st century global security," Lockheed Martin, <https://www.f35.com/global>.

IMPLICATIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

The theory developed in this chapter presents an explanation of foreign policy based on a symbolic signaling mechanism. States can, and often do, send signals that rely on symbols, rather than costly actions, and these signals matter because they have observable effects on states' foreign policy behaviors. This type of signaling occupies the middle ground between the extremes of costly action and cheap talk: signals can come from social relationships and symbolic goods.¹¹⁹ Weapons transfers are not so exceptional that they are rare signals in international politics, nor are they so commonplace as to lose signaling meaning. They are instead common enough to be broadly comprehensible, but rare enough to have real foreign policy effects. Scholarship on signaling needs to be sensitive to context and contingency, and to the importance of shared meanings and understandings. Future research can identify other contexts where actors use social relationships and symbols to send political signals; I would suggest this type of signaling is not confined to weapons transfers, nor is it unique to international security.¹²⁰

This theory also demonstrates the importance of political relationships in explaining foreign policy and international security. Foreign policy is a complex and dynamic process, in which the past affects the present and the present will affect the future. To pull a dyad out of its historical and social context is to strip away relationships that matter for determining a state's foreign policy choices. Further, states beyond the sender-receiver dyad matter. Whether through establishing hierarchies, or signaling to the receiver's

¹¹⁹ See Fearon 1994. for the classic development of audience cost theory, and Fearon 1997 for a discussion of hands tying versus sinking costs. See also Jervis 1988; Fearon 1995.

¹²⁰ See, for example, Sartori 2005, 11.

adversaries, weapons transfers affect and are affected by the policies in multiple states. Relationships are not exogenous to behavior, nor is behavior exogenous to relationships.¹²¹ The emphasis on relationships throughout this project also shows just how much effort it takes to maintain them. Maintaining relationships takes work, because the giver must constantly feed the ravenous beast.

Finally, by treating arms as both military tool and symbol, this chapter shows the promise of linking materialist and constructivist approaches to international security. Addressing both dimensions of weapons shows that perceptions of relative power are a function of *both* military capabilities and relationships with other states. Weapons transfers serve the vital role of signaling and clarifying these political relationships. Combined with the focus on relationships, this work shows how international actors use symbols and signals to make and unmake relations that constitute world politics.

SCOPE CONDITIONS

Thus far the theoretical exposition has not specified which states are more or less likely to use arms transfers to send signals, nor which states are likely to purchase arms and receive signals. This section outlines key scope conditions, noting the difference between the theoretical expectations and what will be examined in the empirical chapters that follow.

1: Who can send a signal?

In theory, there are three types of states that are eligible to send signals through weapons transfers: major powers, regional powers, and states that occupy unique structural positions

¹²¹ See Fowler et al. 2011. for an extended discussion of causality in networks.

in the international system. Major powers can send signals because they are the states that can most credibly offer military and political support to other states. It is unsurprising that during the Cold War the United States and Soviet Union engaged in this type of behavior. By contrast, when Albania transferred old Soviet MiG-19 aircraft to China in 1965, this transfer was more likely about China wanting the MiG-19 than any expression of closeness between Albania and China. Most major powers also export weapons, so this first scope condition is not especially constraining for the theory. This dynamic plays out in a similar fashion for regional powers. Whereas an Egyptian transfer to Cambodia would not have much signaling power, an Egyptian transfer to Syria or Jordan would, because of regional dynamics.

The final type of state eligible to send signals are those in powerful structural positions. Their support is valuable by virtue of the structural position they occupy: states that are brokers between groups, or gatekeepers to a particular clique or group of states can exercise this power.¹²² Egypt and Yugoslavia – key members of the non-aligned movement (NAM) – were not major powers, but were still instrumental in spreading weapons to members of the NAM across the globe. Tracing weapons transfers from Egypt and Yugoslavia is one way to identify which states were included in the NAM and which states were excluded. Today, the UAE plays a similarly important role in distributing weapons—many of them secondhand—to other, smaller states in the Middle East. This second scope condition shows that power is derived from states' structural position, and that weapons transfers are

¹²² Carpenter 2011, 75; Goddard 2009, 250; Kahler, 21. Carpenter 2011, 75; Goddard 2009, 250; Kahler 21

still meaningful signals because they indicate inclusion or exclusion from particular groups.

The empirical chapters that follow primarily tell a story about US foreign policy, though I often reference transfers from other states, including the Soviet Union and France. The Soviet Union should also have used arms transfers to send signals during the Cold War, but limited access to archival records prevents a similar in-depth study. However, US records about Soviet weapons transfers do indicate that the Soviet Union engaged in similar arms transfer signaling dynamics. French arms transfers in the Middle East during the Cold War provide an additional check on the theory, and suggest that other major states can also send signals through arms transfers.

2: Who buys arms?

The decision to pursue arms is different in the conventional than in the nuclear realm. Whereas states that want nuclear weapons have to build their own, or at least locate nuclear facilities within their borders, most states don't have the option to sustain their own military with a domestic conventional arms industry. With the exception of the United States, all other weapons-producers need to export weapons in order to economically support their own domestic industry.¹²³ The necessity of maintaining an export market means that states rarely develop their own arms industry; nearly all senders of weapons are also receivers.

¹²³ See **Kapstein and Caverley on Tier I and Tier II states.

SIPRI identified 155 states that purchased major conventional arms between 2012 and 2016; the vast majority of countries seek arms.¹²⁴

CONCEPT ANALYSIS AND CASE SELECTION

To assess this theory, I use a multi-method research design that incorporates the quantitative analysis from the preceding chapter. I use three historical case studies to explore the causal mechanism of signaling and reveal of information, and also include a chapter of shorter contemporary cases that illustrates the ongoing relevance of this mechanism in explaining the link between arms and foreign policy today. This section describes how I evaluate the concepts to provide consistency across cases and time periods, and concludes with a section on case selection.

Prestige

To determine prestige, I first differentiate among weapons platforms – that is, I separate out in broad brush strokes aircraft, from armored vehicles, from missiles, and then within each of those categories, between attack/bomber aircraft and training/transport aircraft. This is in line with existing literature, which names supersonic aircraft, main battle tanks, and submarines as prestigious weapons. Though these weapons are not all offensive – supersonic aircraft are usually used as defensive interceptors – they all do have some sort of forward usage, either through firepower (tanks, submarines), or by movement (primarily aircraft and submarines). Aircraft and submarines are also technologically sophisticated.

¹²⁴ ** <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2017/state-major-arms-transfers-8-graphics>. The US accounted for the largest single share of arms exports, with 33% over the same time period.

There is, then, a non-determinative correlation between the tactical offense and technological sophistication and perceptions of prestige. In determining what weapons are prestige, I look for a baseline of either offense or technology, and then dig further into perceptions of the weapon.

Establishing a baseline means that there are some weapons that are never candidates for prestige, such as armored vehicles or rifles. These weapons have uses, but they don't meet the necessary requirement for consideration as a prestige weapon. Digging further in, I look for examples of actors talking about the weapons *without* reference to its usage. Is a weapon called glamorous, cool, or flashy for reasons other than its military usage? Do actors acknowledge problems or faults with the weapon and still desire it nonetheless? This type of analysis relies heavily on archival resources (for official opinion), and on historical news coverage (for both popular and official opinion). I have found—both from the empirical evidence and through my fieldwork—that public opinion about prestige in the realm of military instruments follows military opinion. This is likely because the general public does not know enough about various types of weapons to adjudicate between “cool” and “cool *and* useful,” so in cases where the official opinion is not known, the public reaction to weaponry is a good gauge of perceptions.

The DF-3 missile, produced by China and popular in the 1980s, is an example of a weapon considered prestigious despite its shortcomings on the capabilities side. The DF-3 is “exceedingly inefficient for the delivery of conventional munitions,” but Saudi Arabia purchased a number of them from China in 1988, and then went on to display these

weapons at a military parade in 2012 to demonstrate the prestige of its military.¹²⁵ Similarly, the F-104 fighter jet, as will be shown in greater detail in Chapter 4, had Mach-2 capabilities and a literally shiny body. But these capabilities did not make it tactically useful: the lightweight construction needed to enable Mach-2 meant the F-104 could not carry a meaningful payload; its short and narrow wings led to stalling problems in the engine, severely limiting the plane's use as an interceptor (its primary function). Various high-level US officials referred to this plane as a "glamour weapon,"¹²⁶ or a "shiny object,"¹²⁷ while simultaneously acknowledging the universal limitations on the plane's employment.

The other way prestige is indicated is when actors reference the weapon's lack of local tactical utility, but still desire the weapon. In 1968, the US considered giving Taiwan a squadron of F-4C aircraft, more for "reasons of prestige and desire to obtain some reaffirmation of US defense commitment, than by anticipated military needs."¹²⁸ Though the F-4C was a capable aircraft, it would not have been of military use for Taiwan's specific requirements. Taiwan thought there would be political benefits to receiving the prestigious weapon. Using this type of evidence allows me to get a sense of what actors thought about different types of weapons, and gives me more leverage on perceptions of prestige than imposing the requirement that all weapons of type X are necessarily prestigious.

¹²⁵ Lynn-Jones and Miller 1992, 398; Gertz 2014; Henderson 2014. On missiles as prestige technology, see Payne and Rudney 1998.

¹²⁶ Telegram State (Ball) to New Delhi, 20 August 1963, p. 3, RG 59, Box 3861, Folder DEF Defense Affairs US-Pak 1/1/63, USNA.

¹²⁷ Telegram New Delhi (Timmons) to State, 8 June 1963, RG 59, Box 3757, Folder DEF 19-3 US-India, USNA.

¹²⁸ Box 1688, Folder DEF 19-8 US-Chinat 1/1/68, Telegram State (Rusk) to Taipei, 1 November 1968

Military Utility

Military utility is a relative measure, comparing the specific weapon's performance to others of the same type, and is also concerned with potential local uses of the weapon. On the first point, I compare the capabilities of weapons produced and in use at the same time. For example, the F-104 fighter jet (mid-1950s) is compared to the F-86 (late-1940s), the F-5 (late-1950s), and the F-100 (mid-1950s). In addition to being produced in the same time frame, the empirical record shows that these planes were often discussed during the same negotiations, and that some of them were believed to be interchangeable with one another. I take note of the characteristics of the weapon, including speed, range, payload, caliber, etc., in order to get a sense of the relative capabilities of the weapon. A weapon is considered less tactically useful if a) it significantly underperforms compared to other available weapons, or b) it cannot perform its primary function. On the first criterion, if comparable tanks have an average speed of 25 miles per hour, and the tank under consideration tops out at 15 mph, the tank significantly underperforms compared to its peers. On the second criterion, though it might seem incomprehensible that states would produce, buy, and sell weapons that cannot perform basic functions, this does happen. The DF-3 missile, produced by China, was notorious for its inability to hit its programmed target.

For local context, I look at a variety of factors that can impede a state making full use of the weapon. The example of Singapore hoarding old German tanks is extreme; the island city-state has no land borders, and tanks generally destroy city roads. There are, though, more general reasons why a weapon can have diminished local use.

Geography

Mountains or water barriers can make it difficult to use certain weapons. For example, supersonic aircraft can be less effective in mountainous areas because radar – needed to guide these planes and their ordnance – is often not placed in this difficult terrain, and the topography can interfere with signals from more distant bases.

State infrastructure

States can lack the physical infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, or waterways, to use weapons. For example, India desired main battle tanks from the US and UK, but would have been unable to deploy these weapons in the places where it would have fought because the tanks were too heavy to drive over bridges. Though the armor on the tanks and caliber of its main gun contributed to the prestige of these tanks, there was little tactical use for them in the places where India would fight.

Military skill level

As technological sophistication increases – and thus the likelihood of prestige – so too does the level of skill needed to both master the weapon and incorporate it into operations. It can take a year for pilots to learn to fly a new aircraft, never mind for that aircraft to be effectively incorporated into existing arsenals. For surface ships and submarines, weapons that involve the workings of an entire crew, this learning can be even greater. For example, though the F-104 fighter jet was a prestigious Mach-2 aircraft, but Pakistan's low level of pilot skill and lack of integrated radar capability severely diminished the tactical utility of the aircraft. Though soldiers and pilots can be trained to operate new weapons systems, in many cases this takes a significant period of time. The US estimated it would take a minimum of nine months for experienced Pakistani pilots to learn to fly the F-104, never mind use it in tactical maneuvers.

Missing or deficient support and maintenance

Weapons have an attrition rate from use (battle deployment as well as general wear and tear). Without proper maintenance and support, including the steady flow of spare parts, the operational life of the weapon quickly decreases, particularly in areas of harsh conditions (e.g., extreme weather temperature, or deserts where sand can get into engines and can also damage stealth technology). For this reason, the number of weapons can often matter for tactical utility; if a state does not have weapons to replace damaged ones, or to cannibalize for spare parts, there is limited use to the weapon. Though the lack of support systems is a constraint on tactical utility only in extreme cases, since supply and maintenance agreements are often included in the initial weapons contract, it can affect the speed with which a state can employ a new weapon. For example, US arms transfers to Vietnam are expected to be only a gradual change in Vietnam's military capabilities, partly because of the types of weapons it will receive, and partly due to Vietnam's lack of the necessary support and maintenance structures.¹²⁹

Shared Strategic Interests

Recall that this concept captures both "objective" types of alignment, such as defense pacts, shared threat perceptions, significant economic ties, or natural resource dependence, as well as diffuse or ideational ties like shared worldview, or cultural affinity. Defense pacts, economic ties, and natural resources are readily observable through existing databases. The other reasons, though, require a deeper knowledge of the cases, and of national security

¹²⁹ Franz-Stefan Gady, "US arms sales to Vietnam: A military analysis," *The Diplomat*, 6 June 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/06/us-arms-sales-to-vietnam-a-military-analysis/>.

narratives. The degree of common and conflicting interests is an important part of the framework, but it is not the primary dimension of interest. I therefore rely on archival evidence, memoirs, and heavily on secondary sources to determine shared worldview, regional goals, and threat interpretation. Where there are disagreements – either within governments or in the scholarly literature – about national security or worldview, I note this in the footnotes, and default to the perspectives of the heads of state and civilian and military leadership that had say over what weapons to send and accept.

The problem of economic ties

In the contemporary period economic ties can serve analytical purpose – though that role should be based on the relative weight of the tie (i.e., how much trade occurs between states) rather than simply the existence of a trade tie – the economics of weapons transfers during the Cold War are more complicated. Prior to 1982, the United States provided weaponry on a grant basis through the Military Assistance Program.¹³⁰ This often took the form of the US providing grant funding to a country so that it could “buy” US weapons. It was therefore *not* a prerequisite that the country be able to afford the weapon in order to receive it.

Even in the current period of weapons transfers, qualitative changes to the ways that weapons deals are negotiated has further complicated the effects of economic variables. A confluence of factors – increased competition from new weapon suppliers; greater cost of research, design, and production; reductions in military spending; and longer life-spans and dual-purpose weapons – now mean that every weapons sale is crucial for defense firms.

¹³⁰ “Military Assistance Program,” *Federation of American Scientists*, <https://fas.org/asmp/campaigns/training/MAP%20-%20SAMM.pdf>.

Only weapons manufacturers in the US – who can rely on the immense US military budget – are somewhat free from this pressure to constantly earn sales. This dynamic has flipped the usual story of leverage. Traditionally, supplying weapons to a state gave the supplier leverage over the receiver: by threatening to cut off future transfers the supplier could affect the receiver’s policies both foreign and domestic. However, the imperative to gain business has given leverage to the receivers. They have been able to extract additional goods and services – known as offsets – from the defense manufacturers. For some states this has involved the transfer of technology or knowledge alongside weapons. For others, offsets have become an integral part of the state’s development. Malaysia, for one, has used offsets to jump-start its Green Technology sector, to fund domestic infrastructure projects, and has even leveraged weapons purchases from the UK into spots for Malaysian students at higher educational institutions in the UK. I provide this extended discussion of the economics of weapons trade to show that a) cost-benefit analysis of purchasing weapons has to take into account intangibles like technology and education, and b) the economics of the weapons trade has become increasingly complex over the last fifteen years and can no longer simply be an input variable. The chart below summarizes the key questions asked of the evidence in order to determine prestige, military utility, and shared strategic interest.

Prestige	Military Utility	Strategic Interest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the weapon meet the baseline of offensive power or technology? • Do actors reference the weapon <i>without</i> talking about its use? • Do actors acknowledge the weapon’s lack of local use, but still want it? • When was the weapon last used by a great power? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the weapon perform its primary function? • How many weapons were included in the transfer? • How old is the weapon? Is it second-hand? • What is the state’s integration capacity (e.g., missiles, radar)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do states share threat perceptions? • Do the states have defense pacts? • Does one state depend on the other for natural resources or other goods? • Do the states share cultural, language, or other affinity ties?

Table 4: Concept Analysis

Case Selection

The three cases share a general strategic environment characterized by (1) an enduring rivalry; (2) power asymmetries; and (3) great power interest. This strategic environment means each case is ripe for conflict, states are interested in the balance of power, and have the possibility of receiving arms from an external supplier. Therefore, the cases present a number of countervailing conditions for a signaling argument.¹³¹

I leverage between- and within-case comparison in three cases, US arms transfers to: India and Pakistan, 1954-1966; Israel, Egypt, and Jordan, 1962-1969; and China and Taiwan, 1970-1979. Each case takes place during the Cold War, and the bipolar international structure holds a variety of variables constant. Finding the same patterns, processes, and outcomes between cases reduces the likelihood of a confounding variable or process doing the work.

¹³¹ Rapport 2015, 433-435; Eckstein 1975, 118-120.

Within each case I analyze transfers of each type of weapon, vary whether they are expected or unexpected, and also give examples of non-transfers. I trace the transfers from negotiation through delivery to outcome, in order to directly connect the weapon transfer to foreign policy behavior. The transfers analyzed in each case are not independent of one another; transfers at later periods of time build on the expectations and outcomes of previous ones.

There are, then, two sets of “casing.” The first is around types of state relationships – each case is a different example of friend and adversary configurations. The second is around types of weapons transferred within each case: I trace the four types of weapons and the lack of transfer in each. The transfers vary in type and amount, and I note transfers that both occur and did not occur. Each case address foreign policy behaviors that are puzzling, and that can be answered by understanding the signals sent and (mis)perceived in each case.

India and Pakistan

This case shows how signals sent through weapons transfers help explain the ebbs and flows in the enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan. It begins with Pakistan’s signing of defense agreements with the US in 1954, and ends with the 1965 India-Pakistan war in Kashmir. The chapter addresses why Pakistan – a revisionist state – did not take advantage of India’s defeat by China in 1962, and instead allowed the status quo to reign in the disputed territory of Kashmir. The chapter also addresses *how* pivotal deterrence failed in 1965, and encouraged Pakistan to attack India. More broadly, this chapter shows how weapons transfers are implicated in producing and communicating status hierarchies: some

of the fighter jets received by Pakistan indicated that it was a high-status US ally, while the denial of other planes knocked Pakistan down a few rungs on the status ladder.

Israel, Egypt, and Jordan

This case study focuses on the development of US-Israeli relations, beginning with the 1962 transfer of Hawk surface-to-air missiles, and ending with the 1968 transfer of F-4 Phantom jets, cementing the United States as Israel's primary weapons supplier. The case study offers an amended explanation of the 1967 war, by focusing on the pivotal role of Jordan, and on Israeli anxiety. The United States failed to reassure Jordan in April 1967 – it had expected to receive fighter jets and instead received rifles and utility trucks. Feeling snubbed by the US, Jordan unexpectedly aligned with Egypt. Simultaneously, Israel received contradictory signals from the US and France, which fueled its anxieties about its political alliances with these states.

China and Taiwan

Finally, the case of China and Taiwan shows how the policy of strategic ambiguity was developed and sustained through weapons transfers. While the US was initially aligned with Taiwan and opposed to mainland China, the Nixon administration's opening to China was the beginning of shifting allegiances in the area. Arms transfers to Taiwan helped reassure it that the US would prevent a Chinese attack, and also deterred China from making a move against Taiwan. The case shows how arms transfers compare to other signals, such as diplomatic visits, economic aid, and public statements.

Chapter 3. Shooting for the Starfighter: US transfers to India and Pakistan, 1954-1965

Situated on the front lines of the Cold War, India and Pakistan were key pieces in political maneuvering at the grand strategic level. The US and Soviet Union wanted to prevent each other from developing client states in South Asia. India and Pakistan fiercely contested disputed territory in Kashmir, and had an almost pathological fear of one another. As each sought weapons and allies to obtain military and political superiority over the other, the sub-continent seemed ripe for conflict.

This chapter uses weapons transfers from the US to India and Pakistan between 1954 and 1967 to explain key foreign policy puzzles: why did Pakistan draw away from the US, and toward China, in the mid-1960s? why did war erupt in Kashmir in 1965, and not earlier? The signals sent by weapons transfers (and the lack of certain transfers) help make sense of these otherwise puzzling behaviors.

This chapter proceeds as follows. I first provide the historical background necessary to make sense of the relationships between India, Pakistan, and the superpowers. I then show the expectations generated by my theoretical framework, and explain the specific weapons transfers analyzed in this chapter. Finally, I trace a series of arms transfers from negotiation to outcome, to demonstrate how the signal sent by the transfer explains political outcomes. I conclude with more general observations about signaling in social networks, status hierarchies, and the role of (mis)perceptions.

CONTEXT AND EXPECTATIONS

India and Pakistan gained independence from the British Empire in 1947; India retained the majority of the British military equipment while Pakistan inherited a tenuous geostrategic position and a distinct lack of military hardware.¹³² Split into East and West Pakistan, the country was vulnerable to incursions from both India and China, and fought an almost-immediate war with India over the territories of Jammu and Kashmir.¹³³ This set the stage for Indo-Pakistani relations throughout the Cold War. Control over Kashmir continues to plague Indian-Pakistani relations to this day, and proved a thorn in superpower dealings with the subcontinent. The imperative to gain and hold control of Kashmir animated foreign policy behaviors in both India and Pakistan.

The quality of the relationship between the United States and both Pakistan and India fluctuated during the first decades of the Cold War. Following independence, the US incorporated Pakistan into its military assistance bureaucracy. Pakistan signed Mutual Defense Assistance Agreements in 1950 and 1954, and US weapons were sent to Pakistan beginning in 1955. Pakistan also joined Western-oriented regional defense treaties, including the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Baghdad Pact (later CENTO) in 1955.¹³⁴ India, on the other hand, maintained a non-aligned position and received weaponry and aid from some Western States (primarily France and the UK) as

¹³² Burke 1973, 149. For a concise history of India-Pakistan relations prior to 1955, see Trivedi 1977, 25-51.

¹³³ Paul 2005, 8.

¹³⁴ Burke 1973, 165.

well as the Soviet Union. The alignment of Pakistan with the West and India as a neutral party held until October 1962, when India fought a border war with China.

Fought on the heels of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the border war was seen by India and the US as heralding new Chinese interest in the subcontinent. At the strategic level, this conflict fundamentally altered how US policymakers viewed South Asian politics. The US rushed emergency military aid to India and began to view India and Pakistan as cogs in the greater Cold War struggle, rather than as regional rivals. The Kennedy administration tried to woo India to a more Western-friendly position by taking advantage of the vulnerabilities India felt after the 1962 war.¹³⁵ An uneasy triad of relations persisted from 1962-1965, with the US hoping to improve its relations with India while maintaining strong ties with Pakistan. Such a triad was impossible to maintain, and Pakistan, feeling slighted by new US interests in India, attacked India in September 1965.¹³⁶ The US imposed a complete arms embargo on India and Pakistan as a result of this war, a ban which was only lifted in 1975. Overall, then, the intensity of the relationship between the US and India and Pakistan varied between 1954 and 1967.

There are two final pieces of information necessary for understanding regional dynamics. First, by any account of relative military power, India remained preponderant over Pakistan even after Pakistan received US weaponry. The numerical balance of forces grew from 2.5 to 1 in 1952 to a maximum of 11.5 to 1 between 1962 and 1965. However, this was a numerical—not a quality—balance; India simply had a larger population and a

¹³⁵ Haqqani 2013, 97; Crawford 2003, 136.

¹³⁶ Burke 1973, 329; Crawford 2003, 136.

larger army.¹³⁷ These crude measures overlook strategic considerations that would have prevented India from using all of its military power in a conflict with Pakistan. Most of India's forces were deployed along the Himalayan border with China, and would not have been available for engagement with Pakistan.¹³⁸

Second, the weapons received by Pakistan, and later by India, were part of the US Military Assistance Program (MAP). This program provided weapons at little to no cost to US friends and allies.¹³⁹ Weapons provided under MAP meant that economic constraints were due to US budget outlays, not the purchasing power of India or Pakistan. MAP aid also has a longer logistics and planning period than outright purchases. Pakistan would submit its "wish list" to the military officer in charge of the Military Assistance Advisory Group, who would make an evaluation of Pakistan's military needs, and forward his recommendations to the Ambassador and to State Department officials in the US. These policymakers would analyze the political consequences of transferring the recommended weapons. Weapons were only transferred after this lengthy process. As a result, transfers were planned three years in advance, with some State Department officials arguing for a five-year planning process. The degree of bureaucracy involved in administering MAP aid meant that neither Pakistan nor India was able to get weaponry quickly. Funding for the program was also subject to the whims of Congress, which allocated funds to the Departments of State and Defense. With the exception of emergency aid – which could

¹³⁷ Diehl, Goertz, and Saeedi 2005, 38.

¹³⁸ Cohen 1976, 51.

¹³⁹ Hammond et al. 1983, 3.

only be extended in dire circumstances and on a limited basis – US arms transfers were planned years in advance of when the weapon was delivered.

Expectations: Balance of Capabilities

The enduring rivalry over Kashmir and the general hostility between India and Pakistan means that this is a hard case for my signaling argument: the primary logic of weapons acquisition should be based on building real military capabilities. Both states should be sensitive to changes in the relative balance of power. They should actively seek capable and prestigious weapons, and be skeptical of less capable, though prestigious weapons. Specifically, India and Pakistan should desire weapons that help extend supply lines and get troops into the mountainous region of Kashmir, and light tanks and subsonic jets that would enable fighting on Western and Eastern borders. India and Pakistan should seek allies that will boost their military capability relative to the other, and should urge those allies to commit to defend them against aggression from the other. Finally, India and Pakistan should exploit moments of weakness in the other, whether that weakness stems from declining military power or perceived lack of political will to hold Kashmir.

Because India and Pakistan were situated on the front lines in the Cold War, the US and USSR should use weapons transfers to accomplish their own “strategic goals.” While existing literature is ambiguous about what “strategic goals” means, we can assume that the US wanted to protect the sovereignty of its ally (Pakistan) and wanted to woo India to the West. The Soviet Union wanted to similarly cultivate India as a friendly state, and to prevent the US from influencing the subcontinent through Pakistan. Knowing that India and Pakistan were concerned about relative capabilities, we should thus see the US and

Soviet Union providing weapons to sweeten the deal: they should transfer highly capable and prestigious weapons when trying to influence India or Pakistan. To restate this point: weapons acquisition in India and Pakistan should be guided by the balance of power. All parties involved should want to send and receive highly prestigious and highly capable weaponry. It is therefore highly unexpected for either state to seek weapons with minimal military capabilities, or to restrain itself from taking advantage of momentary weakness in the other.

Finally, Pakistan's military was entirely dependent on the United States. Unlike India, it did not inherit former British equipment and was unable to produce even small arms domestically. Therefore, Pakistan should have been vulnerable to US leverage and pressure.¹⁴⁰ Pakistan's foreign policy should conform to US strategic goals, and the US should be able to restrain in Pakistan in its dealings with India. Pakistan's vulnerability should increase its support for the SEATO and Baghdad Pact/CENTO alliances. By contrast, India could rely on its large stockpile of colonial British weaponry, and had independent manufacturing capabilities for small arms. Therefore, India should have more foreign policy freedom, but should be careful not to jeopardize its non-aligned position by accepting too many weapons from either the US or USSR.

The sections that follow discuss a series of weapons transfers, beginning with the transfer of F-86 fighter jets and M-47 Patton tanks from the US to Pakistan in the late 1950s. As the first transfers between the US and Pakistan, they were expected and reinforced ties between the two states. Pakistan next requested, and expected to receive,

¹⁴⁰ Catrina 1988.

the F-100 advanced fighter jet. This transfer was denied, since the plane was given only to the NATO allies. The denial was quickly followed by non-transfers caused by US budget reduction and changes in administration. Pakistan took the combination of the F-100 denial and subsequent non-transfers as a signal that its relations with the US had soured. It therefore sought reassurance through the transfer of the F-104 Starfighter, a flashy bling weapon that would have signaled strong ties to the US. After China and India fought a border war in 1962, the US extended military aid to India. Though these transfers were of backbone and blip weapons, India and Pakistan both interpreted the transfers as a signal of change. Pakistan, fearing a budding US-India relationship, again requested the F-104 for reassurance purposes, but was ultimately denied the weapon.

Many of the weapons transfers were negotiated simultaneously, or in quick succession. Further, negotiations with one state were often conducted concurrently with negotiations with others. The transfers that resulted from one negotiation effected subsequent negotiations. The analysis that follows highlights important simultaneous or successive events that bear on the weapons transfers and the effects of the signals. After analyzing each series of transfers, I turn to alternate explanations to show that the signal from the weapon transfer, not something else, accounts for observed behaviors.

AMERICA'S MOST ALLIED ALLY: FIRST TRANSFERS TO PAKISTAN

Between 1950 and 1955, Pakistan signed two mutual defense assistance agreements with the US, and joined the regional defense organizations SEATO and the Baghdad Pact. The multitude of ties with the US led Pakistan's President, Mohammed Ayub Khan, to describe

Pakistan as America's "most allied ally."¹⁴¹ These defense agreements were signed in large part because Pakistan portrayed its strategic use and its vulnerability in a way that appealed to the US. Even before it signed defense agreements with the United States, Pakistani leaders and media tried to cultivate an image of a friendly South Asian state. Shortly after independence, Pakistani Prime Minister Noon said that the US should realize, "Pakistan is the Eastern bastion against communism as Turkey for Western nations. It is in the interest therefore of the US to give military and economic support to Pakistan as well as to Turkey."¹⁴² *Dawn*, a left-leaning and progressive newspaper, published an editorial in April 1952 describing Communism as a "prowling monster," and stating that Islam "shared with the democratic west the basic concept of liberty and freedom of conscience." The editorial urged closer relations with the United States.¹⁴³ The Pakistani government gave rhetorical support to the US intervention in Korea, to show that it was committed to the defense of the "free world."¹⁴⁴

Pakistan's rhetorical maneuvering was successful in framing the future of Pakistan as a vital strategic interest for US policymakers. The US defined its objectives in Pakistan as "the continuance of non-Communist governments willing[ness] and [ability] to resist Communist blandishments or pressures from within and without."¹⁴⁵ By emphasizing its opposition to Communism, Pakistan smoothly played to broader national security

¹⁴¹ Ayub Khan 1967, 176.

¹⁴² Chary 1995, 98.

¹⁴³ Burke, 1973 #4001@95 }

¹⁴⁴ Chary 1995, 94.

¹⁴⁵ International Cooperation Administration, *Evaluation of Pakistan Program*, 1 February 1957, p. 4, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-257, document 790D.5-MSP/4-1557, US National Archives (USNA).

narratives in the United States. The State Department's Pakistan Working Group, stated that the US provided military assistance to Pakistan primarily for political reasons, in order to "maintain an atmosphere of friendly relations."¹⁴⁶ The State Department noted the political importance of Pakistan, "with its western wing oriented toward the Middle East and its eastern portion oriented toward Southeast Asia, provided a logical choice to incorporate pivotally in the security arrangements which were created to shore-up both regions against further communist aggression."¹⁴⁷ Though their motivations were slightly different – Pakistan felt US support was necessary for its survival as a country, whereas the US thought Pakistan was an important front-line in the Cold War¹⁴⁸ – the outcome was the same: Pakistan was incorporated into US alliance and policy structures.

The shared threat perceptions, particularly with regard to China, led Pakistan to expect US transfers of highly capable and prestigious weapons. These expectations were met: in 1956, Pakistan received 76 M-47 Patton tanks and 120 F-86 Sabre jets; both among the most capable available at the time. As the first transfers, my theory anticipates that these weapons reinforce the ties that existed on paper and the shared worldview between Pakistan and the US. Pakistan should feel more confident and secure in its regional position. India should object to the weapons both on the basis of Pakistan's increased capabilities as well

¹⁴⁶ Pakistan Working Group, Draft on "Strategic Aspects of US military assistance to Pakistan", 15 June 1959, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-259, document 790D.5-MSP/7-1259, USNA.

¹⁴⁷ Foreign Service Despatch, Karachi to State, "coordinated country team development of FY 1961 military aid proposals," 29 May 1959, p. 21, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-259, 790D.5-MSP/5-2959, USNA.

¹⁴⁸ Karachi (Hildreth) to State, 19 May 1956, p. 2-3, RG 59, Box 3875, Folder 790D.5MSP/1-1156, document 790D.5-MSP/5-1956; International Cooperation Administration (ICA), *Evaluation of Pakistan Program*, 1 February 1957, p. 4, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-257, document 790D.5-MSP/4-1557, USNA.

as the evident political alliance between the US and Pakistan. The observed outcomes of the initial transfers largely accord to these expectations.

US officials portrayed the transfers as routine and obvious actions between close allies. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles summarized the transfer of F-86 Sabres in 1956:

The planes form part of the long-term program worked out between Pakistan and the United States on the basis of the military aid agreement. The undertaking to include modern jets in the program was reached in 1954 soon after the agreement was signed. It takes about eighteen months in 'lead time' to schedule, produce, and deliver this type of aircraft. As has been stated previously the purpose of the United States program of military aid to Pakistan is to help defend the Middle East and Southeast Asia against possible Communist aggression.¹⁴⁹

In an effort to manage India's opposition to the transfers, US Ambassador Horace Hildreth recommended handling any publicity about the planes' arrival "in such a way as to attempt to show arrival of these planes was no emergency move by GOP or US due to developing situation but dated back to commitments made nearly two years ago."¹⁵⁰ The statements from Dulles and Hildreth both emphasize that the arms transfers were a perfectly natural extension of the shared strategic interests between the US and Pakistan.

As expected by my theory, the Indian reaction focused on the balance of power and beliefs that Pakistan's belligerency would increase. The leader of Uttar Pradesh, a state in northern India, called the transfer "an act of hostility to India," that greatly endangered India's security.¹⁵¹ He was not wrong: the F-86 matched the capabilities of India's primary

¹⁴⁹ Telegram State (Dulles) to Embassy Karachi and Embassy New Delhi, 7 June 1956, RG 59, Box 3875, Folder 790D.5MSP/1-1156, document 790D.5-MSP/6-756, USNA.

¹⁵⁰ Telegram Karachi (Hildreth) to State, 13 April 1956, pp. 1-32, RG 59, Box 3875, Folder 790D.5MSP/1-1156, document 790D.5-MSP/4-1356, USNA.

¹⁵¹ "Indian papers blast US arms pact," 11 March 1959, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)*, ID: FBIS-FRB-59-049.

fighter jet – the British-produced Hunter – with the benefit of being ten years newer. India further believed that this type of US support for Pakistan led Pakistan to adopt a confrontational approach with India.¹⁵² Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Ayub, “The mere fact that large scale rearmament and military expansion takes place in Pakistan must necessarily have repercussions in India. The whole psychological atmosphere between the two countries will change for the worse and every question that is pending between us will be affected by it.” He went on to say that the “expansion of Pakistan’s war resources with the help of the USA can only be looked upon as an unfriendly act in India and one that is fraught with danger.”¹⁵³ The effects of US military aid affected US-Indian relations, too. In the defense realm, India turned to the Soviet Union in order to offset US aid to Pakistan.¹⁵⁴ This was the first step in closer relations between India and the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁵ In other areas, India let negotiations with the US over an air-transit agreement flounder inconclusively, and Nehru regularly attacked the US and US-sponsored defense pacts.¹⁵⁶

The F-86 and M-47 transfers increased Pakistan’s military capabilities, and also caused its relations with India to sour. The transfers increased Pakistan’s confidence in its capacity to use force, which led Pakistan to increase its belligerency in other international arenas,

¹⁵² Kapur and Ganguly 2007, 646.

¹⁵³ Trivedi 1977, 51.

¹⁵⁴ Telegram London (Barbour) to Secretary of State, 19 January 1956, RG 59, Box 3875, Folder 790D.5MSP/1-1156, document 790D.5-MSP/1-1956, USNA; Telegram New Delhi (Bunker) to State, 22 August 1957, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-257, document 790D.5-MSP/8-2257, USNA.

¹⁵⁵ McMahan 1996, 217.

¹⁵⁶ McMahan 1996, 215.

including the 1955 Bandung Conference.¹⁵⁷ Equally important, even these routine, alliance standard operating procedure transfers had broader political consequences: they reinforced the nascent US-Pakistani relationship.

These initial transfers were important because they were the *first* transfers from the US to Pakistan. My theory expects that first transfers always have a political signaling effect, and this effect was particularly evident in the case of Pakistan. Even after signing the two mutual defense agreements, US weapons did not immediately pour into Pakistan. Ayub, then the Commander in Chief of the Army, expressed dissatisfaction with what he perceived as the US dragging its feet. He told US Consul General Eugene Fisk that Pakistan's lack of weapons from the US meant that he "cannot trust the Americans' word."¹⁵⁸ More disconcerting to the US, Ayub said that the King of Saudi Arabia told him, "you cannot rely on the Americans; you cannot trust them." Ayub knew that the Shah of Iran, and leaders in Lebanon and Iraq held similar opinions.¹⁵⁹ Ayub further warned, "people are saying that America is resorting to political opportunism with Pakistan. If this becomes a widely held opinion you are not going to succeed in your policies in this area."

¹⁶⁰ For Ayub, and other leaders in the region, the *fact* of US military deliveries was important to demonstrate the strength and sincerity of the US commitment to Pakistan.

¹⁵⁷ Trivedi 1977, 54.

¹⁵⁸ Foreign Service Despatch, Lahore (Fisk) to State, "Ayub says US letdown on military aid to Pakistan may kill American prestige in the Middle East," 4 October 1955, p. 1, RG 59, Box 3875, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-355, 790D.5-MSP/10-455, USNA.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3

Once the jets and tanks were delivered in late 1956, Ayub and others had proof of the US commitment.

The first transfers were essential in making the ties that existed on paper real to both Pakistan and external observers. But the F-86 also raised Pakistan in the US alliance status hierarchy. As reported by the *New York Times* in June 1956, the F-86 “would give Pakistan a modern jet air arm superior to that of almost any other Asian ally of the United States except Nationalist China.”¹⁶¹ Because only Taiwan had similar jets, observers interpreted this transfer as signaling Pakistan’s elevation to the status of significant ally. The F-86—a rare weapon in this part of the world—signaled the seriousness with which the US approached its relationship with Pakistan.

The initial transfers made Pakistan more confident in its relations with the US, elevated Pakistan to the status of key Asian ally, and represented the sincerity of US commitment to its allies. Thrilled that it had been raised to the status of an important Asian ally – equivalent to Taiwan – through the F-86 transfer, Pakistan next requested the F-100 fighter jet to test the extent of its importance to the US. The F-100 was a Mach-capable plane with a significantly larger operational radius than the F-86.¹⁶² The capabilities and the prestige of the F-100 made this a very desirable weapon for Pakistan. Pakistani Ambassador Mohammed Ali said that Pakistan was aware that F-100 fighter squadrons were being given to the NATO allies, and as a key ally of the US, Pakistan wanted the same equipment.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Telegram State (Dulles) to Karachi, 25 June 1956, RG 59, Box 3875, Folder 790D.5MSP/1-1156, document 790D.5-MSP/6-2356, USNA.

¹⁶² Telegram State (Rusk) to Rawalpindi, 2 September 1963, RG 59, Box 3757, Folder DEF 19-3 Defense Affairs, USNA.

¹⁶³ Memorandum of Conversation, “light bomber and fighter squadron for Pakistan,” 11 April 1958, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-258, document 790D.5-MSP/4-1158, USNA.

However, the US had to deny this request because there were not enough planes to give to both NATO and Pakistan. If Pakistan wanted the plane, it would have to wait two years for production to increase. Thus, Pakistan achieved the same status as Taiwan, but it was not, in US eyes, structurally equivalent to the core, Western European allies. This abrupt introduction into alliance hierarchy may have passed without incident, but cuts to the foreign aid budget meant that the denial of the F-100 coincided with both reduced funding for other military equipment and the completion of the initial 1955 defense assistance agreement.

DOWNGRADE SIGNALS AND THREATS OF RE-ALIGNMENT

This confluence of factors – denial, completion, and reduction in budget – amounted to non-transfers, and caused anxiety among Pakistani leadership, who believed they were seeing signals of a downgraded US-Pakistan relationship. Their doubts about the strength of the US commitment increased once the Kennedy administration came to power. Kennedy and his advisors suggested that India, not Pakistan, was a more natural partner for the US. After the Senate decision to cut future US military aid to Pakistan, Ambassador Ali told US officials in Washington that his government “interpreted recent trends in American opinion with regard to military aid as indicating a loss of interest on the part of the United States in Pakistan.”¹⁶⁴ As anticipated by my theory, Pakistan threatened to pursue re-alignment as the result of these downgrade signals. The entire rationale for the US alignment with Pakistan – strength against Communist aggression – was thrown into

¹⁶⁴ Bartlett to Jones, Memorandum re: Call by Pakistan Ambassador, 21 July 1959, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-259, document 790D.5-MSP/7-2159, USNA.

crisis when Pakistan threatened to seek arms from the Soviet Union if the US did not continue to treat Pakistan as a full ally and provide her with more military equipment.¹⁶⁵

In 1958 the US began planning its military transfers to Pakistan for fiscal years 1959 and 1960. The initial US commitments made to Pakistan under the 1954 Aide Memoire were nearing completion, and the MAP proposal for fiscal year 1960 was austere – a result of near-completion as well as US Congressional budget cuts. William Rountree, US Ambassador to Pakistan, warned that a program lacking in bling and boom weapons would provoke a significantly negative reaction in Pakistan.¹⁶⁶

US budget cuts led the US to say, in 1958, that it could not give Pakistan bomber planes until at least the 1960 fiscal year. This exacerbated Pakistan's fears of future abandonment. Prime Minister Noon said this was evidence that the US had "gone back on its word," and now was denying the transfer of weapons that had been promised.¹⁶⁷ State Department documents from May 1958 show that the US was not planning to transfer any additional boom or bling weapons to Pakistan: "The department does not recommend the provision of more military hardware than is necessary to fulfill the commitment in the 1954 Aide Memoire plus reasonable quantities of maintenance material and replacements."¹⁶⁸ This was, from Pakistan's perspective, a marked change in its relationship with the US. The

¹⁶⁵ Telegram Karachi (Langley) to State, 17 July 1959, p. 1, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-259, document 790D.5-MSP/7-1459, USNA.

¹⁶⁶ Telegram Karachi (Rountree) to State, 19 September 1959, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/8-559, document 790D.5-MSP/9-1759, USNA.

¹⁶⁷ Telegram Karachi (Langley) to State, 27 February 1958, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-258, document 790D.5-MSP/2-2758, USNA.

¹⁶⁸ Foreign Service Despatch, Karachi to State, "Coordinated country team development of FY 1960 military aid proposals," 2 May 1958, p. 2, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-258, document 790D.5-MSP/6-658, USNA.

initial delivery of F-86 Sabres and M-47 Patton tanks seemed to foretell a growing relationship, built on the regular transfer of prestigious and capable weapons. Pakistan had come to expect that its relationship with the US would be maintained through similar – if not more – weapons transfers. Yet just a year later, the US seemed to be signaling a downgrade and a more distant relationship with Pakistan.

Pakistani officials thus threatened re-alignment – possibly with the Soviet Union – if the US did not resume weapons transfers. Writing from the US Embassy in Karachi, Langley noted “Almost all papers warned that military aid cut will undermine US prestige in area and enhance Communist prospects in area.”¹⁶⁹ In an interview with France’s *Le Monde*, Ayub expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of US aid provided to Pakistan. He then stated that Pakistan would seek aid from other countries.¹⁷⁰

The US finally realized that maintaining its relationship with Pakistan would take continual investment through a regular stream of transfers. Faced with the possibility of the most allied ally turning to the Soviet Union, the US tentatively agreed to transfer B-57 bombers in 1960. The only *confirmed* transfers for the year were 10 medium tanks, much less than the 98 tanks that were scheduled before Congressional budget cuts.¹⁷¹ Rountree urged the US to take Pakistan’s crisis of faith seriously, by granting approval for Pakistan’s weapons requests. He urged the US to supply more tanks in 1961, and for the transfer of

¹⁶⁹ Telegram Karachi (Langley) to State, 17 July 1959, p. 2, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-259, document 790D.5-MSP/7-1459, USNA.

¹⁷⁰ Foreign Service Despatch, Lahore (Corry) to State, 5 August 1959, p. 2, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/8-559, USNA.

¹⁷¹ Telegram State (Dillon) to Karachi, 10 September 1959, p. 2, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/8-559, document 790D.5-MSP/1059, USNA.

more advanced weapons, like the F-104 Starfighter jet or Sidewinder missiles for the 1961 fiscal year, in order to avoid a “major” split with Pakistan.¹⁷²

Officials within Pakistan echoed Rountree’s suggestion for the transfer of F-104s. The negotiations over this plane show the importance of weapons as signaling devices, and how a less militarily useful plane can be used to repair rocky relations between allies.

SUPERSONIC BLING AND ALLIANCE REASSURANCE

On the heels of the non-transfers caused by US budget cuts, as well as indications that the Kennedy administration was interested in pursuing relations with India, Pakistan requested the F-104 fighter jet. The US approved the request, and ten jets were delivered in 1962. This bling transfer was a test balloon for Pakistan. Based on the denial of the F-100 and the non-transfers due to budget cuts, Pakistan was not sure about its relationship with the US. The bling transfer was an unexpected, if welcome, surprise, that increased Pakistan’s confidence in the US-Pakistani relationship. My theory expects this upgrade signal to result in greater policy coordination between the US and Pakistan. Concretely, Pakistan should accede to US demands to stop calling for negotiations over Kashmir. Nor should Pakistan take aggressive action toward India in other areas. Overall, the F-104 served as a symbol of Pakistan’s importance as a US ally, and of the newly reinvigorated relationship between the US and Pakistan.

All the states involved knew the F-104 was the ultimate bling weapon. This Mach-2 capable, sleek, shiny aircraft was taken as a symbol of a close future relationship –

¹⁷² Telegram Karachi (Roundtree) to State, 19 September 1959, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/8-559, document 790D.5-MSP/9-1759, USNA.

reinforcing common goals between sender and receiver. It was nicknamed the “missile with a man on it,” and set the world record for speed and altitude of a piloted aircraft.¹⁷³ The plane proved so difficult to effectively incorporate into combat operations that it was more useful as a NASA chase plane than as a staple of the US Air Force.

The F-104s military limitations were widely known. Under Secretary of State George Ball wrote, “The F-104 A/B, though superficially glamorous because of its Mach 2 speed, is purely a day fighter-interceptor with very limited bomb-carrying capacity; its range is so short that without effective intercept control (which [Pakistan] does not have), it has only limited intercept capability and considerably lesser capability to bomb Indian bases effectively.”¹⁷⁴ Benson Timmons, the Deputy Chief of Mission in New Delhi, referred to the planes as “shiny objects.”¹⁷⁵ Ambassador to India Chester Bowles said that the F-104 was “extremely costly, hard to fly, and prone to accidents.”¹⁷⁶

Even Lockheed – the plane’s manufacturer – was aware of issues with the plane. The engine was so prone to stalling during certain maneuvers that Lockheed produced a comic warning pilots about the signs of stalling. The US Air Force concluded the F-104 was less effective than older MiG models.¹⁷⁷ The MiG, produced by the Soviet Union and later copied by China, was the plane Pakistan was most likely to encounter in the air. The risks

¹⁷³ Federation of American Scientists, “F-104 Starfighter,” <http://fas.org/nuke/guide/usa/airdef/f-104.htm>.

¹⁷⁴ Telegram State (Ball) to New Delhi, 20 August 1963, p. 3, RG 59, Box 3761, Folder DEF Defense Affairs US-Pak 1/1/63, USNA.

¹⁷⁵ Telegram New Delhi (Timmons) to State, 8 June 1963, RG 59, Box 3757, Folder DEF 19-3 US-India, USNA.

¹⁷⁶ Telegram New Delhi (Bowles) to State, 6 June 1964, RG 59, Box 2305, Folder POL 1 India-US 1/1/64, USNA.

¹⁷⁷ Hare, Muskat, and Williams 1965, 4.

of stepping into the cockpit were known beyond the US: German pilots referred to the F-104 as the “Flying Coffin,” and “the Widow maker,” while Canadian pilots added the moniker “Aluminum Death Tube.”¹⁷⁸

Pakistan’s pursuit of the deficient F-104, rather than more capable alternatives, is difficult to explain using existing power-based arguments. Pakistan should, according to these theories, pursue the most capable weaponry. Yet Pakistan formally requested the F-104 seven times between 1959 and 1961. Pakistan lacked the radar equipment and training to make the plane useful in military operations, and had no space program that could use the F-104 as a chase plane. US advisors believed the Pakistani Air Force would not be able to “absorb the new technology,” a polite way of saying the US did not think Pakistan would be able to operate or effectively use the F-104.¹⁷⁹

The F-104 transfer sent an upgrade signal to Pakistan. It yanked US-Pakistani relationships out of a downward spiral, and increased Pakistan’s confidence in its alliance with the US. I thus expect Pakistan’s foreign policy to continue along the same path: it should be committed to upholding the status quo in the region.¹⁸⁰ India, recognizing the signal of reassurance, should revise its expectations about any gains to come from the Kennedy administration. More broadly, the F-104 transfer should be understood by regional observers that the US was committed to Pakistan. If any of these observers also

¹⁷⁸ “The not quite right stuff – F-104 Starfighter,” *Daily Kos*, 2 February 2015, <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2015/2/2/1360449/-The-not-quite-right-stuff-F-104-Starfighter>; Dowling, 29 August 2016; Bashow 1993, 92.

¹⁷⁹ FRUS VIII, Doc. 379.

¹⁸⁰ At this point in time, Pakistan was revisionist with respect to Kashmir, but was also concerned with its own territorial status quo, particularly where East Pakistan was concerned. As a result, it was somewhere in between a status quo and revisionist state, but functioned more like a status quo one.

had questions about the commitment of the US to their causes, or their own standing within the US alliance network, they should seek the F-104 as well.

US officials knew the signaling power of the F-104. Back in 1960, as US budget cuts were beginning to be felt by MAP recipients, US Ambassador Rountree urged his superiors to provide the F-104 to Pakistan to signal US commitment. In a May 1960 telegram to the State Department, he wrote, “it is important that Ayub, GOP and key military officers be aware that US is promptly performing on its military aid commitments to Pakistan. Failure on our part to respond immediately and in meaningful manner would undermine Pakistani confidence in repeated assurances that US stands by its allies, especially in time of need.”¹⁸¹ JM Wilson, the Deputy Coordinator for Mutual Security, noted that there was “no military requirement for modernizing the F-86s with which the PAF [Pakistani Air Force] has recently been equipped.”¹⁸² Representing the view of the State Department, Wilson recognized that the F-104 would have been primarily a political transfer.

The F-104 was a focal point during Ayub’s visit to Washington in July 1961. Kennedy administration documents prepared in advance of the visit show that the US was aware of a growing rift with Pakistan, and wanted a way to heal that rift. The papers said, “Pakistan’s underlying anxiety is that the Administration attached less importance than did the previous administration to allies, and greater importance to neutrals, particularly India.”¹⁸³ The primary goal of Ayub’s visit was to “allay Pakistan suspicion that we regard India as more

¹⁸¹ Telegram Karachi (Rountree) to State, 12 May 1960, RG 59, Box 2120, Folder 790d.5/6-662, USNA.

¹⁸² J.M. Wilson, Memorandum for the Under Secretary, 2 June 1960, RG 59, Box 2121, Folder 790d.5 MSP/6-260, USNA. Emphasis original.

¹⁸³ Scope Paper, Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President's Office Files. Countries. Pakistan: Security Briefing book, Ayub visit, July 1961, p. 1.

important than Pakistan, and consequently intend to give India more favorable treatment. We must stress the importance of regional cooperation as a means for developing indigenous strength in the subcontinent.”¹⁸⁴ Within the State Department, the F-104 was seen as a signal of “our continued willingness to support Pakistan.”¹⁸⁵ Within Pakistan, normally pro-US military chiefs were worried that the US no longer desired a close relationship with Pakistan, and wanted the F-104 as proof that the US was still committed to that country.¹⁸⁶

Ayub left the meeting with Kennedy with a promise that the F-104 would be expedited. The plane was not delivered fast enough for Ayub, who instructed his Finance Minister to again request the F-104 in November.¹⁸⁷ Finance Minister Shoaib’s renewed request came on the heels of Ayub’s anxiety that the US was going to extend arms aid to India.¹⁸⁸

Pakistan received its first F-104s in 1962, and, feeling optimistic about the US commitment, felt no need to hedge against abandonment. Assured that the US would act in Pakistan’s interest, Pakistan remained willing to negotiate over Kashmir, but did not increase or otherwise change its pressure on India to negotiate.¹⁸⁹ The primary result of

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁸⁵ Dean Rusk, Memorandum for the President, “Next Steps on Military Aid to India and Pakistan,” 11 December 1963, RG 59, Box 3757, Folder DEF 19-3 Defense Affairs, USNA. Though written in 1963, this memorandum described the role of military aid to India and Pakistan, noting the effect of the earlier transfers of the F-104.

¹⁸⁶ Airgram Karachi (McConaughy) to State, 28 May 1962, RG 59, Box 1304, Folder 611.90d/1-662, USNA.

¹⁸⁷ Foreign Service Despatch, Karachi (Linebaugh) to State, 21 January 1961, RG 59, Box 2120, Folder 790d.5/1-1660, USNA.

¹⁸⁸ L.D. Battle, Memorandum for McGeorge Bundy, 4 November 1961, RG 59, Box 1394, Folder 690d.91/1-1562, USNA.

¹⁸⁹ McMahan 1996, 283.

the transfer was to uphold the status quo: Pakistan did not feel the need to take aggressive action because it was confident in its relationship with the US.

As expected, India understood this upgrade signal and lowered its expectations about changes that would come from the Kennedy administration. Selig Harrison, part of a mission sent to India in 1965, observed that certain US weapons transfers to Pakistan had signaled “the special character of the relationship of the United States with Pakistan,” which “prolonged and reinforced Indian intransigence.”¹⁹⁰ Indian Charge d’Affairs D.N. Chatterjee said that India felt inferior to Pakistan because of the F-104, even though India had been informed about Pakistan’s limitations that prevented full use of the plane.¹⁹¹ India believed that the US had no desire to harm India, but saw the F-104 transfer as a way to “pacify an ally angry over unrequited love.”¹⁹²

India, as a status quo state, resisted efforts to open negotiations over Kashmir. It rejected US offers to act as a mediator in the Kashmir dispute, saying that third-party interference would not help. Robert Komer, the Kennedy administration’s point man on Southeast Asia, wrote that Nehru turned down the offer because he believed it would “inevitably involve some change in the status quo to their disadvantage.”¹⁹³

Beyond reassuring Pakistan about US commitment, the F-104 became a relational good in the US alliance network. Just as the US feared, other states requested the jet as a symbol

¹⁹⁰ Harrison 1965, 322.

¹⁹¹ Memorandum of Conversation, “Indo-Pakistan relations,” 28 July 1961, RG 59, Box 1393, Folder 690d.91/4-1560, USNA.

¹⁹² Prem Bhatia, “Prospect and Retrospect: The Road to Hell,” *Times of India*, 1 August 1961, p. 8, PQID: 750662790.

¹⁹³ Quoted in McMahan 1996, 284.

of US commitment to them, particularly if these states saw Pakistan as a peer. The US begged Pakistan not to publicize the F-104 transfer because the US believed Iran would demand the plane as evidence of “equal treatment.”¹⁹⁴ Saudi Arabia did demand the F-104, even though the US evaluated the Saudi Air Force as “not technically very advanced” and unable to handle the plane.¹⁹⁵ Showing the durability of the F-104 as a political signal, the US used the plane to signal commitment to Taiwan in the 1970s, as the opening to China was taking place. Even though Taiwan had more advanced—and capable—planes than the F-104, and even though Taiwan never requested the plane, the F-104 remained a symbol of US commitment, and proved valuable in this situation as well.¹⁹⁶ The F-104 reverberated throughout the network as a symbol of close ties with the United States.

Signals or the Balance of Power?

Neither the balance of power nor economic incentives can explain the foreign policy shifts in this period. There were no balance of power reasons for Pakistan to want the F-104. According to existing explanations, the transfer should not have stabilized Pakistan’s foreign policy orientation for three reasons. First, the plane itself had dubious military potential. Deficiencies in the plane itself, and Pakistan’s lack of radar capabilities that rendered the F-104 operationally less useful for military moves against India. Second, even capable supersonic aircraft are not useful in mountainous areas like Kashmir, which was

¹⁹⁴ JM Wilson, Memorandum for the Under Secretary, 2 June 1960, pp. 1-2, RG 59 Box 2121, Folder 790d.5 MSP/6-260, USNA.

¹⁹⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, “Meeting with Lockheed representatives,” 27 July 1964, p. 2, RG 59, Box 1655, folder DEF 12 Armaments India 1/1/64, USNA.

¹⁹⁶ Airgram Taipei (McConaughy) to State, 9 February 1970, p. 7, RG 59, Box 2206, Folder Pol Chinat-US 5/26/70, USNA.

the geographic focus of most of Pakistan's military might. Finally, even if Pakistan had been granted permission to buy the plane, its high cost would have placed the plane out of reach. The low tactical advantage, high economic cost, and repeated statements that the plane symbolized the relationship between the US and Pakistan support the interpretation that the plane was a signal of US-Pakistani ties, and that this signal contributed to Pakistan's lack of interest in negotiations with India.

With respect to India's behavior, there is again no balance of power or economic reason for India to be upset at the F-104 transfer. Though India had initially been hopeful that the new Kennedy administration would downgrade relations with Pakistan and make overtures to India, the F-104, even though it didn't change military capabilities, played a role in India's rejection of Kashmir negotiations.

The best evidence for understanding the events in this period as signaling is the durability of the F-104 as a signal of alliance reinforcement. The F-104 proved a durable reinforcement signal, as Pakistan again sought the plane in 1963 and 1964, right as the US was extending military aid to India.

SINO-INDIAN BORDER WAR AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO INDIA

The first years of US relations with the subcontinent primarily reinforced ties between the US and Pakistan. Once the US realized that good relations with Pakistan required satisfying Pakistan's continual appetite, the US tried to calibrate its arms transfers to keep Pakistan sated. Weapons transfers from 1956 to 1962 helped shore up Pakistan as a buffer against Communism. However, relations on the subcontinent changed after India was defeated in

a border war with China in November 1962. The US rushed arms aid, including rifles, ammunition, and transport aircraft to India under Section 503 of the US Foreign Assistance Act of 1961.¹⁹⁷ This emergency aid was followed by the December 1962 Nassau Agreement, under which the US and UK agreed to give India an additional \$120 million in military assistance. The US signed a further commitment in June 1963, agreeing to transfer communications and transport equipment – backbone weapons.¹⁹⁸ US military assistance to India caused a rupture in the US-Pakistani relationship. The US through it was extending a life boat to a state trying to push back the tides of Communism. Pakistan instead saw the US helping not an anti-Communist Cold Warrior, but a kid who didn't realize he could stand up in the shallow end of the pool.

The causes of the different US and Pakistani views on India are threat perceptions and rhetoric. India successfully narrated itself as yet another state threatened by Communist aggression, which opened the door to arms transfers from the US. Indian President Nehru successfully framed his struggle with China in a way that appealed to the US and fit with broader strategic narratives, laying the groundwork for expected weapons transfers. On 27 October 1962, he said that the US should support India with military aid “not only because of their friendly relations with us, but also because our struggle is in the interests of world peace and is directed to the elimination of deceit, dissimulation and force in international

¹⁹⁷ Ganguly 1972, 220; Crawford 2003, 143. The US and UK had the ability to rush arms to India for two reasons. First, most of the aid was rifles and ammunition, small arms that are produced in greater quantity than larger arms, and that are logistically easier to transport across long distances. Second, the US agreed to give up its place in line so that the planes, produced in Canada, could go to India. Had the US not been willing to do this, India would have had to wait for more planes to be produced, defeating the purpose of emergency aid.

¹⁹⁸ Ganguly 1972, 221; Cohen 1976, 50; Brecher 1979, 626.

relations.”¹⁹⁹ Kennedy agreed, and wrote a letter to Ayub justifying US aid to India: “We see another instance of Communist aggression almost as close to your borders as Cuba is to ours – the Chinese Communist attack on India... In my judgment the long-run significance of this move cannot be exaggerated.”²⁰⁰ For both the US and India – the future of the subcontinent was at risk, and led to new strategic interests between the US and India.

Pakistan, on the other hand, was convinced that India was playing the part of a wolf in sheep’s clothing. General Musa, the Commander in Chief of the Pakistani Army, said that he thought a Chinese attack was a “bogey” and that “no serious military planner could conceive of such an attack.”²⁰¹ Foreign Minister Bhutto was similarly convinced that India planned to milk Western military aid for everything it could get, and would then turn around and make a peace agreement with China.²⁰²

These different threat perceptions and narratives – with the US desiring to take a vulnerable India under its wing, and Pakistan perpetually skeptical of its neighbor – led India to expect backbone, and perhaps even bling, weapons, and Pakistan to expect the US to refrain from transferring weapons to its chief rival. What the US saw as arms transfers to bolster a humiliated India (and therefore the subcontinent) against a growing Chinese threat, Pakistan interpreted as a signal of US alignment with India at the expense of Pakistan.

¹⁹⁹ Brecher 1979, 614.

²⁰⁰ Quoted in Devereux 2009, 75.

²⁰¹ Peking NCNA, “Ayub: Talk of CPR attack a ‘bogey’” 1 May 1963, *FBIS*, ID: FBIS-FRB-63-086

²⁰² Telegram Karachi to State, 16 January 1963, RG 59, Box 1400, Folder 691.93/1-1563, USNA.

Unable to reconcile itself to any shared strategic interests between the US and India, Pakistan interpreted the US arms transfers to India as a signal of change. This was exacerbated by the US choice to deny further Pakistani requests for F-104 jets. As expected, Pakistan shifted its foreign policy toward realignment, while India, after getting its first transfers, cautiously explored expanded relations with the US. India tried to gauge the extent of US interest by requesting additional, more prestigious weapons. I further expect the Soviet Union to see US transfers to India as an indication that the US was trying to win India over to its side, and to take steps to prevent this by offering India weapons, too. I expect China to recognize an opportunity to drive a wedge between India and Pakistan to prevent the formation of an anti-China coalition, and to recognize the rift between the US and Pakistan by presenting itself as an alternate alignment partner. More broadly, Pakistan's allies in the region should be surprised and upset that the US aided Pakistan's chief rival, and should be supportive of any shifts in Pakistan's foreign policy.

The actual course of events accords with these expectations, with one notable exception. The Soviet Union *did not* transfer weapons to India in the wake of US transfers. In fact, it reneged on a previous deal to supply India with MiG planes. However, Soviet actions were designed to send a signal to China, its fellow Communist ally. Since China had just fought a war with India, the Soviet Union was wary of antagonizing a Sino-Soviet split by arming India and potentially enabling it to fight back.²⁰³

²⁰³ Chari 1979, 233; Galbraith 1969, 390.

Backbone, not bling: Arms for India

US emergency arms aid – infantry weapons and light artillery – arrived in India between 3 and 12 November 1962. As reported in *The Hindu*, this arms assistance affected more than military capabilities. The initial airlift “was more in the nature of a token of intent to develop an ongoing large-scale military supply relationship. [On Nov 12] Nehru told a group of visiting American journalists that India was seeking all kinds of aircraft from the US, as well as equipment to manufacture arms.”²⁰⁴ The C-130 and the weapons it carried were tangible first evidence of new ties between the US and India. The arms signaled a significant US policy shift and set the stage for changes on the subcontinent.²⁰⁵

States beyond South Asia also believed the backbone weapons transfers – the *first* between the US and India – opened the door to closer Indo-American relations. The Soviet Union, according to Ambassador Galbraith, thought there was a high likelihood US military aid would lead to a military alliance between the US and India.²⁰⁶ Iraq, an ally of Pakistan, thought that the transfers were a betrayal of Pakistan and urged Pakistan to leave CENTO since it was clear that the US had sided with India over Pakistan.²⁰⁷ Swedish Ambassador Gunnar Jarring wanted to know “whether there was a basic change in India’s non-aligned military attitude. Ambassador Jarring said he recognized that there was obviously some change by reason of the fact that India had accepted foreign military

²⁰⁴ Brecher, 1979 #4000@616} quoting coverage from *The Hindu*.

²⁰⁵ Devereux 2009, 71.

²⁰⁶ Galbraith 1969, 387-388.

²⁰⁷ Airgram Baghdad (Lakeland) to State, 26 November 1962, RG 59, Box 1399, Folder 691.93/11-20-63, USNA.

aid.”²⁰⁸ This widespread reaction shows the attention states pay to arms transfers, and that they see arms transfers as credible signals of alignment.

Within India, the transfers were believed to herald a new era. The *Times of India*, reflecting government views, thought the occasion was historic: “This will start a new relationship between the two countries which might well prove to be a turning point in India’s history.”²⁰⁹ The Indians themselves thought that the initial aid would open the door to greater requests, including “manufacturing capacity, tanks and other armored equipment, and an air force.”²¹⁰

As expected, the transfers did affect Indian foreign policy. In contrast to its previous insistence on non-alignment, India cautiously pursued areas of shared interest with the US. Ambassador Galbraith reported that India was now willing to work with the US both politically and militarily in Asia, a “remarkable advance” and “fundamental shift” in Indian foreign policy.²¹¹ India, he observed, viewed the “US and Commonwealth countries as steadfast friends in contrast with Chinese Communist intruders and ambiguous Soviets.”²¹² The budding relationship between the US and India seemed to blossom over the next year. The US gave up its own place in line so that India could receive Caribou transport planes

²⁰⁸ Memorandum of Conversation “Indian-Chicom situation; Kashmir problem” 6 December 1962, p. 1, RG 59, Box 1399, Folder 691.93/12-162, USNA.

²⁰⁹ HR Vohra, “US Assistance is in the offing” *Times of India*, 31 October 1962, p. 9, PQID: 346972520.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 410.

²¹¹ Galbraith 1969, 458.

²¹² Telegram New Delhi (Galbraith) to State, 25 October 1962, RG 59, Box 1398, Folder 691.93/10-1562, USNA.

from Canada.²¹³ India was incorporated into the MAP bureaucracy in early 1963, putting it on the same footing as US allies including West Germany and Pakistan.

Building on these signals of closeness, Indian Ambassador B.K. Nehru delivered a letter to the State Department urging prompt delivery of weapons. The letter was an ambitious “shopping list” of all the weapons India desired.²¹⁴ India did not expect to get most of the weapons on the list, and instead viewed the requests as testing the waters for a subsequent request for fighter aircraft and supporting technical personnel. If India were to receive fighter planes, the transfer would “mark a change in India’s policy.”²¹⁵

Included on India’s shopping list was the F-104, and main battle tanks. India recognized, however, that “political considerations” made the transfer “not ruled out but not likely.”²¹⁶ The political situation it references was the US-Pakistani relationship, which it thought would constrain US transfers to India. Nonetheless, the list was a way for India to gauge US interest in India relative to US interest in Pakistan. The F-104 Starfighter would be the prize won by the favored partner. Crucially, India’s requests were for signaling, not military power, reasons.²¹⁷ India’s recent conflict with China had proven that supersonic jets were not effective in mountainous fighting.²¹⁸ Further, military maneuvers in the border areas required transit over bridges, but none of the bridges were strong enough

²¹³ Telegram State (Rusk) to Karachi, 19 October 1962, RG 59, Box 1398, Folder 691.93/10-1562, USNA.

²¹⁴ Telegram State (Rusk) to New Delhi, 5 March 1964, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 2, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library (LBJ).

²¹⁵ HR Vohra, “Nehru urges Kennedy to rush arms aid,” *Times of India*, 12 November 1962, p. 10, PQID: 737543259.

²¹⁶ HR Vhora, “Talks on Arms Aid Begin in Washington,” *Times of India*, 12 May 1964, p. 1, PQID: 49689708

²¹⁷ Harrison 1965, 323.

²¹⁸ Galbraith 1969, 388.

to support the weight of the requested tanks.²¹⁹ The weapons India wanted would not have affected the military balance against China, or against Pakistan in Kashmir.

Because of the complex signaling environment on the subcontinent, the US government was not in agreement about how to treat India's requests. Giving the F-104 would have caused problems in the US-Pakistan relationship. Yet some within the US government supported the transfer. In the words of Assistant Secretary of State Phillips Talbot, the transfer of US weapons would prevent the Soviet Union from scoring "a particularly politically glamorous" victory by providing India with similar weapons. But "more than any other single gesture, this would signify that the Indians can depend upon us in meeting their security requirements."²²⁰ Even though backbone US arms aid helped India on the battlefield, the F-104 would be the bellwether for US-India ties.

Ultimately, the naysayers won and India never received the F-104. The US did not want to alienate Pakistan by sending such a strong upgrade signal to India. The US did, however, help India build its own supersonic engine, which shows that the symbol of the F-104, rather than supersonic capabilities, was the primary issue in this transfer. The US lending support to India's domestic industry is a particularly puzzling move. Indian self-sufficiency would free it from reliance on others for this type of plane, possibly making India less interested in arms transfers for political reasons. This would have been a significant qualitative step for India's production ability, and should have been the target of much

²¹⁹ Ibid., 442; Telegram New Delhi (Bowles) to State, 8 March 1965 p. I:1, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 129 (1/2), Folder 2, LBJ.

²²⁰ Letter Talbot to Secretary, "US assistance to India Air Defense" 21 May 1964, p. 3, RG 59, Box 1654, Folder DEF 1-3 India 1/1/64, USNA.

outrage from Pakistan. Strangely the domestic production project received negligible attention from Pakistani leaders and the Pakistani press. Pakistan cared more about rumors of India receiving an F-104 than it did about actual US assistance that increased India's capabilities. Symbolic politics, not relative capabilities, was the guiding logic behind this event.

In the long run, US arms aid to India remained constrained by Pakistan's anticipated reactions, and India never received the prestigious boom or bling weapons it truly wanted. The US found itself stuck, and more deeply constrained by its relationship with Pakistan than it had anticipated. The US could not be a philandering partner, making and breaking political relationships at will. Relationships created by arms transfers last longer than the proverbial one-night stand. As a result, India received mixed signals from the US. The first set of transfers opened the door, but the US never let India into the house. Due to these mixed signals, India's foreign policy underwent minimal revision, and changes were primarily rhetorical. India was not confident enough that the US shared its strategic goals that it was willing to actually change its policies, and refused repeated entreaties to re-open negotiations over Kashmir.²²¹ The lack of bling and boom weapons – and resulting upgrade signal – further meant that India was “aghast” at suggestions that it coordinate policies with the US by joining Western military alliances.²²²

²²¹ Galbraith 1969, 437.

²²² Galbraith 1969, 433.

Pakistan, on the other hand, did significantly shift its foreign policy in the wake of US arms aid to India. Its reaction was out of sync with the minimal weapons India did receive. Pakistan reacted like a jilted lover, a feeling reinforced by US transfer denials.

Pakistan's response: Re-alignment and criticism

At first glance, Pakistan's reactions to US arms aid to India seems out of proportion. The backbone and blip weapons did not significantly change India's capabilities, and are weapons with relatively less signaling power. And yet Pakistan threw what can only be described as an international temper tantrum. Pakistan greatly feared that the bling and backbone weapons were a harbinger of closer US-India relations, which it though implied a downgrade to US-Pakistan relations.

David Sneider, Counselor for Political Affairs at the Embassy in Karachi, wrote that Pakistan's reaction was "was the frustrated reaction of a nation which found itself caught in the web of dependence upon the US and yet in basic conflict with the policies of its mentor in the area most crucial to Pakistan's national interest, India." From the Pakistani point of view, "the US-Pakistan special relationship were clearly invalidated by US military aid to India."²²³ If nothing else, Pakistan expected the US to leverage its aid to India to resolve the Kashmir dispute. Sneider directly connected Pakistan's actions to US military aid, remarking that "since late 1962, Pakistan has behaved virtually like a wounded bull, thrashing about and seeking to give vent to its disillusionment with the West," and

²²³ Airgram Karachi (Sneider) to State, 24 March 1965 "Pakistan's disengagement: US policy alternatives," pp. 8-9, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 4, LBJ. Note that Sneider explicitly considered, and dismissed, Pakistani domestic politics as an explanation for its reaction.

that its foreign policy actions were “reactive, based on its disenchantment with its alignment with the West.”²²⁴ That is, US-Pakistan relations were fundamentally changed by virtue of US arms transfers to India. The souring of relations with Pakistan was an unintended consequence of sending arms to India. Pakistan’s interpretation of its enduring rivalry with India mean that positive relations with one constituted negative relations with the other. From the Pakistani point of view, US arms aid to India implied a downgrade signal to Pakistan.

Pakistan’s disenchantment with the US resulted in a multi-pronged re-alignment policy. One strand saw Pakistan oppose the US on issues of general foreign policy and in intra-alliance politics. Sneider noted “increasingly divergent courses in key international issues [such as] Communist China, Vietnam, and Congo.”²²⁵ In stark contrast to the rhetoric of support Pakistan gave the US during the Korean War, Pakistan criticized the war effort in Vietnam. In March 1965, Bhutto deplored US use of poison gas in Vietnam, even though Pakistan had just a few months earlier gratefully received large quantities of riot control gas. Bhutto’s criticism coincided with arms deliveries to India. In 1963, Pakistan invited Indonesian President Sukarno for an official state visit, even though Pakistan’s fellow SEATO member Australia – who was providing troops to the US war effort in Vietnam – feared aggression from the Sukarno regime.²²⁶ Pakistan thus broke with SEATO by not offering rhetorical support for the US in Vietnam, and its invitation to

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 7

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

²²⁶ Telegram Karachi (McConaughy) to State, 22 June 1963, p. 2, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Papers, President’s Office Files. Countries, Pakistan: Security, 1963 (JFKPOF-123-006).

Sukarno was a slap in the face to Australia. Writing from Karachi, Ambassador Walter McConaughy believed these general divergences were due to “Pak[istan’s] frustration with recent decision [to] give India long term arms assistance.”²²⁷

Pakistan also tried to make life miserable for the US on the subcontinent, by ramping up its calls for negotiations in Kashmir. As McConaughy said, Pakistan thought “that prospects for Kashmir settlement are diminished in direct ratio to extent Western military aid to India,”²²⁸ but nonetheless hoped it could coerce the US into supporting Pakistan’s position. Gone was the cooperative Pakistan, willing to coordinate its policies with the US. Instead, Pakistan thought that a policy of agitation – pitting its revisionist aims against India’s status quo desires – would force the US to make up its mind about which country on the subcontinent would retain its support.²²⁹

Recognizing that its threats to pursue negotiations over Kashmir were ineffective in changing US policy on the subcontinent, Pakistan upped the ante by threatening to sever its alliance ties to the US. Ayub told McConaughy that he was considering leaving SEATO,²³⁰ in part because Foreign Minister Bhutto suggested this would be a way to “strike home to the US her resentment over present US policy toward India and exert real

²²⁷ Telegram Karachi (Cargo) to State, 27 June 1964, p.1, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 2, LBJ.

²²⁸ Telegram Karachi (McConaughy) to State, 18 January 1964, p. 1, RG 59, Box 2298, Folder POL 32-1 India-Pak 1/1/64, USNA.

²²⁹ Letter Komer to Bundy, 6 March 1964, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 4, LBJ.

²³⁰ Telegram Rawalpindi (McConaughy) to State, 20 September 1964, 1:2, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 1, LBJ.

pressure on the US to reconsider and change this policy.”²³¹ Pakistan wanted to make clear that this was no playground spat: further US arms transfers to India would result in the dissolution of US-Pakistani ties.

The second strand of Pakistani re-alignment took the form of increased public and private criticism of the United States. It was not only the upper echelons of Pakistani political elite that saw transfers to India as a betrayal. A few days after arms arrived in India in November 1962, Pakistanis observed a national day of protest against US aid to India.²³² Shortly thereafter, demonstrations erupted throughout the country. Protestors carried signs that said, “End all military pacts with United States and Britain,” and “A Donkey is more trustworthy than a Yankee.” They shouted slogans like “Down with the United States,” and “Down with Britain”²³³ Extra-parliamentary groups, “including such extraneous bodies as the Pakistan Writers Guild, passed resolutions condemning Western arms aid to India.”²³⁴ US arms aid to India united the Pakistani general public to an extent rarely seen.²³⁵

At the elite level, statements emphasized betrayal, and increased in frequency as it became clear that India would be incorporated into the US military assistance bureaucracy.

In a report to President Johnson, Dean Rusk noted that Pakistan’s statements and actions

²³¹ CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 13 July 1964, “Pakistani consideration of withdrawal from CENTO and SEATO and President Ayub’s effort to develop confederation of Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan”, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 2, LBJ.

²³² “Pakistani transgressions of US friendship” 16 July 1965, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 5, LBJ.

²³³ Peking New China News Agency, “Further Karachi Demonstrations,” 21 November 1962, *FBIS*, ID: FBIS-FRB-62-227.

²³⁴ Dobell 1964, 293.

²³⁵ Airgram Embassy Murree (Spielman) to State, 14 November 1962, p. 1, RG 59, Box 1398, Folder 691.93/11-1462, USNA.

were “a reminder that Pakistan is not reconciled to United States military assistance to India, that the Kashmir issue is not dormant, and that Pakistan has the capacity to exacerbate tensions any time it wishes.”²³⁶ An editorial in *Dawn*, which had less than ten years previously extolled the virtues of alignment with the US, said “American policy involves reckless defiance of realities of regional situation and is responsible for perpetuation of discord and tension in area. This policy is morally indefensible because it based on most cynical disregard of considerations that involve close ally’s security.”²³⁷ The editors encouraged “a most careful reappraisal of our external policy and our position in world in which changing dictates of realpolitik matter far more than alliances entered into in spirit of sincerity and devotion to principles.”²³⁸ This theme of betrayal and loss of the moral high ground infused nearly all of Pakistan’s statements after November 1962.

During an interview with London’s *Daily Mail* in July 1964, Ayub said, “During the Dulles-Eisenhower era US policy had moral content but now Americans do not hesitate to let down their friends. Today American policy is based on opportunism and is devoid of moral quality. Pakistan...has been let down by politicians she regarded as friends.”²³⁹ The Commander in Chief of the Army, General Musa, was similarly concerned about the “moral side” of US arms aid to India. He elaborated: “Pakistan now finds itself frustrated

²³⁶ Dean Rusk, Memorandum for the President, 11 December 1963, Attachment: “Indo-Pakistan Relations,” p. 4, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 2, LBJ.

²³⁷ Telegram Karachi (Cargo) to State, 12 June 1964, RG 59, Box 1757, Folder DEF 19-3 Equipment & Supplies US-India 6/1/64, USNA.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ Komer, Memorandum to the President, 14 July 1964, Tab B, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 2, LBJ.

and disillusioned, and public opinion is genuinely unsettled. [Pakistan] had been placed in the shadow of death by an active ally.”²⁴⁰

The emphasis on betrayal and immorality is downright strange. US arms aid to India did not threaten Pakistan’s territorial integrity, or its military balance in Kashmir. The US actually informed Pakistan of its arms deliveries to India. None of this was enough to affect Pakistan’s perception that its chief ally was developing a relationship with its chief rival. As noted in a July 1964 State Department briefing paper, “Pakistan saw its position as the nation most favored by the US on the subcontinent reduced by our decision to provide arms aid to India.”²⁴¹ Despite repeated US assurances to the contrary, Pakistan believed US arms aid signaled shifting allegiances: arms spoke louder than words.

The final strand of Pakistan’s re-alignment was the most significant. Ayub thought that by drawing Pakistan closer to China (a US rival), he would be able to pressure the US into foregoing deeper ties with India.²⁴² Maxwell Taylor, the chief US military advisor for Pakistan believed that Pakistan did not genuinely want to be close with China. He wrote that Ayub had “embark[ed] on a campaign of sharp criticism of US behavior coupled with moves to ‘normalize’ relations with Red China. Such moves appear useful to him both in neutralizing an unfriendly neighbor and goading the US to pay greater attention to his needs.”²⁴³ Finance Minister Muhammad Shoaib admitted as much. He told Ambassador

²⁴⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, 20 December 1963, p. 6, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 3, LBJ.

²⁴¹ Briefing Paper, “Pakistan Concerns about United States military assistance to India,” July 1964, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 2, LBJ.

²⁴² Telegram New Delhi (Bowles) to State, 6 February 1964, 2:1, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 1, LBJ.

²⁴³ Maxwell Taylor, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, “Next steps on military aid to India and Pakistan,” 23 December 1963, p. 4, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 3, LBJ.

McConaughy that “not very expensive” arms aid from the US to Pakistan would be the most promising stop-gap means of checking Pak[istan’s] drift toward China.”²⁴⁴ Ayub reinforced this when he told McConaughy that “as long as we pursue policies toward India which he considers inimical to Pakistan’s national interest – specifically, continued substantial US military aid to India and US failure to seize recurring opportunities to press India decisively for a solution of Kashmir issue – [Pakistan] will pursue a China policy running at an angle to, and therefore interfering with, US objectives in Asia.”²⁴⁵

Pakistan’s closer relations with China took the form of a border agreement and a civil air agreement in 1963. Under Secretary of State Averell Harriman warned, “a commercial air link in itself might not appear on first hand to be of great consequence, but in the present context of world affairs, it eased Chicom communications problems and helped Chicoms present better image to world. Pakistan should be very careful in its dealings with Chicoms and not jeopardize its relations with the Western world.”²⁴⁶ Though these ties were not as strong as those created by arms transfers, US officials still felt the moves were significant. This is especially the case because Pakistan signed cooperative treaties with China even as it remained a member of anti-Communist alliance SEATO.

The US was well aware that Pakistan’s foreign policy shifts were caused by US arms aid to India. To some extent, Pakistan’s hysterical response worked because it constrained US actions in India. For example, the US used C-130 transport planes (backbone weapons)

²⁴⁴ Telegram Karachi (McConaughy) to State, 21 October 1964, p. 3, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 1, LBJ.

²⁴⁵ Telegram Karachi (McConaughy) to State, 18 August 1964, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 1, LBJ.

²⁴⁶ Telegram Karachi (Rusk) to State, 7 July 1963, p. 4, Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President’s Office Files. Countries. Pakistan: Security, 1963, JFKPOF-123-006.

to get supplies to India's border with China. The US did not give the planes to India, and instead had US pilots fly the cargo runs. This is because the State Department knew "if we had given the C-130s to the Indians the Pakistanis would have been furious."²⁴⁷ A transfer of the C-130 would have further infuriated Pakistan, and the US wanted to prevent the eruption of tensions between India and Pakistan. Pakistan's questions about US intentions increased when India was incorporated into the military assistance bureaucracy in late 1963. Ambassador McConaughy argued against this change, because it "would in [Pakistan's] view present quite different situation and add to [Pakistani] suspicions of US intentions."²⁴⁸ Arms transfers and MAP aid signaled, in Pakistan's eyes, that the US had chosen India over Pakistan as its preferred partner.

Pakistan gave the US one last chance to prevent alignment shifts by requesting additional F-104 fighter jets in late 1964. Receiving the jet would have, in Pakistan's mind, been evidence that its relationship with the United States had *not* changed, despite US overtures to India. From the US point of view, however, providing the F-104 would have "rewarded" Ayub for his criticism of the US; the US believed its relationship with Pakistan *had* changed, but that the change was caused by Pakistan's turn to China.²⁴⁹ The US was therefore unwilling to give Pakistan such a clear and unambiguous signal of US support. Dean Rusk instead proposed a meeting between Johnson and Ayub as a way "to

²⁴⁷ Memorandum of Conversation "Sino-Indian Dispute" 20 December 1962, p. 4, RG 59, Box 1400, Folder 691.93/1-1563, USNA.

²⁴⁸ Telegram Karachi (McConaughy) to State, 24 January 1964, p. 3, RG 59, Box 1765, Folder DEF 19 US-India 1/1/64, USNA.

²⁴⁹ Bundy and Komer, Memorandum for the President, 8 March 1964, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 150, Folder 7, LBJ.

demonstrate our awareness and appreciation of Pakistan's security concerns and our continuing efforts to meet these concerns in every reasonable way."²⁵⁰

Rusk and Ambassador McConaughy wanted to offer Pakistan other weapons. These alternate boom weapons, they believed, would reassure Pakistan without endorsing its recent "bad behavior." Rusk wrote, "as we chart our course in the troubled waters of US-Pakistan relations during the months ahead, I believe it important that we be prepared to give Ayub a clear signal of our continued willingness to support Pakistan unless its conduct impairs our ability to do so."²⁵¹ Their proposal was a five-year military assistance plan that would include weapons like the F-5 or F-100 fighter jet, both capable planes.²⁵² Though just eight years earlier Pakistan wanted the F-100 as evidence of its status relative to NATO, it found the 1964 offer lacking. Similarly, though the F-5 matched or exceeded the capabilities (on paper) of the F-104, it was used primarily by lesser US allies, such as Taiwan, South Korea, and Iran. The F-104, on the other hand, was still in production by Italy, France, and Germany—who had figured out how to make the F-104G version an actually effective military tool. Pakistan still saw the F-104 as *the* signal of commitment and high status within the US alliance networks, and thus rebuffed US offers of alternate fighter jets.

Ironically, Pakistan's efforts to frighten the US into abandoning its new ties with India had the opposite effect. The US saw its ally running into the arms of its opponent, and saw

²⁵⁰ Telegram Karachi (McConaughy) to State, 11 July 1964, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 2, LBJ.

²⁵¹ Dean Rusk, Memorandum for the President, 11 December 1963 "Next Steps on Military Aid to India," p. 2, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 2, LBJ.

²⁵² Maxwell Taylor, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, "Next steps on military aid to India and Pakistan," 23 December 1963, p. 4, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 3, LBJ.

India, a neutral state, warming to closer ties with the West. Pakistan's coercive gamble failed, as the US found it increasingly difficult to remain allied with a state that was friendly to Communist China. India, the subcontinent's democracy, and a state that wanted to defend against China, was a more attractive partner.

Whether the events following the 1962 Sino-Indian war would have led to a complete reexamination of US policy is unknown. War broke out between Pakistan and India in July 1965, which resulted in a complete US arms embargo against both states. The embargo lasted until 1975, and US relations with both states never again resumed pre-war dynamics.

Signals or the Balance of Power, Part 2

Though Pakistan did not cut ties with the United States, it is clear that US arms aid to India fundamentally changed the Pakistani-US relationship. This section provides evidence that Pakistan was not concerned about the relative balance of power, and instead acted based on its interpretation of signals, and what it perceived to be a new US-India coalition.

US transfers to India did *not* change the military balance. India remained preponderant over Pakistan for the entire period, with the numerical balance of forces ranging from 2.5:1 in 1952 to 11.5:1 from 1962-1965.²⁵³ Most of the increase in the later period was due to India's increase in the number of divisions within its army, and is not attributable to US arms aid. More revealing than the numerical balance is India's enduring belief that Pakistan's armed forces were *qualitatively* better equipped. The many years of US arms

²⁵³ Diehl, Goertz, and Saeedi 2005, 38.

aid were believed to have given Pakistan a qualitative edge.²⁵⁴ Pakistan, on the other hand, saw India as superior and an increasingly looming threat. Beliefs about the superiority of the other's forces make explaining the events during this period based on the balance of power very difficult, particularly because supersonic jets and heavy tanks would not have been useful weapons in Kashmir. There are three other reasons to suspect a balance of power mechanism was not the primary factor.

First, the timing of Pakistan's turn to China, and leaders' linking of friendship with China to US arms to India is hard to ignore. Contemporary analysts attributed Pakistan's growing closeness with China to US arms aid to India.²⁵⁵ Writing while Pakistani overtures to China were crystallizing, Dobell muses, "It is plausible that many of the pro-Chinese utterances made by senior Pakistan officials were voiced more with the aim of forcing a re-assessment of the Aid India policy in Washington than for any effect they would have in Peking."²⁵⁶ That is, Pakistan's flirtations with China were understood as a direct response to the US arming India.

Second, Pakistan did not object to the US helping India develop its own supersonic engine; it only objected to rumors that India would receive the F-104. If the balance of power were at work, Pakistan should have cared much more about the supersonic engine than the F-104. The bling weapon would not have significantly helped India's military

²⁵⁴ Telegram State (Ball) to New Delhi, 4 August 1961, RG 59, Box 1394, Folder 690d.91/8-361, USNA; HR Vohra, "Tangible Gain for Ayub in US Visit: Increased Military Aid to Pakistan Assured," 15 July 1961, p. 7, PQID: 346318420. The US told India that its weapons were qualitatively on par with Pakistan's, but this did not prevent Indian claims that Pakistan was better-equipped.

²⁵⁵ Venkataramani and Arya 1966, 112; Lerski 1968.

²⁵⁶ Dobell 1964, 293.

balance in Kashmir, but being able to develop its own supersonic engine would have freed India from dependence on the US or USSR.²⁵⁷ India would be less vulnerable to external leverage, and domestic production capability would have hardened India's negotiating position in Kashmir. Perhaps, we can argue, Pakistan cared less about the engine because it would have taken time for India to develop, test, and finally employ its own planes. If the balance of power were at work, surely Pakistan would have jumped at opportunities to increase its own capabilities.

The US offered Pakistan the F-5 or F-100 fighter jet. If balance of power were the primary motivation, Pakistan should have accepted this offer. The F-5, first offered in 1963, was determined to be "fully capable of handling Chinese bombers," as well as MiGs (which were found in Indian and Chinese arsenals).²⁵⁸ Like the F-104, the F-5 and F-100 are Mach-capable planes.²⁵⁹ Pakistan refused these planes, insisting on the F-104. Why Pakistan would forgo capable and prestigious planes is deeply puzzling to the balance of power. Similarly, if the US were concerned about preventing an arms race, it should have been more willing to provide the F-104, a rather ineffective weapon, than the F-5 or F-100. Again, the F-104 was associated with core Western allies, while the F-5 was a tool used by the weaker, peripheral allies. Pakistan wanted confirmation that it was equivalent to the European allies, not the "others", and so rejected the F-5. We have, then, a series of three

²⁵⁷ Nor would supersonic jets have enabled India to attack sites in Pakistan, as the jets move so fast that they need the assistance of ground-based radar, which India did not have in sufficient capacity or quality to use.

²⁵⁸ Telegram New Delhi (Bowles) to State, 6 June 1964, p. 3, RG 59, Box 2305, Folder POL 1 India-US 1/1/64, USNA.

²⁵⁹ Telegram State (Rusk) to Rawalpindi, 2 September 1963, RG 59, Box 3757, Folder DEF 19-3 Defense Affairs, USNA.

contradictory actions: Pakistan's apathy at India's indigenous production efforts; the US offering arms that could have fueled an arms race; and Pakistan's rejection of those same weapons in favor of the F-104. US actions make sense as an indication that the US "was not especially happy over Pakistan's continued flirtation with China."²⁶⁰ Pakistan's actions simply cannot be explained by the balance of power. Rather, in search of a reinforcement signal through the F-104, a rebuffed Pakistan felt impelled to turn to China.

The balance of power *does* explain why the Soviet Union did not try to out-jockey the United States in sending weapons to India. The fear of a Sino-Soviet split restrained the USSR. As reported in the *Times of India*, the Soviet Union announced it was sending only minimal military aid to India: twelve unarmed MiGs over two years, with assistance in building a MiG factory in the future. The reporter – who covered all of India's weapons negotiations – noted that the Soviet announcement was to reassure China. "This is like telling China: 'This can have no bearing on your fight with India.'"²⁶¹ But there are signaling undertones here, too. By refusing to send weapons to India, the USSR signaled that it ranked China above India, and did not want to provoke any split in the Communist bloc.

Finally, a balance of power explanation focuses on the rivalry between India and Pakistan and the importance of Kashmir. Not only did Pakistan reject planes that might have helped it in Kashmir, it also sought a different symbolic weapon that would have no bearing in a land war in Kashmir. Pakistan tried to get a submarine from the US, and when

²⁶⁰ Venkataramani and Arya 1966, 118.

²⁶¹ HR Vohra, "Aid to India is Insignificant: Moscow Bid to Placate Peking," *Times of India*, 26 February 1963, p. 9, PQID: 501578678

this attempt proved impossible, it threatened to request a submarine from the Eastern bloc. Such a move was feared by the US, but not because of the capabilities it would give Pakistan. Writing from Kashmir, Knox said, “In any case for CENTO ally to have to acquire such major and symbolic weapon from such quarters, after having been turned down by US, might have long-lasting effect on Pak foreign policy orientation and specifically on the US-Pak relationship.”²⁶² In seeking out a different partner, Pakistan would be asserting its independence and signaling its dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs, in a way that had no capabilities bearing on the Kashmir dispute.

A balance of power explanation would have expected Pakistan to accept fighter jets from the US, and would have evaluated a Pakistani submarine based on relative capabilities, not the signal it would send about Pakistani-US relations. The US should have been able to repair its relations with Pakistan by increasing Pakistan’s relative power. And yet, Ayub declared in January 1965 that there would be no improvement in relations with the US as long as the US continued to give arms to India.²⁶³ Arms to India were the animating cause for Pakistan’s actions.

CONCLUSION

This chapter used arms transfers to explain the highs and lows in US relations with both Pakistan and India. Weapons were essential in cementing Pakistan’s relation with the United States in the 1950s, and were instrumental in making Pakistan feel confident and

²⁶² Airgram Karachi (Knox) to State, 5 July 1965 “Pak desire to purchase US submarine.”, p. 2, RG 59, Box 1760H, Folder DEF 19 Military Assistance US-PAK 1/1/64, USNA.

²⁶³ Venkataramani and Arya 1966, 118.

secure over the following decade. The F-104 fighter jet, a militarily ineffective weapon, played a large role in bolstering Pakistan's confidence in the US in early 1962. The denial of that same weapon just one year later encouraged Pakistan's anxieties about its ties with the US. Ultimately, the ruptures in US-Pakistani relations were caused by non-transfers to Pakistan and transfers to India, which led Pakistan to strike against India in 1965.

The preceding discussion also shows the evolution of relationships over time, and the high degree of investment needed to maintain them. Expectations for future transfers are based on previous transfers. The initial transfer of the F-86 and M-47 from the US to Pakistan in the mid-1950s set a baseline for the relationship between those two countries. Pakistan expected to continue receiving boom weapons, and began reinterpreting its relationship with the US when it was denied these weapons. Weapons that might reassure at one time period can be disappointing at a later one.

Pakistan and India's interest in the F-104 shows how weapons produce and communicate status hierarchies with alliances. The F-86 elevated Pakistan to the status of important Asian ally, as it was the only Asian state beside Taiwan to have the plane. However, the denial of the F-100, a plane sent to the core European allies, signaled that Pakistan had not achieved the same status as Western Europe. Pakistan's 1962 reception of the F-104 led Saudi Arabia and Iran to request the plane as evidence of equal treatment. These two states saw Pakistan as a peer and believed the plane was necessary to ensure they did not fall behind Pakistan in the status hierarchy. More broadly, savvy arms suppliers can use weapons transfers to rank their friends and allies, and to create intra-group cliques within a larger group of allies. This also shows that the signaling effects of

weapons transfers reverberate through a network, and are not confined to a dyad, or even triad. States are embedded in networks of relationships; understanding these networks is essential for explaining why and when states act.

Finally, this chapter shows the importance of perceptions in explaining weapons transfers. Leaders' perceptions dictate which weapons transfers are expected or unexpected – even if more objective factors, like the balance of power or shared interests – suggest otherwise. When states agree about what weapons are expected, foreign policy outcomes generally accord with my theory. When leaders have divergent perceptions, foreign policy outcomes are “surprising” from the perspective of one of the actors. This was most clearly seen when the US began providing arms to India after the 1962 conflict with China. The US and India both perceived these transfers as expected, based on shared interest in containing China. Their Cold War lens narrated transfers as stemming the tide of communism. Pakistan, on the other hand, interpreted the transfers through the lens of its regional enduring rivalry with India. It could not understand why the US was arming India. Pakistan's outrage at US-Indian arms transfers was surprising to US officials, but the outrage was expected from an enduring rivalry point of view. As Jervis noted, “statesmen believe that others will interpret their behavior as they intend it and will share their view of their own state policy.”²⁶⁴ Divergent interpretations, or a mismatch of lenses, can lead to unanticipated consequences. Even when states are attentive to the signals their weapons transfers send, there is no guarantee that all actors will agree about the political implications of the signal.

²⁶⁴ Jervis 1976, 69.

Chapter 4. Of Phantoms and Mirages: Misperceived Signals and the 1967 War

Israel's destruction of the Egyptian Air Force on 5 June 1967 was the culmination of a months-long crisis between Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Israel. In April, in response to raids along its border, Israel shot down six Syrian jets. On 15 May, Egypt sent troops into the Sinai, and soon demanded that the United Nations remove its Emergency Force from the Gaza Strip. On 22 May, Egypt's president, Gamel Abdel Nasser, closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, and on 30 May Egypt and Jordan signed a bilateral defense pact. By 10 June, Israel controlled the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank. Explanations of the conflict abound. Some argue the increasingly escalatory steps were a needed diversion from domestic problems in Egypt and Israel.²⁶⁵ Others suggest war was never the intended outcome, and that demonstrations of resolve had deterrent purposes, but failed and led to war.²⁶⁶ Both explanations overlook the changing landscape of political relationships in the year prior to the war. I argue that ambiguities about political relationships, as signaled by arms transfers, created an environment that incentivized belligerency and escalation, which pushed states down the path to war.

Arms transfers contributed to ambiguity in two key ways. First, the United States bungled a series of arms transfers to Jordan in late 1966 and early 1967. The transfer sent a downgrade signal, and convinced King Hussein he could no longer count on US political

²⁶⁵ Maoz 2009, 84; Barnett 1992, 103-127.

²⁶⁶ Faddah 1974, 55. Hussein 1969, 48; Mutawi 2002, 94. See Maoz 2009, 88-90. for an extended explanation of this.

support. This was one of the primary reasons Jordan unexpectedly signed a bilateral defense pact with Egypt in May 1967. Second, by approving the sale of some weapons but denying others, the US and France sent mixed signals to Israel, causing Israel to feel politically abandoned by its two major allies. Faced with the twin problems of a new Egyptian-Jordanian coalition and looming political abandonment, Israel saw preemptive action against Egypt as its only feasible option. War was not inevitable; the signal sent by arms transfers played a key role in the processes that ultimately led to war.

This chapter makes an empirical contribution to explanations of the 1967 war, and theoretical contributions to scholarship on signaling and power. To the former, I highlight Jordan's pivotal role in the conflict, and the role of misinterpreted signals in the months prior to war. On the latter point, I show that the interpretation of signals is socially contextual and contingent. All parties in the Middle East openly acknowledged the *political* significance of arms transfers in a way not seen in other regions. This both increased the saliency of the signals sent by arms transfers, and helps explain the frequent divergences between superpower and regional interpretations of signals. While the United States and Soviet Union approached their relations with the Middle East through the systemic perspective of the Cold War, Egypt, Jordan, and Israel operated under a regional framework that was more attuned to their specific context. Arms transfers that might have had a minor effect in India or Pakistan, for example, often had significant and amplified effects in the Middle East. This suggests, then, that the meaning of signals is not exogenous to social settings, nor is it constant over time. Instead, scholars need to be aware of the social context that shapes the legibility and meaning of signals over time. With respect to

power, this chapter shows that states weigh their relative power against adversaries as both a function of military power *and* political relationships. A strong political relationship means a state can draw on the resources – military, economic, rhetorical – of an external partner, whereas a weak political relationship indicates that a state will be fighting on its own. Arms transfers are an essential tool for clarifying whether or not a state should expect its partners to have its back.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I outline the limits of existing explanations, based primarily on the balance of power, for explaining the 1967 war. I next explain the particularly salient role of arms transfers, before providing background information on relationships and interest from the 1956 Suez Crisis to 1962. I then explain the foreign policy effects of arms transfers to Israel and arms transfers to Jordan, highlighting differences in how signals were interpreted, and the processes that led to the 1967 war.

EXPLAINING JUNE 1967

The Chief of Staff of the Egyptian military, Abd al-Hakim Amr, said, “No one seems to have expected a Middle East war in the spring of 1967.”²⁶⁷ Just one month before the war, Israeli intelligence assessed the prospect of war as “very distant,” in part because the Arab states did not have good relations with one another.²⁶⁸ The surprise of the war has led to a vibrant debate about its causes. Existing explanations of the 1967 war overlook the pivotal role of Jordan, who signed a bilateral defense pact with Egypt on 30 May, as well as Israel’s uncertainty about its defense commitments from the US and France, its great power

²⁶⁷ Parker 1992, 177.

²⁶⁸ Eban 1992, 380.

patrons. Both Jordan's defense pact and Israel's uncertainty are a direct consequence of the signals sent by arms transfers and non-transfers.

One common explanation for the war sees it as a series of inevitable escalatory moves.²⁶⁹ The ratchet effect of move and counter-move took the states from a low-level border conflict to war. In response to border infiltrations from Syria, Israel undertook a series of reprisals, culminating in the 7 April 1967 shooting of six Syrian jets.²⁷⁰ Israel, this explanation holds, viewed engaging the Syrian military as a deterrent action, but Syria and Egypt read this as escalatory.²⁷¹ Then, in response to perceived Israeli escalation, Nasser moved his troops into the Sinai to function as a deterrent against further Israeli action. He then closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping.²⁷² Nasser, however, didn't view the Straits as an international waterway, and did not think Israel would view his actions as tantamount to declaring war.²⁷³ For Israel, closing of the Straits was *casus belli*. Faced with an imminent threat, Israel then took preemptive action against Egypt's air force.

Other explanations for the war incorporate the domestic politics of Egypt and Israel. Some have suggested that the war played a diversion role in Egypt and Israel, or that escalation was the result of domestic forces pushing for more aggressive and belligerent policies.²⁷⁴ In a slightly different version of the domestic politics explanation, some have explained the war as Nasser's attempt to win a political victory over Israel which would

²⁶⁹ Maoz 2009, 110; Amos 2013, 30; Parker 1992, 177.

²⁷⁰ Maoz 2009, 89; Parker 1992, 179; Faddah 1974, 62-63.

²⁷¹ Maoz 2009, 89.

²⁷² Gat 2005, 610; Heikal and Haykal 1972; Maoz 2009, 89-90; Bregman 2000, 46-48.

²⁷³ Maoz 2009, 89; Quandt 1992, 204-207; Parker 1993, 49,72. See also New York, to FO, 17 May 1967, Prime Minister's Papers, London (hereafter, PREM), 13/1617.

²⁷⁴ Maoz 2009, 84; Barnett 1998, 158.

have strengthened pan-Arabism.²⁷⁵ This explanation does seem to have some support: Jordan did sign a defense pact with Egypt on 30 May, and agreed to place its military under pan-Arab command.

Finally, one of the more curious explanations for the war points the finger at the Soviet Union. This explanation holds that Nasser's move into the Sinai was the result of intelligence manipulated by the Soviet Union. Egypt was told that Israel was massing troops along the Syrian border, and so had to act to defend its ally.²⁷⁶

While each of these explanations might address various parts of the 1967 war, they all raise questions about the political agency of each actor and why the war happened when it did. The escalation story presents a clean timeline, but it overlooks the political decisions that were made in the leadup to war. Israeli leaders flew to Washington and Paris to converse with allies; decisions were deliberated over a period of weeks and only after internal discussion.²⁷⁷ In Egypt, Nasser and his advisors discussed the consequences of closing the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba.²⁷⁸ Actions were not automatic or inevitable. Nor was the war a result of an imbalance of military power. A September 1966 arms survey conducted by the CIA determined "Israel remains qualitatively superior over any of the various combinations of Arab states with which it could be expected to come into direct conflict. In addition, Israel possesses the industrial capacity to improve and alter

²⁷⁵ Gat 2005, 610; Tibi 1998, 70,73-74; Sharabi 1967, 53; Safran 1978, 391.

²⁷⁶ Heikal and Haykal 1972, 217; Parker 1992, 179.

²⁷⁷ Eban 1992, 407; Roth 2009, 387.

²⁷⁸ Parker 1992, 179-180.

armored vehicles and to rehabilitate aircraft.”²⁷⁹ The State Department similarly assessed the military balance as favoring Israel, and asked, rather facetiously, “If the Arabs were able to destroy Israel, why have they not done so in 17 years?”²⁸⁰

The domestic politics story focuses primarily on Egypt, thus overlooking the role of Israel and of Jordan. Finally, the Soviet story strips agency away from Egypt by making it incapable of assessing any intelligence received from the Soviet Union. Zeev Maoz pushes back against existing explanations of the 1967 war because they do “not link the political and military circumstances in Israel to the management of the May-June crisis itself.”²⁸¹ While Maoz focuses on Israeli policies and practices, he is right to insist that any explanation of the war link political and military circumstances. I argue that arms transfers are precisely this link.

Existing explanations overlook how the political environment in Jordan and in Israel set the conditions for war. Crucially, this political environment was created by the signals sent through arms transfers. The 1967 war was not the result of an imbalance in power or domestic politics gone awry: it was caused by ambiguous political relationships, as signaled by arms transfers. US actions toward Jordan in the months preceding the war confused Jordan about its relationship with the US. Without a clear signal of support from the US, King Hussein signed a bilateral defense pact with Egypt on 30 May – a stark reversal of his prior foreign policy. France, to whom Israel had been a loyal partner,

²⁷⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, “Arab Israeli Arms Survey,” 1 September 1966, p. 2, National Security File, Country File – UAR, Box 160, Folder, LBJ.

²⁸⁰ Commentary on Israeli-UAR Arms Balance (Not for Attribution), 14 August 1965, p. 2, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, Box 31, Folder 1, LBJ.

²⁸¹ Maoz 2009, 98.

instituted an arms embargo in early June, leaving Israel with questions and concerns about what type of support, if any, it should expect from its patron. This embargo was especially confusing given the nuclear cooperation between France and Israel.²⁸² The US, meanwhile, denied a series of transfers to Israel in April 1967, and was generally unwilling to see itself as Israel's great power patron, despite what it signaled by its arms transfers. Facing uncertain support from its friends, and a new Egyptian-Jordan coalition, Israel preemptively destroyed Egypt's air force on 5 June. The remainder of this chapter shows how arms transfers are the crucial missing link between the political and military situation in the Middle East.

ARMS TRANSFERS AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

Even though the balance of power is an unsatisfactory explanation for the specifics of the 1967 war, states in the Middle East were concerned about gaining military superiority over one another.²⁸³ Interest in the relative balance was due, in part, to the generally high tensions in the region. In the words of Shimon Peres: "seeded along the borders are political and strategic mines, and each, if it explodes, is liable to become a pretext for war. The borders themselves are not permanent, not recognized, and not traditional."²⁸⁴ Mohammed Heikal, journalist and confidant to Nasser, wrote, "the stage was set for an increasingly complex and volatile situation in the region."²⁸⁵ Concerns about maintaining military

²⁸² Heiman 2010.

²⁸³ Atherton to Hart, "Memorandum: Notes for Briefing Secretary-designate", 8 January 1969, p. 1, RG 59, Box 2224, Folder POL ISR 1/1/76, USNA.

²⁸⁴ Peres 1970, 14.

²⁸⁵ Heikal 1978, 717.

superiority heightened concerns about an arms race. Fear of an arms race made the US reluctant to transfer arms to any state in the Middle East. As Walt Rostow noted in April 1964, “The arms race is, I believe, the danger ahead. It is already expensive (both the UAR and Israel now spend over 10% of their GNP on security) and will grow both more expensive and more dangerous.”²⁸⁶ The weapons Israel and Egypt desired included prestigious and capable weapons like bomber planes, as well as smaller, but still useful, weapons such as surface-to-surface missiles, and air defense systems/surface-to-air missiles. Main battle tanks are also very useful, though the military using them would need a steady supply of replacement tracks and the technical knowledge to maintain and repair the tanks in a harsh desert environment.

While the military interest of states in the Middle East was similar to the interests of India and Pakistan, the social context of arms was different. This unique context increased the importance of the signals sent by arms transfers, and raised their foreign policy stakes. Shimon Peres bluntly wrote, “What water is to agriculture, armaments are to security.”²⁸⁷ He illustrated this through an extended discussion of the political significance of fighter jets:

Whereas the prop plane had long been manufactured by numerous countries and stocks were available all over the world, from Japan to Canada, the basic production of jets was confined to five countries alone: the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and Sweden. The governments themselves were involved in the development and manufacture, and kept scrupulous supervision and control over their disposal. No country could acquire them from any one of the

²⁸⁶ Walt Rostow, Memorandum for the President, 14 April 1964, “Our Policy Toward the UAR,” p. 4, National Security File, Country File – Turkey, UAR, Box 158, Folder 8, LBJ.

²⁸⁷ Peres 1970, 31.

five in a simple commercial transaction. The considerations were almost wholly political. Indeed, the sale of jets was a marked expression of political friendship.²⁸⁸

Peres was not alone in considering fighter jets an obvious sign of friendship. Egypt and the Soviet Union often pressured Jordan to purchase Soviet MiG fighter jets as a way to clearly align itself with “anti-imperialist” forces.²⁸⁹ This signal of political alignment was so important that the Soviet Union offered to sell Jordan the highly advanced and prestigious MiG-21 at two-thirds its usual price.²⁹⁰

Main battle tanks served a similar signaling function, even in cases where the tank had more limited use. Writing from Damascus, US Ambassador Ridgway Knight remarked, “Whether or not it makes military sense, tanks are regarded here as a prime symbol of military strength. In Syria, the unsophisticated tank is the elite weapon.”²⁹¹ Arms, he knew, were powerful because they conferred military strength and signaled political relationships. Regional actors were fluent enough in the signals sent through arms transfers that weapons had the potential to strengthen or to sever political relationships.²⁹²

A unique feature of the high salience of arms transfers was the role of visiting weaponry. Visiting weapons were not as strong of a signal as an arms transfer, they were more akin to courting behavior, rather than a signal of exclusive and dedicated relationships. Both the Soviet Union and the United States dispatched forces to demonstrate solidarity with friendly states in the Middle East. These forces would make a show of

²⁸⁸ Peres 1970, 36-37.

²⁸⁹ Stephens 1971, 439.

²⁹⁰ Levey 2006, 530.

²⁹¹ Airgram Damascus (Knight) to State, 26 March 1964, p. 2, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 138 (2/2), Folder 2, LBJ. Emphasis original.

²⁹² Telegram State (Symmes and Rusk) to USUN, 8 August 1968, p. 2, RG 59, Box 1558, Folder DEF 12-5 ISR 1/1/68, USNA.

anchoring or flying around highly visible areas. For example, in late 1967 the Soviet Union sent a squadron of Tu-16 bombers to visit Egypt. The US State Department recognized that this was meant to be a “gesture of support rather than signaling any intent [to] resume fighting. As such their impact [was] more political than military.”²⁹³ The US Sixth Fleet, based in the Mediterranean, played a similar role for Israel. The particular social context in the Middle East meant that actors gave extra attention to the political meaning of arms transfers. Beginning in 1956, major powers transferred arms to the region, establishing relationships that affected the 1967 war.

RELATIONS FROM SUEZ TO 1962

The 1956 Suez Crisis and its aftermath are necessary points of background information for understanding the relationships and relational ambiguities that contributed to the 1967 war. Beginning in 1956, Israel and Egypt became respectively identified with the Western bloc and the Soviet sphere. Though Nasser’s Egypt was formally non-aligned, and Nasser himself was a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, Egypt frequently accepted arms from the Soviet Union, and often positioned itself as an alternative to Western ideas and interests. Jordan, meanwhile, was stuck in the proverbial middle: the USSR offered King Hussein prestigious weapons, but the monarch’s desire to avoid aligning with Nasser and the Soviet bloc led him to turn to the United States for weaponry. Each state additionally had to deal with the interests of three superpowers: the United States, France, and the Soviet Union. Thus the late 1950s into the early 1960s were a period of shifting allegiances and

²⁹³ Telegram State to Tel Aviv, 12 December 1967, no signature, pp. 1-2, RG 59, Box 1639, Folder DEF 15 UAR-USSR 1/1/67, USNA.

exploratory relationships as each state tried to consolidate its power and position in the Middle East. This section briefly outlines the primary interests of each state and the key relationships that developed between the Suez Crisis and 1962.

France was an underappreciated force in relations in the Middle East. Under Charles de Gaulle, the French government sought to reclaim *grandeur* and influence by inserting itself into Middle East relations via arms deals.²⁹⁴ France started this process by rushing arms to Israel during the Suez Crisis. Under de Gaulle, this escalated to include the sale of prestigious and capable boom weapons, which France hoped would pressure Egypt into ceasing aid to revolutionary forces in Algeria.²⁹⁵ An arms agreement signed in June 1956 brought advanced AMX-13 light tanks, Mystère fighter jets, and light weapons and ammunition to Israel.²⁹⁶ As a result of this arms aid, the Israeli press hailed France as its new champion, and Israeli diplomat Ephraim Evron noted that “the arms trade between Israel and France was a tangible expression of their growing friendship.”²⁹⁷ This friendship was clearly expressed through French assistance in Israel’s nuclear ambitions. France was integral to the construction of Israel’s nuclear reactor at Dimona.²⁹⁸

France thought it could be Israel’s primary partner, and its link to Europe. De Gaulle encouraged Israel to establish closer relations with West Germany and Europe, and to lessen its dependence on Washington.²⁹⁹ Beyond transferring arms, France agreed, in

²⁹⁴ Crosbie 1975, 20, 41-42; Evron 1970, 82; Heimann 2010, 241.

²⁹⁵ Evron 1970, 82; Heimann 2010, 241; Safran 1978, 369.

²⁹⁶ Goldstein and Shumacher 2010, 101.

²⁹⁷ Evron 1970, 83.

²⁹⁸ Heiman 2010; Cohen and Burr 2006.

²⁹⁹ Crosbie 1975, 21.

November 1959, to help Israel develop short-range missiles to counter a growing “psychological” threat of Egyptian missile possession.³⁰⁰ Shimon Peres, then Director General of the Defense Ministry, was even given an office in the French Defense Department.

The primary consequence of these arms sales was that France became identified as Israel’s chief strategic ally. France “often voted along with Israel as a minority of two in the [UN] General Assembly,” and in less public negotiations.³⁰¹ Writing from the US Embassy in Paris in 1964, John Bovey observed:

France’s influence with the Government of Israel is that of a major Ally. This is equally the way the Arab Governments must view it today. When the Arabs look at this relationship they therefore probably continue to perceive a potential threat...French military assistance has been a major factor in Israel’s survival. More, it made Israel the ‘tool and spearhead of the imperialists’ in Arab eyes. Israel’s French-strengthened military kept Cairo looking East while France was militarily engaged in North Africa. It continues to be a governing factor in the formulation of policies in Arab states.³⁰²

France’s actions from Suez through the early 1960s led Israel to expect a continued flow of arms, and for continued rhetorical and material support in any future conflicts with the Arab states.

Israel’s relationship with France during this period was very different than its relationship with the United States. Under the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, US policy was to protect the territorial integrity of states facing threats from Communism, which translated into bolstering Arab states deemed most likely to resist communism.³⁰³

³⁰⁰ Heimann 2011, 901. Background Paper, 28 May 1964, “Near East Arms Race,” p. 3, Vice Presidential Security File, Box 143, Folder 7, LBJ.

³⁰¹ Crosbie 1975, 88.

³⁰² Telegram Paris (Bovey) to State, 29 April 1964, RG 59, Box 2183, Folder POL FR-I, USNA.

³⁰³ Bass 2004, 13-14.

The Johnson administration continued the policy of containment, and articulated four goals for the Middle East: (1) contain the influence of the Soviet Union to those places it already existed; (2) maintain stability to ensure the flow of oil; (3) limit the supply of US military hardware to the Middle East; and (4) ensure Israeli security.³⁰⁴ In practice, this meant that the US did not want to become identified as Israel's primary strategic partner, and was more than happy for France and Europe to take on the role of Israel's military suppliers. As explained later in this chapter, the US-Israeli relationship dramatically changed with the 1962 transfer of Hawk missiles.

Though nominally non-aligned, Egypt started developing a strong political relationship with the Soviet Union in 1955. In that year, the Soviet Union arranged for Egypt to receive \$200 million of advanced Soviet arms from Czechoslovakia in exchange for Egyptian cotton.³⁰⁵ In many ways, the Soviet Union had similar motivations to France when it arranged for the transfer of T-34 tanks and MiG-15 aircraft. Like France, the Soviet Union wanted to gain a "center of influence" in the Middle East, through which it could contest US efforts, and guide regional events.³⁰⁶ The Soviet aid program for Egypt, including arms transfers, was the largest it undertook in any non-communist country, and resulted in the transfer of "such advanced Soviet weapons as surface-to-surface missiles (SAMs), MiG-21 (Fishbed) jet fighters, Tu-16 (Badger) jet bombers, and Komar guided missile boats."

³⁰⁴ Levey 2004, 256.

³⁰⁵ Cleveland and Bunton 2013, 288.

³⁰⁶ Cleveland and Bunton 2013, 293.

³⁰⁷ Nasser believed that Egypt's military superiority would allow him to pursue his hegemonic goals in the Arab world,³⁰⁸ and so welcomed the infusion of Soviet weaponry.

While Egypt and Israel are often treated as the two centers of gravity for analyzing conflict in the Middle East, focusing on them elides the crucial role of Jordan. Jordan's King Hussein took the throne in 1953, and accepted US aid in the aftermath of a coup attempt. Aid from the US made Hussein a frequent target of Egypt and Syria. US aid increased to some US\$50 million annually in development and economic aid by the early 1960s.³⁰⁹ The US saw Jordan as an important ideological battleground, since King Hussein was more "moderate" in his pan-Arab ambitions than was Nasser.³¹⁰ The Kennedy administration believed Jordan was "the key to the precarious stability in the Middle East,"³¹¹ and found Hussein's open profession of anti-Communism an encouraging sign.³¹² However, the US was sensitive to the balancing act King Hussein felt he must undertake – ensuring that he was not vulnerable to Soviet- or Nasser-induced coup attempts, but not breaking entirely with the Arab states. The US thus tried to facilitate close US-Jordanian relations without compromising Hussein's independence.³¹³ Similarly, Hussein was

³⁰⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, Special Report: The Soviet Union and Egypt, 8 May 1964, p. 7, National Security File, Country File – Turkey, UAR, Box 158, Folder 8, LBJ.

³⁰⁸ Dawisha 1976, 75; Barnett 1992, 91.

³⁰⁹ Cleveland and Bunton 2013, 309.

³¹⁰ Visit of Foreign Minister Eban, 23-24 October 1967, p. 6, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 140, Folder 6, LBJ.

³¹¹ Levey 2006, 528.

³¹² Bunch 2006, 520.

³¹³ Lyndon Johnson, 15 May 1964, "President's Instruction for Feldman-Sloan Mission," p. 2, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 145 (1/2), Folder 7, LBJ.

skeptical of Soviet offers of weaponry, believing they were an attempt to “acquire a foothold in the Arab world.”³¹⁴

This early period established clear relationships between all of the states – even as Jordan maintained a difficult balancing act. The consolidation of a new French-Israeli partnership, and a budding relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union set expectations for future actions. These background relationships are essential for understanding the stops and starts on the path to war, beginning with the 1962 transfer of Hawk missiles from the US to Israel, which introduced relational ambiguity and uncertainty about future actions.

AMBIGUITIES AND DISAGREEMENTS ABOUT THE US-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP

The contemporary close relationship between Israel and the United States is often taken for granted. However, such a close relationship was not the inevitable outcome of history. The US deliberately avoided transferring arms to Israel in the 1950s for fear of becoming identified as Israel’s chief supporter. Even after it began giving Israel arms in the 1960s, the US refused to see itself as Israel’s military or strategic partner. Ambiguities about this relationship – whether Israel could or ought to rely on the political and defensive military backing of the US – occupied the diplomatic corps of both countries in the years preceding the 1967 war.

Relational ambiguities first emerged with the 1962 sale of Hawk surface-to-surface missiles. While Israeli political and military leaders thought that the Hawk sale signaled a

³¹⁴ Mutawi 2002, 62.

growing interest from the US, US officials believed the transfer was a one-time exception devoid of political meaning.

For Israel, Hawk missiles were concrete evidence of a new US-Israeli relationship. Haim Yahil, Director General of the Foreign Ministry, described the transfer as a “dramatic turning point in the history of American-Israeli relations.”³¹⁵ Writing with the benefit of hindsight, Abraham Ben-Zvi calls the Hawk sale, “an insufficiently acknowledged watershed in Middle Eastern history,” and notes, “the US-Israeli diplomacy that produced it sheds light on Israel’s strategic thinking in the run-up to the Six Day War of 1967.”³¹⁶ Israel interpreted this transfer as a signal of political support for two reasons. First, the Hawk missiles are extremely useful military tools, and were an important weapon for the US military from 1959 until 1994. Israel was the first non-Western state to receive the Hawk.³¹⁷ Second, the missiles would counter the psychological threat posed by the missiles Egypt received from the Soviet Union.³¹⁸ Egypt’s Soviet weapons would be addressed both by Israeli possession of a capable (and prestigious) counter weapon, and the signal sent by this transfer.

The Hawk sale was unexpected – and was therefore, according to my theory, an upgrade signal – because of an existing US arms embargo against Israel, dating to 1956. In Peres’ words, the Hawks were “the first major weapons to breach the wall of America’s

³¹⁵ Quoted in Ben-Zvi 2002, 2-3.

³¹⁶ Bass 2004, 4.

³¹⁷ Max Frankel, “U.S. will supply Israel missiles in policy change: Washington Agrees to Sale of Hawks After Study of Red Exports to Arabs,” *New York Times*, 27 September 1962, PQID: 116286156.

³¹⁸ Memorandum for Record, 10 January 1964, “Israeli Arms Needs,” p. 2, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, Box 31, Folder 1.

arms embargo.”³¹⁹ They were interpreted as a “crossing of the Rubicon” and “a valid index of a major swing in the American posture toward Israel.”³²⁰ Peres communicated this interpretation to US officials during his visit to Washington in May 1962. He said that the Kennedy administration needed to show “willingness to supply something that would be a demonstrable indication of [US] concern for supporting Israel and maintaining a military balance.”³²¹ As Bass observed, “Ben-Gurion wanted both the missile and the marker.”³²²

Despite multiple indications from Israeli leaders that the Hawk missiles were important symbols of a political relationship, US officials were unwilling to acknowledge this broader significance. Dean Rusk informed US embassies of the sale by writing that it was “not a change or reversal of long-standing US policy. The US intends to continue to avoid becoming a major supplier of offensive or sophisticated weapons to parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is [a] single decision designed [to] meet [a] specific need for an improved air defense.”³²³ Diplomat Phillips Talbot, who opposed the sale, urged the State Department to avoid establishing a “special military relationship” with Israel.³²⁴ Approaching the Hawk sale from a Cold War framework, most US officials saw the missiles as a status quo weapon that would stabilize the regional military balance and bolster Israeli deterrence. While McGeorge Bundy believed there was a valid military reason for giving Israel the Hawks, he was alone in noting “one can read into their [Israel’s]

³¹⁹ Bass 2004, 145.; Peres 1970, 100.

³²⁰ Ben-Zvi 2002, 2-3.

³²¹ Bass 2004, 161.

³²² Bass 2004, 171.

³²³ Quoted in Spiegel 1985, 108.

³²⁴ Bass 2004, 162.

present insistence all kinds of collateral political moves.”³²⁵ The rest of the Kennedy administration was (perhaps willfully) ignorant of the political significance of the Hawk sale.

These different interpretations led to different expectations about the effects of the Hawk transfer. Kennedy expected that the Hawk would ultimately encourage Israel to make concessions to the Arabs.³²⁶ The Department of Defense believed the sale was necessary to “fill an important gap” in Israel’s air defense, but that the Hawks “would not alone act to shift the balance of military power between Israel and its neighbors.”³²⁷ They were, in US eyes, status quo weapons to shore up an ally’s military posture.

While the US and Israel were at odds over how to interpret the political significance of the Hawk sale, third party observers were not. The British – who had wanted to sell their own Bloodhound missile to Israel in 1959 – were “startled” by what they saw as “the American leap into the Middle Eastern arms-sales business.”³²⁸ The Brits did not sell the Bloodhound because they thought the sale would jeopardize British standing in the Arab world, and assumed similar reasoning would prevent the US from selling weapons. Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was so surprised by US actions that he sent a protest note directly to Kennedy.³²⁹ Nasser similarly reacted to the political implications of the sale. US Ambassador John Badeau, after informing Nasser of the sale, wrote that Nasser seemed “unperturbed by [the] military implications” of the deal, but that the politics of the sale

³²⁵ Quoted in Bass 2004, 161.

³²⁶ Ben-Zvi 2002, 78.

³²⁷ Bass 2004, 164.

³²⁸ Bass 2004, 180.

³²⁹ Bass 2004, 181.

were problematic.³³⁰ The sale would make it more difficult for Egypt to continue working with the US, since the US had clearly chosen sides in the Middle East conflict. Nasser also warned the transfer would lead to more Soviet arms pouring into the region. In Beirut, pro-Nasser newspaper *al-Akhbar* ran an editorial that said, “Arabs can expect to be stabbed in the back by the US. Arabs everywhere should beware of Kennedy.”³³¹

In the short term, then, there were substantial differences in actors’ interpretations of the Hawk sale. The US saw a one-time exception to its policy of not becoming a major supplier of weapons to the Middle East, whereas Israel, Egypt, and even the British interpreted the sale as a major upgrade to US-Israeli ties.

The relational ambiguities created by the Hawk transfer stem from the long-term implications of the transfer. From the Israeli perspective, the transfer set a baseline for future expectations. Warren Bass is insightful on this point: Because Kennedy was the first president to break the embargo of major weapons sales “after his term, Washington was deciding *which* arms to sell the Jewish state, not *whether* to sell any arms in the first place.”³³² And indeed this is what happened. To the great puzzlement of US officials, Israeli arms requests escalated immediately after the Hawk missiles were delivered. In October 1962, Israel requested the prestigious F-104 fighter jet and advanced Genie air-to-air missiles.³³³ Minister of Foreign Affairs Golda Meir followed this with a September 1963 request for US tanks – an important symbolic weapon – and additional surface-to-

³³⁰ Bass 2004, 172.

³³¹ Bass 2004, 179.

³³² Bass 2004, 3.

³³³ Bass 2004, 182.

surface missiles (SSMs). In November 1963, Minister of Defense Levi Eshkol again asked for SSMs, tanks, and for some way to counter growing Egyptian naval strength. Rather than seeing the Hawk sale as a blip on the radar, Israel viewed the sale as the opening of a door to the possibility of a special relationship with the US.

Brokered tank sale and multi-party signaling

Whereas Israel wanted to continue receiving US weapons as evidence of a growing political relationship, the US took pains to avoid such a perception. Though Israel used the Hawk transfer as an entryway to request multiple types of weapons, it was particularly interested in tanks. In January 1963, Ambassador Avraham Harman asked the US to provide tanks for free under the military assistance program.³³⁴ This bold request stunned the US, and was rejected outright. Robert Komer explained that providing tanks under the aid program would “not only spook the Arabs, but lay ourselves open to constant pressure for all sorts of hardware.”³³⁵ Undeterred, Israel continued making these requests, and by May 1964 the US conceded there was a legitimate *military* need for Israel to acquire modern tanks.³³⁶

Because the tank was an especially symbolic weapon in the Middle East, the US wanted to find a way to provide Israel with the weapons, but to dampen the signal that would be sent by the transfer. As reflected in notes from a National Security Council meeting, “for

³³⁴ Letter Komer to Bundy, 9 January 1963, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 145 (1/2), Folder 5, LBJ.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³³⁶ Johnson, 15 May 1964, “President’s Instruction for Feldman-Sloan Mission,” p. 3, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 145 (1/2), Folder 7, LBJ.

political reasons, it is probably inadvisable for the US to provide Israel with tanks, but the US should assist Israel behind the scene in meeting its requirements from among Western European sources.”³³⁷ Komer further elaborated the dilemma: “we are already tabbed as Israel’s greatest friend and protector, and open US sale of tanks would compromise our relations with Arabs...”³³⁸ Even Meyer Feldman, Israel’s champion within the Johnson administration, recognized the political problem of directly supplying tanks, acknowledging that it would be a “dramatic shift in US policy.”³³⁹ Thus was born the “German Deal,” a US attempt to provide Israel with modern US tanks without becoming “overt supplier.”³⁴⁰

Using the West Germans as a tank broker seemed to be the least-bad option for meeting Israel’s military needs without signaling a deeper political relationship between the United States and Israel. President Johnson said as much in his instructions to the team tasked to set up the deal: “We intend to see that Israel gets the tanks it needs, but without exposing the US to unacceptable political risk.”³⁴¹ If all went according to plan, West Germany would give Israel 150 of its own US-produced M-48 Patton tanks, and in return the US would replace the West German arsenal with newer versions of the tank.³⁴² Since West Germany already provided military aid to Israel, “[the] inclusion of tanks should raise no

³³⁷ NSC Standing Group Meeting, 28 April 1964, “Meeting Israeli Arms Requests (NSAM – 290),” p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 145 (1/2), Folder 5, LBJ.

³³⁸ Special Talking Paper, 11 June 1964, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, Box 31, Folder 2, LBJ.

³³⁹ Feldman Talking Paper, 13 May 1964, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, Box 31, Folder, LBJ.

³⁴⁰ Lyndon B. Johnson, 15 May 1964, “President’s Instruction for Feldman-Sloan Mission,” p. 3, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 145 (1/2), Folder 7, LBJ. Emphasis original.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Rodman 2004a, 6.

new policy issue” for West Germany.³⁴³ The existing military aid tie was supposed to mask the hand of the United States guiding this deal. Key to using the West Germans as tank brokers was secrecy: all parties, including German Foreign Minister Gerhard Schroeder and Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, agreed to keep the deal secret.

The brokered deal failed when it became public in October 1964. West Germany suspended the arms sales out of fear of damaging its relations with the Arab states (and perhaps goading them into recognizing the German Democratic Republic). Only 40 tanks had been delivered to Israel.³⁴⁴ While the collapse of the German Deal was a disaster for the US, it was a boon for Israel. As the National Security Council noted, “The Eshkol government also preferred the M-48 for political reasons: the purchase of this tank would help to establish an American-Israeli arms pipeline, however roundabout, which Israel could later strengthen.”³⁴⁵ The Eshkol government believed it could pressure the US into meeting the remainder of the German deal, which would fulfill Israeli political objectives for in the tank transfer.

British and French tanks would have met Israel’s military needs, but Israeli leaders were quite explicit in wanting the M-48 Patton tank because of its political significance. During Eshkol’s visit to Washington in June 1964, he sought military purchases that would “symbolize a close military association with the United States.”³⁴⁶ In the words of the

³⁴³ Telegram Bonn (McGhee) to State, 16 May 1964, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 145 (1/2), Folder 7, LBJ.

³⁴⁴ Rodman 2004a, 6.

³⁴⁵ Rodman 2004a, 5.

³⁴⁶ Background Paper, 28 May 1964, “Quid Pro Quo of Visit,” p. 1, Vice Presidential Security File, Box 143, Folder 7, LBJ. Emphasis original.

National Security Council, “We judge [Israel’s] request for US tanks is designed primarily to project the image of a close military association with the United States.”³⁴⁷ Possessing US tanks, transferred from the US, was one way that Israel hoped to “project the image of a de facto alliance” with the United States.³⁴⁸ Deputy Prime Minister Abba Eban said “the provision of tanks would...be considered concrete evidence of US determination to fulfill its assurances. It would also symbolize a closer US-Israeli military association.”³⁴⁹

Though Israel would have happily accepted the M-48 from West Germany – after all, the tanks were US-made – nothing could beat a direct transfer from the US. Under immense pressure to honor the German Deal, the US finally agreed, in July 1965, to provide the remainder of the M-48 tanks that should have arrived from West Germany. Just as with the Hawk missile sale three years prior, US Ambassadors in the region were instructed to tell their hosts that the “sale to Israel would be an exception to our arms sales policy made to prevent significant arms imbalance from posing a threat to peace resulting from overconfidence or from desperation.”³⁵⁰

The US anticipated significant negative reactions from its tank sale to Israel, and Dean Rusk solicited input from the embassies throughout the region. The responses were not optimistic: “Replies indicate no gains to [US] from transaction and probable severe damage to US policies and interests in Near East. Posts suggest no means [to] mitigate reaction which could include: 1) rupture diplomatic relations, 2) retaliatory actions against oil

³⁴⁷ NSC Standing Group, Record of Meeting No. 3/64, 28 April 1964, p. 2, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, Box 31, Folder 3, LBJ.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁵⁰ Telegram State to Cairo, 18 March 1965, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Middle East, Box 161, Folder 5, LBJ.

installations, 3) shift to greater dependence on USSR, 4) accelerated spiral of arms race, 5) pressure to expel US from military bases, and 6) growth of anti-American sentiment.”³⁵¹

The CIA shared this estimate, writing that Arab states would see the tank sale “as evidence of a firm decision on the part of Washington to choose Israel over the Arabs.”³⁵²

To Israel, the transfer of these boom weapons reinforced its interpretation of the Hawk sale as a significant step in US-Israeli relations. The open willingness of the US to fulfill the German Deal sent an upgrade signal, and led Israel to pursue bolstering behavior with the US. This was seen most clearly through changes to Israel’s border policies. Between 1949 and 1973, Israel had a policy of conducting reprisal raids. This was a policy of striking at bordering Arab states in response to violence along the border.³⁵³ Raids were, according to prevailing Israeli logic, designed to induce cooperative behavior in the Arab governments by demonstrating that challenges to Israel’s security would result in a considerably larger “balance of blood.”³⁵⁴ Between October 1964 (when tanks began arriving in Israel), and October 1966 (the delivery of the remaining US tanks), virtually no raids were carried out by Israeli infantry or paratroop units.³⁵⁵ This resulted in lower fatality rates than in preceding or subsequent years.³⁵⁶ While some of this change is due to differences in Israeli leadership – Levi Eshkol and David Ben-Gurion disagreed about the

³⁵¹ Telegram State (Rusk) to Paris, 1 April 1964, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 138 (2/2), Folder 3, LBJ.

³⁵² CIA Office of National Estimates, Memorandum for DCI, 20 February 1964, “Storm Warnings Up for US-Arab Relations,” p. 4-5, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, Box 31, Folder 3, LBJ.

³⁵³ Maoz 2007, 327.

³⁵⁴ Maoz 2007, 327; Blechman 1972, 158.

³⁵⁵ As Maoz 2007, 338. notes, this was partially out of a desire to use reprisals to train Israel’s armored and artillery units, but it meant that raids were less intense and less deadly during this period.

³⁵⁶ Blechman 1972, 163.

efficacy of reprisals – the change is also likely due to Israel’s increased confidence in the US because of the tank transfers. In the words of Abba Eban, the tank sale would “guard against the contingency [that the US would not act to support Israel in its time of need] and would be concrete evidence of US determination to fulfill its assurances.”³⁵⁷ “The provision of tanks,” he said, “was important both substantively and psychologically.”³⁵⁸ Israel partially modified its own foreign policy to satisfy the US, hoping to build and strengthen this newly-confirmed relationship.

Following the tank transfer, Israel turned its sights to fighter jets. Israeli leaders thought they had leverage to request additional boom weapons because of concurrent US arms transfers to Jordan – explained later in this chapter. The National Security Council determined that “as a corollary to an offer to Jordan, the [US] should offer to make a comparable sale to Israel and should inform the Jordanian government at the time the latter is given our proposal.”³⁵⁹ The corollary proposal would include “a limited number of American aircraft in view of recent shifts that appeared to have taken place in the Near East arms balance.” The US “would stress we do not intend to become a primary supplier to Israel.”³⁶⁰ Recognizing that he had the upper hand, General Ezer Weizman, commander of the Israeli Air Force, pressed for prestigious fighter and bomber aircraft. He requested

³⁵⁷ NSC Standing Ground, Record of Meeting No. 3/64, 28 April 1964, Attachment A, p. 3, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, Box 31, Folder 3, LBJ.

³⁵⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, “Israel and the Near East,” 4 March 1964, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 138 (2/2), Folder 2, LBJ.

³⁵⁹ Staff Study, “Jordanian Request for Supersonics,” 1966, p. 11, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, Box 31, Folder 6, LBJ.

³⁶⁰ Suggested US Aircraft Proposals to Jordan and Israel, 1966, p. 3, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, Box 31, Folder 6, LBJ.

165 A-4E Skyhawk bombers, and 45 F-4 Phantom jets.³⁶¹ Though this request was absurd – the US was not willing to provide 210 planes to Israel – the request nonetheless communicated Israel’s feelings about the US-Jordan transfer, and its need to be reassured that the US was not seeking to develop a close relationship with one of Israel’s adversaries.

Again hesitant to become openly identified with Israel, the US agreed to sell 24 combat aircraft, of a type to be determined later, *only* if Israel could not find suitable planes from Western European suppliers.³⁶² Perhaps having learned from the failed deal to use West Germany as a tank broker, the US did not offer to arrange an aircraft transfer from Western Europe, but it did push Israel to consider non-US planes.³⁶³ The US tried to preemptively dampen signals sent by arms transfers by telling Israel that “we would expect Israel to agree not to request additional aircraft sales from the United States in the time frame 1966-1971... We would also expect Israel to rely on Western Europe as its primary supplier for military equipment, including aircraft in the future.”³⁶⁴ This was yet another attempt to steer Israel to interpret the transfer as a one-time boost in military strength, rather than a transfer that signaled a growing political relationship.

Skyhawk jet sale and further divergences

Israel claimed it was unable to find suitable jets in Western Europe, and pressed the US to transfer planes. The internal US negotiations over what type of plane, and how many, show

³⁶¹ Telegram State (Rusk) to Tel Aviv, 14 October 1965, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 139 (1/2), Folder 5, LBJ.

³⁶² Levey 2004, 267.

³⁶³ Levey 2004, 268. Emphasis original

³⁶⁴ Levey 2004, 271.; Suggested US Aircraft Proposals to Jordan and Israel, 1966, p. 5, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, Box 31, Folder 6, LBJ.

that US leaders were sensitive to the signaling dynamics involved in arms transfers, but were unwilling to acknowledge the signals being sent to Israel. The US first offered to give Israel the F-5, a plane that was not on General Weizman's wish list.

Though the US did not try to arrange a formal brokerage agreement as it did with the tanks from West Germany, it suggested the F-5 for similar reasons. Produced in Europe, the F-5 would have placed one degree of separation between the US and Israel. From the US perspective, this separation was a desirable shield that would obscure a direct link to Israel. The US also hoped Israel would prefer this plane because it was a staple of the European air forces, which would symbolize Israel's entrance into the inner circle of US alliance hierarchies. As Robert Komer explained, "the public image of the F-5 may be more "defensive," and therefore better from our point of view; but the differences here may be quite subjective and superficial. (I now understand that Northrop Aviation has proposed to the Dutch and the Belgians a consortium arrangement to produce F-5s in Europe; while tentative, this prospect might be an attractive option for the supply of aircraft to Israel.)"³⁶⁵ Israel, unwilling to accept another brokerage-type arrangement with the US, rejected the offer of the F-5, and insisted that Western Europe did not produce planes that met its needs. The US finally agreed to sell Israel the A-4E Skyhawk bomber in February 1966, just seven months after the German Deal.

The Johnson administration tried to be as explicit as possible with Israel about the *lack* of political commitment implied by the Skyhawk transfer. US officials "admonished

³⁶⁵ Robert Komer, Memorandum for Raymond Hare, 2 November 1965, "Combat Aircraft for Jordan and Israel," p. 6, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, Box 31, Folder 4, LBJ.

Israel's leaders not to view the deal as a nascent strategic relationship," and told Israel to look to Europe, and "not to bother [the US] on planes for the next several years."³⁶⁶ As with the German Deal, the Skyhawk transfer was supposed to remain secret.

Actions again spoke louder than words, as Israeli leaders interpreted the Skyhawk sale as a momentous political occasion. In a note to Levi Eshkol, Eban wrote that the transfer was "a development of tremendous political value."³⁶⁷ Israel's neighbors also feared the transfer foretold a strong relationship between the US and Israel. In Cairo, *Al-Ahram* wrote that the transfer meant American arming of Israel "had assumed grave proportions for the first time."³⁶⁸ US officials tried to downplay the signal sent by the Skyhawk, by describing the plans as "a type which has been in service for some time and whose performance is considerably below that of the MiG-21s now in service in the UAR and Syria."³⁶⁹ The US was unable to portray the Skyhawk as a backbone weapon. Even popular media understood the significance, as explained in a *Christian Science Monitor* article from May 1966:

Rightly or wrongly, Israelis view the recent sale of United States jet bombers to this country as a precedent-setting departure from traditional American policies regarding the Middle East. The principal novelty read by Israelis into the Skyhawk sale concerns the question of who should be the principal guarantor of Israel's survival against steadily escalating Arab armaments... The increase in United States prestige clearly is noticeable following the Skyhawk announcement, with Israelis hitherto accustomed to look to France as the source of vitally needed jet planes. This trend is so marked that one Israeli Cabinet member commented: "Columbus may have been the first to discover America, but he obviously was not last."³⁷⁰

³⁶⁶ Levey 2004, 273.

³⁶⁷ Levey 2004, 274.

³⁶⁸ Quoted in Hedrick Smith, "Jet Sale to Israel Strains U.S. Ties to Cairo Anew" *New York Times*, 21 May 1966, PQID: 117028244

³⁶⁹ Joe Alex Morris, JR "Curb Reprisals Against Syria, U.S. Asks Israel: Tense Political Situation in Middle East Called Main Reason for Unusual Request," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 May 1966, PQID: 155448750.

³⁷⁰ Francis Ofner, "Israelis analyze the Skyhawk deal: Imbalance redressed?" *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 May 1966, PQID: 510854759.

Another Israeli official said that the Skyhawk sale meant the US was “ready for a new form of partnership.”³⁷¹ The Skyhawk sale exemplified Israeli policy to “strive for a continued intensification of existing US commitment and the creation of sui generis strategic relations.”³⁷²

If the Skyhawk sale had been the only arms transfer from the US during this period, it is likely that Israel would have been content with the signals coming from its new patron. Believing that actions were more credible than words, Israel saw a progression of increasingly capable and prestigious weapons, beginning in 1962 with the Hawk missiles, and ending with the 1966 Skyhawk transfer. However, simultaneous to the collapse of the German Deal for tanks, Jordan asked the US for arms. The complicating role of Jordan in understanding state action in the Middle East shows that states beyond the transfer dyad pay attention to symbols, and that the foreign policy effects of arms transfers to one state can interact with the effects of transfers to a second. US arm transfers to Jordan undercut signals sent to Israel, and led to ambiguities – from Israel’s perspective – about who the US would support in a regional conflict.

THE US AND SOVIET UNION FIGHT FOR INFLUENCE IN JORDAN

In August 1964, Jordan asked the US for arms in order to resist pressure from Egypt that it buy arms from the Soviet Union.³⁷³ Though Jordan was, at this point, a member of the

³⁷¹ Quoted in James Feron, “Arms and Mideast Israel’s view” *New York Times*, 12 June 1966 PQID: 117709658.

³⁷² Levey 2004, 274.

³⁷³ Rodman 2004a, 7.

Unified Arab Command, it did not share many of Nasser's more "radical" policy preferences.³⁷⁴ The Johnson administration was therefore sympathetic to Jordan's request, and feared a Soviet arms deal with Jordan would be "the beginning of the end" of a pro-Western orientation in that country.³⁷⁵ Because the Soviet Union had offered arms at significantly reduced costs, Jordan felt it would be forced to accept unless the US could offer a better deal.

Recognizing the pressures on Jordan, as well as an opportunity to repel Soviet advances, Secretary of State Dean Rusk recommended selling Jordan 100 M-48 tanks, to be delivered between 1965 and 1966. He also recommended preempting further Soviet and Egyptian pressure on Jordan by "cooperat[ing] with Jordan in finding suitable supersonic aircraft from Free World sources on the understanding that, if Jordan is unsuccessful, we would then tell the Jordanians we would sympathetically consider selling them 20 F-104s with deliveries starting in 1968 or 1969."³⁷⁶

Despite US efforts to paint the tank sale as part of a long-standing agreement to modernize the Jordanian army, the sale successfully identified Jordan as a friend of the US, and helped Jordan rebuff the Soviet offer of arms. Even the *New York Times* was aware of the political significance of this sale, writing in January 1966 that "Jordan presents an illustrative example of the political motivations behind American arms contributions... the United States now finds itself under political pressure to increase the supply of tanks and

³⁷⁴ Faddah 1974, 76.

³⁷⁵ Levey 2006, 530.

³⁷⁶ Dean Rusk, Memorandum for the President, 19 February 1965, "Near East Arms," p. 1-2, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 145 (2/2), Folder 1, LBJ. Emphasis original.

jet planes, probably to be supplied by Britain, to dissuade Jordan from turning to the Soviet Union to modernize and increase its arsenal.”³⁷⁷ These first major transfers helped Jordan remain steadfast against pressures to buy Soviet weaponry.

The political motivations behind and consequences of the tank sale were obvious to outside observers. The sale of tanks to Jordan allowed it to maintain some independence from Nasser, which led Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* to indirectly accuse the US of trying to divide the Arab world by giving arms to Jordan.³⁷⁸ These concerns were amplified after a mid-1966 agreement to sell Jordan F-104 Starfighters, scheduled for delivery beginning in 1968. The F-104, the ultimate bling weapon, was accompanied by US demands that Jordan make no arms purchases from the Soviet bloc.³⁷⁹

The signals sent by the tank and F-104 might have been enough to reassure Jordan of the US commitment, except for an Israeli raid on the Jordanian town of Samu on 13 November 1966. This raid – the first in two years to use paratroopers and infantry³⁸⁰ – destroyed homes and killed 15 Jordanian soldiers. It made King Hussein nervous about Israeli territorial ambitions, and the degree to which the US would support its ally’s belligerency.³⁸¹ Despite the agreements for tanks and the F-104, Hussein was not convinced that the US would act to protect Jordan against Israeli action. He thus pressed

³⁷⁷ John W. Finney, “US an Arms Merchant to the Middle East,” *New York Times*, 2 January 1966, PQID: 117152006.

³⁷⁸ Hedrick Smith, “Cairo Scores U.S. On Jordan Arms: Plane Sale Seen as Attempt to Divide Arab World” *New York Times*, 5 April 1966, PQID: 117223513

³⁷⁹ Suggested US Aircraft Proposals to Jordan and Israel, 1966, p. 3, National Security File, Files of Robert W. Komer, Box 31, Folder 6, LBJ.

³⁸⁰ Shemesh 2002, 151; Blechman 1972, 162.

³⁸¹ Bunch 2008, 55-56.

for US arms as such a signal: “to Hussein, weaponry from the United States represented a tangible show of support and also served to deflect Nasser’s criticism that the king coddled Israel.”³⁸² The F-104 fighter jets and M-48 tanks, agreed to earlier in 1966, had not yet been delivered; Hussein needed an immediate sign that these first agreements were not just talk.

The ties that could have bound: Weak signals after the Samu raid

The United States miscalculated in its response to Jordan after the raid on Samu. Instead of expediting the delivery of particularly symbolic weapons, like the F-104, the US provided minimal weapons and did not in any significant way sanction Israel. To King Hussein, this was a clear signal that he would have to face Israel alone.

The weak signals sent by the US are puzzling because Hussein was very explicit about his need for bling and boom weapons after the raid. Hussein explained that he faced both domestic and international pressures threatening his regime. Between the raid on Samu in November 1966 and May 1967, Jordan’s relationships with its Arab neighbors were deteriorating, with both Egypt and Syria calling on Jordanians to overthrow Hussein.³⁸³ Shortly after the raid, a radio broadcast from Cairo called on the Jordanian Army to overthrow King Hussein.³⁸⁴ Hussein observed numerous “verbal assaults” directed at him, stating “I learned by way of the international press and “The Arab Voice,” the Cairo radio and that of Damascus, that “before liberating Tel Aviv, we must liberate Amman!””³⁸⁵ On

³⁸² Bunch 2008, 64.

³⁸³ Dawisha 1976, 49.

³⁸⁴ Mutawi 2002, 80.

³⁸⁵ Hussein 1969, 28.

21 May 1967, Syrians, whom Hussein viewed as acting in concert with Cairo, sent a car to Jordan that exploded on the border at Ramtha. The King believed the car “had been meant to explode in the center of Amman. Result: 14 Jordanians killed. This compelled us to sever diplomatic relations with Damascus.” Hussein’s relations with Syria – and by extension with Cairo – were plummeting. He said: “the incident filled Jordan with unease. In such delicate circumstances, we no longer knew who was less trustworthy: Israel, or our Arab allies!”³⁸⁶ Further, in the months prior to June 1967, “Nasser was saying that Wasfi Tal [the Jordanian Foreign Minister] was a spy for the British and the CIA. The Jordanians were being branded all the time as imperialist tools, traitors, and spies.”³⁸⁷ Nasser did not support Hussein as Jordan’s leader, and seemed to take all opportunities – direct and indirect – to weaken Hussein’s domestic support.

The US was well aware of these issues, and considered sending arms to Jordan to signal US support for King Hussein and to help him rebuff domestic and international threats. US discussions were sincere enough to be covered in the *New York Times*, which noted that King Hussein had been under “serious pressure to demonstrate that the United States in fact stands behind him,” which would require “something more than just pious expressions of support.”³⁸⁸ Observing the situation from Cairo, US Ambassador Luke Battle wrote, “Possibility has also occurred to us that Egyptian are perhaps not totally adverse to idea of short little war that would tidy things up and get rid of Hussein in process. And we certainly

³⁸⁶ Hussein 1969, 34.

³⁸⁷ Barnett 1998, 46.; *New York Times*, “Chronology of the Crisis,” 25 May 1967, PQID: 117462136.

³⁸⁸ John W. Finney, “U.S. Giving Jordan More Arms To Bolster Her Against Israel: U.S. Sending Additional Arms to Bolster Jordan” *New York Times*, 23 December 1966, PQID: 117594698

agree that Cairo press and radio have...exploited every opportunity to make situation worse and have undoubtedly contributed greatly to that tension in Jordan which Egyptians privately claim they wish to avoid.”³⁸⁹ Though Battle ultimately believed Egyptian action against Jordan was unlikely, its notable that hostilities between the two made this a plausible scenario.

Despite noting the intense pressure facing King Hussein, the US delivered only modest blip and backbone weapons, and dismissed any calls to sanction Israel. The US provided an “emergency” delivery of six 105mm howitzers, utility trucks, and fifteen 106mm recoilless rifles.³⁹⁰ It seems incomprehensible that the US thought the delivery of a handful of non-prestigious weapons would assuage Jordan’s concerns. Dean Rusk captured this oddity when he explained: “We are considering all factors bearing on situation. Consequences go far beyond Jordan. There was question of our relations with Shah and other leaders who will be watching whether or not we properly support Hussein. This is front page news around the world. For this reason we decided earlier speed up certain items to Jordan, such as jeeps and advancing delivery date of two training planes. This was nothing dramatic but was designed to give psychological boost to Hussein and [the Jordanian Army].”³⁹¹ Rusk thought that providing jeeps and rifles, and accelerating the delivery schedule for more prestigious weapons would be the desired signal of support, both for King Hussein and other allies watching the US response. But these transfers of

³⁸⁹ Telegram Cairo (Battle) to State, 15 December 1966, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – UAR, Box 160, Folder 1, LBJ.

³⁹⁰ Bunch 2008, 64, 2006, 533.

³⁹¹ Telegram State (Rusk) to Tel Aviv, 8 December 1966, p. 3, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 140, Folder 1, LBJ.

blip and backbone weapons did not reassure Jordan (as boom weapons would have), nor did they reinforce its existing relationship with the US (as the F-104 would have). The arms were so out of line with his expectations, King Hussein could only see the transfer as a downgrade signal. At the end of May, he traveled to Cairo and, in a major reversal of prior Jordanian policy, signed a defense pact with Egypt.

Realignment and the Egypt-Jordan defense pact

Given the general hostility between Jordan and Egypt, the bilateral defense pact signed on 30 May 1967 was unexpected. More surprising still was that King Hussein approached Nasser to propose the defense pact, and agreed to place Jordanian troops under Egyptian command.³⁹² Conventional explanations of foreign policy cannot explain this radical shift, but realignment followed by compromise with a former adversary is expected in my theory. The mismatched arms transfers to Jordan sent a downgrade signal, confirming, in Jordan's eyes that the US would back Israel *at the expense of* its relationship with Jordan. After losing its primary political partner, Jordan turned to Egypt as a way to try to guarantee its territorial status quo, even though Egypt had just days prior been calling for the overthrow of King Hussein. Note that all of these actions occurred, not because of changes to the balance of military power, but because arms transfers signaled shifting political power.

Placing Jordanian troops under Egyptian command, and forming a military alliance with Egypt was not a quick solution to Jordan's border vulnerabilities. First, Nasser's primarily Soviet-equipped forces and Jordan's primarily US/Western-equipped forces

³⁹² Eban 1992, 401; Hussein 1969, 46.

were not compatible, something the King himself recognized.³⁹³ The military alliance thus would have needed time for effective cooperation to be established between the two militaries and between different weapons systems, and would not have significantly altered the military balance for some time.³⁹⁴ Second, King Hussein was convinced that Nasser wanted to avoid a military engagement with Israel. In an interview after the war, he said “I even suspected that he [Nasser] didn’t really believe war would break out.”³⁹⁵ Hussein retained this impression even after meeting Nasser to sign the defense pact, noting “At the time of the Cairo meeting, I was convinced that Nasser did not want war.”³⁹⁶

The Egyptian-Jordanian defense pact is therefore puzzling for two reasons. It was a stark reversal of prior Jordanian policy, and it would not have brought immediate, or even quick, relief to Jordan’s military situation in the West Bank. Viewed as the result of signals, however, this policy begins to make sense. Egypt could provide what the US could not: a clear signal of support, and confidence that it would defend Jordan against Israeli actions. As a result of the downgrade signal from the US, Jordan took its only remaining option: re-alignment with its former adversary. The bilateral defense pact, a further signal of new unity in the Arab world, further pushed Jordan, Egypt, and Israel down a path to war.

WAR

The processes that ended in war in June 1967 were set in motion by signals. Nasser’s escalation, including closing the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba on May 22, were

³⁹³ Mutawi 2002, 62.

³⁹⁴ Stephens 1971, 486.

³⁹⁵ Mutawi 2002, 94.

³⁹⁶ Hussein 1969, 48.

calculated steps to signal Egypt's resolve.³⁹⁷ The Jordanian-Egypt defense pact signaled a newly united Arab front, which was a more credible military threat to Israel. As Nasser explained in an interview with Lebanese newspaper *Al-Hawadith* in March 1966, "We could annihilate Israel in twelve days were the Arab states to form a united front. Any attack on Israel from the south is not possible from a military viewpoint. Israel can be attacked only from the territory of Jordan and Syria."³⁹⁸

The US and France, meanwhile, were sending mixed signals to Israel, fueling its anxiety about political abandonment against an increasingly unified and seemingly militaristic Arab coalition. To Israel, the closure of the Straits of Tiran in May 1967 closely paralleled the closing of the Suez Canal in 1956. But unlike 1956, France was unwilling to assist Israel. Rather than act as a close friend – something Israel had come to expect because of its long history receiving arms from France – de Gaulle continually warned Israel not fire the first shot. Abba Eban noted that throughout the month of May, official France was covered in "thunderous silence."³⁹⁹ Brecher and Geist recount a particularly troubling meeting between Eban and de Gaulle: "Finally, Eban – in an obvious reference to arms supplies – thanked France for her "reinforcement of Israel's strength and spirit." De Gaulle's reply contained the first hint of the reversal of France's position in this matter as well: "Israel was not sufficiently established to solve all her problems herself."⁴⁰⁰ De Gaulle even imposed a temporary arms embargo on 2 June, *before* fighting started.⁴⁰¹ It

³⁹⁷ Mor 1991, 364.

³⁹⁸ Faddah 1974, 76.

³⁹⁹ Brecher and Geist 1980, 113.

⁴⁰⁰ Quoted in Brecher and Geist 1980, 128.

⁴⁰¹ Heimann 2010, 253; Eban 1992, 407; Brecher and Geist 1980, 162.

was therefore with deep disappointment that Eban reflected, “I had been an eye-witness to the death of solemn commitments.”⁴⁰² Israel was left convinced that France would not, as it had in 1956, honor on its political friendship with Israel.

Israel’s growing sense of isolation was stoked by its unclear relationship with the US. The US denied arms requests in April and May 1967. One of the denials was of armored personnel carriers (APCs) – backbone weapons that should not have been the subject of debate. The US also refused to make a decision about whether or not to transfer the F-4 Phantom jet, a clear boom weapon. While Israel thought that the progression of US transfers beginning in 1962 meant there should be question about the APCs and Phantom jet, the US continued to believe that it was not a major supplier to the region. As a result, the US turned down the request for APCs in April 1967. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was annoyed that Israel came to the US with another arms request so soon after agreeing “to continue to look to Europe for the bulk of its military requirements and not to regard the US as a major arms supplier.”⁴⁰³ The US thought agreeing to the APC request would reward Israel for breaking the rules. Though McNamara also believed “the Israelis will treat a ‘no’ as a broken promise,” his recommendation ultimately won the day and Israel did not receive the APCs.⁴⁰⁴ A similar logic led the US to refuse to make a decision about the F-4 Phantom. This boom weapons would have “change[d] dramatically” the US

⁴⁰² Brecher and Geist 1980, 128.

⁴⁰³ Memorandum for the President, 17 April 1967, “Israeli arms requests,” National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 140, Folder 1, LBJ. Emphasis original.

⁴⁰⁴ Memorandum for the President, 18 April 1967, “Israeli Aid Package,” p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Israel, Box 140, Folder 3, LBJ.

relationship with Israel, and so the decision was delayed.⁴⁰⁵ These denials signaled, in Israel's mind, a downgrade in its relationship with the US. This downgrade was seemingly confirmed by correspondence from President Johnson, urging Israel to "abstain from every step that would increase the tension and violence in the area."⁴⁰⁶ Rather than demonstrating support or even sympathy, the US encouraged Israel not to act in the face of escalatory moves from Egypt.

In search of a clarity about US intentions, Levi Eshkol dispatched Meir Amit, the head of Israel's intelligence service, to Washington on 30 May. Amit reported: "The American intentions were not clear; better stated, there was not sufficient light... it became clear that here, in Israel, there existed certain misperceptions [about the US]. It became totally clear that they [the US] were not planning to do a thing."⁴⁰⁷ Eban succinctly described Israel's political position: "we were isolated; none of the powers would come to our assistance."⁴⁰⁸ This isolation was unexpected, and quite different from the relationships Israel had in 1956. As Defense Forces Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin explained, "[in 1956] Israel had been flanked by two supporting major powers, Britain and France, and Egypt was the only enemy. This time, Israel would be alone while Egypt might have Syria, Jordan and contingents from other Arab countries at its side and the Soviet Union in full political support."⁴⁰⁹ As the month of May wore on, Israel was faced with increasing numbers of mobilized troops along its borders; 100,000 Egyptian troops were mobilized in the Sinai

⁴⁰⁵ Bar-Siman-Tov 1998, 242.

⁴⁰⁶ Quoted in Brecher and Geist 1980, 107.

⁴⁰⁷ Quoted in Brecher and Geist 1980.153

⁴⁰⁸ Rabin 1996, 72.

⁴⁰⁹ Eban 1992, 368.

and Gaza, and 60,000 Syrian troops were mobilized in the Golan Heights.⁴¹⁰ On 22 May Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran, further encircling Israel.

Unlike Jordan, Israel did not have a feasible re-alignment partner. By accepting increasing numbers of prestigious and capable weapons from the US, it foreclosed the possibility of aligning with Russia or with China, nor did it have a regional ally it could turn to, as Jordan did with Egypt. As expected by my theory, Israel pursued a preventative strategy against its chief adversary, in the form of military action that destroyed Egypt's air force on 5 June 1967. The Six Day War, a resounding Israeli victory, fundamentally changed relations in the Middle East.

CONCLUSION

The signals sent by weapons transfers help explain how war occurred in June 1967, even though none of the actors were particularly interested in fighting. Doubts about its relationship with the US led Jordan to seek support from Egypt, which in turn raised the level of military threat to Israel. The US miscalculated in its response to an anxious Israel, and fueled its fears of political abandonment, increasing the attractiveness of a preventive option.

The ambiguous signals before the 1967 war starkly contrast with the clear signals sent by the US to Israel prior to the 1973 war. The transfer of key boom weapons, including the F-4 Phantom jet, were an upgrade signal. My theory expects Israel to coordinate more closely with the US, which explains Israeli restraint at the outset of the 1973 war. Unlike

⁴¹⁰ Gawrych 2000, 9.

in 1967, Israel did not feel the need to take preventive action, because its relationship with the US had not been downgraded. Quite the opposite, the upgrade signal made Israel more likely to listen to, and act in line with, US desires. In an airgram from Tel Aviv, US diplomat Joseph Zurhellen summarized the mood in Israel upon the arrival of the first F-4 in late 1969: “No single event in many months raised Israeli spirits as much as the arrival of the first Phantoms. Despite frequent reassurances, a dread lurked in the hearts of many Israelis that something might go wrong. The sight of a single Phantom, bearing Israeli markings, flying low over Israel’s cities September 13 set these fears at rest and set the stage most appropriately, in the Israeli view, for [Prime Minister Golda] Meir’s visit to Washington.”⁴¹¹ This signal was boosted as more F-4s arrived over the next three years. Finally, US and Israeli interpretations of the signal sent by this transfer were aligned. Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Warnke said that selling the Phantoms would “change markedly” the US relationship with Israel.⁴¹² This sentiment was echoed by a memorandum for the president, stating “the F-4 sale will in fact finally end our long-standing policy of not being the principal supplier of Israel’s military needs.”⁴¹³

There were no longer ambiguities about the US-Israeli relationship, which allowed Israel to act with more restraint. It did not initiate the conflict that began on 6 October 1973. Though it had received similar intelligence about troop movements and aggressive

⁴¹¹ Airgram Tel Aviv (Zurhellen) to State, 8 October 1969, “Political commentary and chronology for September 1969”, p. 4, RG 59, Box 2224, Folder POL 2 ISR, USNA.6

⁴¹² Memorandum of Conversation, “Negotiations with Israel – F-4”, 5 November 1968, p. 2, RG 59, Box 1558, Folder DEF 12-5 ISR 10/1/68, USNA.

⁴¹³ Parker Hart, Briefing Memorandum, “Issues to be considered in connection with negotiations with Israel for F-4 Phantom aircraft,” 15 October 1958, p. 1, RG 59, Box 1558, Folder DEF 12-5 ISR 10/1/68, USNA.

intentions as it had in 1967, Israel did not strike first. To be sure, part of this is due to the confidence and continued military superiority Israel maintained after the 1967 war. Abba Eban said, “We could not ensure that the Arabs would not make war, but we could ensure that they would lose it heavily. The memories of 1967 were still vivid in our minds. Everything that had occurred since then confirmed the impression of Israeli superiority.”⁴¹⁴ Nonetheless, Israel refrained from a preemptive strike, even though such a strike would have been advantageous.⁴¹⁵

This case provides two key lessons for explanations of international politics. First, the bipolar structure of the system does not always translate into mutually exclusive spheres of interest at the regional level. Though Jordan was aligned with the United States, it was able to re-align with Egypt, a Soviet partner, in May 1967. This re-alignment shares similarities to Pakistan’s re-alignment with China in 1965, and suggests that in general, alignments and possibilities for alignment are more flexible than suggested by the bipolar Cold War structure. Regional relationships can provide flexibility and a greater menu of options than a systemic-level analysis would indicate. More generally, alliances are more nuanced than policy and popular discourse lets on: allies are not always “friends” and their interests do not have to largely coincide.⁴¹⁶ As historian Paul Schroeder observes, “allies often clash with each other more than they unite in common cause,” and he thus

⁴¹⁴ Eban 1992, 528.

⁴¹⁵ Roth 2009@388-389.

⁴¹⁶ This is a common assumption even in scholarly literature. See, for instance, Bueno de Mesquita 1981; Mercer 1996, 66-67.. It is implied as well in the logic of prominent theories of international politics, such as balance-of-power and balance-of-threat. See, similarly, Levy and Thompson 2011, 249, 306.

characterizes alliances as “associative-antagonistic relationships.”⁴¹⁷ While the existence of an alliance tie is a useful heuristic for determining shared interests, alliance ties vary in strength, and do not inherently exclude the formation of seemingly contradictory relationships.

Second, signaling in international politics is deeply contextual, but also extremely hard to manipulate. The symbols and shared understandings of weapons in the Middle East meant that there were often differences of opinion between regional actors (Israel, Egypt, Jordan), and their great power patrons. US arms transfers to Israel had signaling implications, despite attempts from the US to deny, downplay, or manipulate those signals. Similarly, the US was unable to imbue the backbone and blip weapons it sent to Jordan with *greater* meaning. Weapons transfers share many similarities with Jervis’ discussion of “indices”, which have meanings regardless of whether the actors are trying to convey a message.⁴¹⁸ Importantly, however, the meanings attached to weapons, which enables their transfer to act as a signaling device, are not universal across time or place. As this chapter has highlighted, symbols are socially contextual and contingent. Tanks mattered in the case of India and Pakistan as well, but in the Middle East the tank was the symbolic weapon, which is why the US tried to transfer tanks to Israel using West Germany as a broker.

The strange behavior of the US – its unwillingness to accept that its transfers to Israel were essential in building a political relationship – can be partially explained by returning to Jervis. I have argued here that weapons transfers are what Jervis calls indices, behavior

⁴¹⁷ Schroeder 1976, 256-257. For related analyses of alliance politics, see, among others, Holsti, Hopmann, and Sullivan 1973; Snyder 1997; Krebs 1999; Weitsman 2004; Pressman 2008.

⁴¹⁸ Jervis 1970, 187.

or action that sends a signal because it is inextricably linked to capabilities and/or intentions.⁴¹⁹ If weapons transfers are indices, then their meaning can't be manipulated. It seems likely that the US was treating indices as Jervis-type signals, which he describes as "promissory notes" that do not contain any inherent credibility, and can be manipulated.⁴²⁰ Divergences between the US and Israel, then, are most likely due to their different treatment of arms transfers. Israel – and indeed, most actors in the Middle East – saw arms transfers as inextricably linked to intentions. When the US began transferring capable and prestigious weapons to Israel, this necessarily signaled intentions about a political relationship. The US, on the other hand, thought that it could alter the meaning of arms signals, and tried to moderate any suggestions of a growing political relationship with Israel. *Why* the US treated weapons transfers this way, particularly after seeing Israeli and Egyptian reaction to its previous transfers, remains a puzzle. Future research can attempt to determine why the US proved unwilling or unable to learn, but returning to Jervis' initial outline of signals and indices provides a useful description of the different views on weapons transfers.

⁴¹⁹ Jervis 1970, 18.

⁴²⁰ Jervis 1970, 18.

Chapter 5. Certain Uncertainty: Strategic Ambiguity in the Taiwan Strait

In January 2010, the United States agreed to sell Taiwan \$6.4 billion worth of US military equipment, including Black Hawk helicopters, Patriot and Harpoon missile systems, and mine-hunting ships. The sale also included communications upgrades for Taiwan's squadrons of F-16 fighter jets. Though the US has provided arms to Taiwan since the 1950s, the 2010 sale provoked a strong Chinese reaction. China's Defense Ministry lodged a "solemn protest" with the United States, and further said, "Considering the severe harm and odious effect of US arms sales to Taiwan, the Chinese side has decided to suspend planned mutual military visits... We strongly demand that the US respect the Chinese side's interests." It then called for the sale to be stopped.⁴²¹ China's Vice Foreign Minister similarly stated that the arms sale "will harm China-US relations and bring about a serious and active impact on bilateral communication and cooperation."⁴²² His office released a message saying that "It will be unavoidable that cooperation between China and the United States over important international and regional issues will also be affected." Experts noted that this Chinese reaction was the most forceful seen in recent years.

Across the Strait, the reaction in Taiwan was positive, though muted. Taiwan's president welcomed the sale by noting that it would make Taiwan "more confident and

⁴²¹ John Pomfret, "US sells weapons to Taiwan, angering China," *Washington Post*, 30 January 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/30/AR2010013000508.html>; "China hits back at US over Taiwan weapons sale," *BBC News*, 30 January 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8488765.stm>

⁴²² Helene Cooper, "US approval of Taiwan arms sales angers China," *The New York Times*, 29 January 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/30/world/asia/30arms.html>.

secure.”⁴²³ But the deal did not include additional F-16 jets, or plans for a diesel submarine; the balance of power in the Taiwan Strait remains fundamentally unchanged. Taiwan’s military, at 130,000 active troops, is dwarfed by China’s force of 800,000.⁴²⁴ Without new submarines, Taiwan remains woefully unmatched. Two of its submarines (half of the fleet) are old World War II-era US submarines that the Defense Minister said “belong in a museum.” The submarines can no longer fire torpedoes. Taiwan’s other two submarines were built by the Netherlands in the 1980s. By contrast, China has 59 attack submarines, including five nuclear-powered ones.⁴²⁵ The disparity in quality and quantity of military forces caused the Pentagon to warn, in May 2017, that Taiwan’s historical defensive advantages have been eroded or negated, and that it was losing the ability to deter a potential attack.⁴²⁶

Given the disparity in military power, China’s outrage at the 2010 US sale seems misplaced. Seen in historical perspective, China’s reaction makes more sense. The United States policy of strategic ambiguity in the Taiwan Strait is premised on uncertainty. The US uses a combination of different types of signals, including weapons transfers, to stoke uncertainty about whether or not, and how, the US might intervene should China attack Taiwan, or if Taiwan declares independence.⁴²⁷ Arms transfers were a key tool in the

⁴²³ “China hits back at US over Taiwan weapons sale,” *BBC News*, 30 January 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8488765.stm>.

⁴²⁴ Helene Cooper, “US approval of Taiwan arms sales angers China,” *The New York Times*, 29 January 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/30/world/asia/30arms.html>.

⁴²⁵ Steven Lee Myers and Chris Horton, “Once formidable, Taiwan’s military now overshadowed by China,” *The New York Times*, 4 November 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/04/world/asia/china-taiwan-military.html>.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁷ Nathan 2000, 102; Zhongqi 2003, 396.

development of this policy – first formulated in the 1972 Shanghai Communique – and remain an essential piece in the production and restructuring of great power political and military relationships in East Asia.⁴²⁸

This chapter traces the development of relations between the United States, China, and Taiwan from the late 1960s through the completion of normalization in 1979. It shows how the US was able to maintain its relationship with Taiwan while pursuing closer relations with China. Even as the US was upgrading its relationship with China – which involved switching diplomatic recognition to the mainland and abrogating the 1954 US-Taiwan defense treaty – the US used arms transfers to signal continuity in its relationship with Taiwan. The hostilities between China and Taiwan, and their mutually exclusive views about leadership and rule over China/Taiwan, meant that the US should have had to pick sides, supporting *either* Taiwan *or* China. And yet, the signals sent by arms transfers were a key factor in holding on to a set of relationships that would otherwise have been impossible. Arms transfers enabled the US to walk the delicate balancing act of deterring China from attacking Taiwan, while reassuring Taiwan (though not too much) of continued US support.

This chapter shows that arms transfer signals are both strong and flexible compared to other common and clear signals, including diplomatic visits, military exchanges, and public statements, uniquely positioning them as key foreign policy tools. To explain how arms

⁴²⁸ Zhongqi 2003; Bush 2004; Chen 2012, 17; Nathan 2000, 94.. On arms as tools for restructuring relations, see National Security Council Action Memorandum, “US-PRC relations and approaches to the President’s Peking Trip: Tasks for the Rest of 1975,” 3 July 1975, Digital National Security Archives (DNSA), ProQuest Document ID (PQID): 1679040879.

transfers facilitated strategic ambiguity, this chapter proceeds as follows. First, I provide background information on the US relationship with Taiwan and mainland China. I then discuss the creation and maintenance of the policy of strategic ambiguity through three key periods: 1) the reduction in US arms aid to Taiwan in the late 1960s and early 1970s; 2) the formulation and consequences of the 1972 Shanghai Communique; and 3) policy made in response to the 1974 National Security Study Memorandum 212, which outlined US arms transfer policies to Taiwan. I conclude with brief reference to the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act and the 1982 Joint Communique between the US and China, the two contradictory documents that complete the “sacred texts” of the US-Taiwan-China strategic triangle, and which carried the policy of strategic ambiguity into the present period.

BACKGROUND: (MOSTLY) ALLIED AGAINST COMMUNISM

Mirroring its relationship with Pakistan, the United States and Taiwan signed a Mutual Defense Treaty in 1954. Article V of this treaty stated that an attack in the West Pacific, against either US or Taiwanese territories, was considered dangerous and required each party to “act to meet the common defense in accordance with its constitutional processes.”⁴²⁹ The defense relationship established in this treaty was strengthened by the 1955 Formosa Resolution, which made it the responsibility of the United States to determine if an attack on the islands of Quemoy or Matsu were related to the defense of Taiwan, and to act accordingly.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁹ Bellows 1976, 4.

⁴³⁰ Bellows 1976, 3-4.

The US aligned with Taiwan in part because of Cold War logics: Taiwan was an attractive political partner in the fight against Communism, and provided a strategic location near both the Soviet Union and China. Taiwanese leaders were aware of the US preoccupation with fighting Communism, and continually portrayed Taiwan as the last bastion of the free world in East Asia. This narrative continued even as the US was turning toward mainland China. Taiwanese Premier Chiang Ching-kuo wrote to Gerald Ford that the US-Taiwan relationship needed to continue because it “also serves to sustain a vital bulwark of the free world against any force of aggression which seeks to disturb the peace and stability of the Western Pacific.”⁴³¹ By painting Taiwan as essential to the Cold War logic of dominoes, Chiang was again mirroring moves made by Pakistan. This view of Taiwan as a linchpin in the fight against Communism continued through the 1970s.⁴³²

Taiwan’s expectations were largely met. As befitted an anti-Communist ally, Taiwan received prestigious and capable arms, including Hawk surface-to-air missiles, F-5A Freedom Fighter jets, advanced radar systems, and Benson-class destroyers. Until 1968, the majority of these arms were transferred through grant aid. Thereafter, the US instituted a military sales program for Taiwan.⁴³³ This allowed for the continued transfer of arms, as well as joint production. For example, the US allowed Taiwan to construct

⁴³¹ Letter Chiang Ching-kuo to Gerald Ford, 20 September 1974, p. 2, Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders – Correspondence with ROC Premier Chiang Ching-kuo, Box 1, Gerald R. Ford Library (hereafter GRF).

⁴³² As will be discussed later in the chapter, like Pakistan, Taiwan also sought a relationship with a communist power, this time Soviet Russia, when its relationship with the US soured.

⁴³³ Speech by General Ciccolella to Taiwan military commanders, 16 September 1969, p. 2, Entry A1(5412), Container 6, Folder DEF 19 1969, USNA.

100 F-5E Tiger jets on the island.⁴³⁴ More than with its other allies, the US seemed interested in creating a self-sufficient Taiwan.⁴³⁵ In addition to providing Taiwan weapons through grant aid, the US also provided significant economic aid, averaging \$121.5 million annually between 1951 and 1965.⁴³⁶ The alliance and economic ties, combined with similar anti-communist strategic narratives, led Taiwan to expect boom and backbone weapons from the United States. Compared to Pakistan, Taiwan should have expected more sophisticated and larger numbers of weapons because of its proximity to China and US agreement that China posed a threat.

The US-Taiwan relationship began to change in the 1970s when Richard Nixon pushed to establish relations with China. The US decreased its defense and economic aid to Taiwan at this time. Military assistance aid was cut to below \$15 million in 1970, a sharp decrease from its high of \$90.6 million in 1967.⁴³⁷ US leaders began engaging with China, and seemed to start overlooking Taiwan. In July 1971, Henry Kissinger made a secret visit to China, followed quickly by a public visit in October of that year. Although President Nixon sent California Governor Ronald Reagan to Taiwan in October 1971, this was widely acknowledged as a “symbolic gesture,” meant to assuage hurt feelings in Taiwan.⁴³⁸

Taiwan’s international position was also deteriorating. In October 1971, Taiwan was expelled from the United Nations, and was replaced by a representative from mainland

⁴³⁴ Bellows 1976, 3.

⁴³⁵ Gelb 1976, 13.

⁴³⁶ Hickey 1994, 21.

⁴³⁷ Telegram Taipei (Armstrong) to State, 14 November 1969, p. 1, RG 59, Box 1688, Folder DEF 19-8 US-Chinat 1/1/68, USNA; Telegram State (Rogers) to Taipei, 4 November 1970, p. 3, RG 59, Box 2205, Folder Pol Chinat-US 1/1/70, USNA.

⁴³⁸ Tucker 2005, 126.

China. Taiwan's treatment at the UN mirrored changes to its international diplomatic position. In 1970, 71 countries recognized Taiwan, and 48 mainland China, as the seat of government. By the end of 1973, only 39 countries recognized Taiwan, whereas China was recognized as the diplomatic seat by 85 countries.⁴³⁹ Setbacks continued for Taiwan: in February 1972 the US and China issued the Shanghai Communique, which pledged the US to withdraw its military forces and installations from Taiwan and indicated a long-term decrease and end to weapons sales; US military personnel stationed on Taiwan were reduced by half between 1972 and 1974; in October 1974 the US repealed the Formosa Resolution; and in December 1978 the US switched its diplomatic recognition to mainland China.⁴⁴⁰

Sprinkled in among this downgrade in US-Taiwan relations were nuggets of hope. In December 1972, Taiwan signed a deal to co-produce the F-5E fighter jet, a capable boom weapon.⁴⁴¹ In 1973 and 1974, Taiwan opened new consulates in Atlanta and Kansas City, and reactivated a Consulate in Portland, seeming to indicate continuity in US-Taiwan relations.⁴⁴² In May 1975, the US decided to continue to allow Taiwan to access new US weapons,⁴⁴³ and the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act committed the US to continue providing Taiwan "with such weapons as may be necessary for its security."⁴⁴⁴ Thus the 1970s were

⁴³⁹ Wang 1990, 7-8.

⁴⁴⁰ Bellows 1976, 2; Hickey 1986, 1327; Copper 1992, 43.

⁴⁴¹ Telegram State (Rogers) to Taipei, 22 December 1972, RG 59, Box 1697, Folder DEF Chinat 1/1/70, US National Archives (USNA); Bellows 1976, 3.

⁴⁴² Bellows 1976, 9.

⁴⁴³ Memorandum for Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, "Department of State's Comments and Recommendations on NSSM 212," 29 January 1975, p. 3, DNSA, PQID: 1679041330.

⁴⁴⁴ Quoted in Hickey 1994, 31.

a period of contradictions and uncertainty in the relationships between the US, China, and Taiwan. The deliberate introduction of uncertainty into these relations complicates the expectations derived from my theory. The downgrade signals sent by the US should lead Taiwan to seek an alternate partner. Failing that, Taiwan should pursue preventive action against China. At the same time, weapons transfers during the 1970s, F-5 co-production, and the opening of embassies indicated continuity of US-Taiwan relations. The contradictory signals (downgrade vs. reinforcement) stopped Taiwan from pursuing prevention against China. Instead, the US was able to hold Taiwan in a state of suspended animation, keeping it from declaring independence or pursuing other action against China, even as Taiwan unhappily watched the creation of new US-China ties.

I show how the US used arms transfers to send contradictory signals at three key moments: the reduction in US arms aid to Taiwan in the late 1960s and early 1970s; the 1972 Shanghai Communique; and policies that grew from the 1974 National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 212, which established guidelines for future US arms transfers to Taiwan. These were foundational moments in the creation of strategic ambiguity.

Though this case is similar to the previous chapters, it differs in three key ways. First, there exists a real and significant arms imbalance between China and Taiwan. Though Taiwan had the support of the US, it was outnumbered by Chinese forces. Additionally, many of the more advanced weapons that Taiwan counted on were operated by and/or loaned to Taiwan, including F-4 Phantom jet squadrons. Unlike the other cases, Taiwan didn't have full control over its weapons. Second, the signals sent by all actors were

deliberately ambiguous. The US though ambiguity was required to restrain Taiwan and to not embolden China. Many within the US government also believed that commitments to Taiwan were interdependent with other commitments. As the State Department remarked, “we don’t intend to normalize in such a manner that we downgrade the integrity of our commitments in the eyes of such important allies as Japan or the Western European countries.”⁴⁴⁵ Kissinger also believed that China saw US commitments as linked, writing, “The Chinese are well aware that our setbacks in Indochina have increased the Administration’s domestic and international political vulnerabilities, creating a context where any major change in our relationship with Taiwan which implied abandonment of yet another ally would be unacceptable at this time.”⁴⁴⁶ Creating an ambiguous set of relationships would help the US guard against charges that it had abandoned an ally. This had two consequences: the sensitivity to (un)related commitments gave Taiwan and China more leverage in negotiating with the US, since the US was loath to be seen as abandoning its allies. The second consequence is that the US was more sensitive to the substitutability of signals, both military and non-military, including diplomatic visits, co-production arrangements, and embassy status. Finally, the third major difference in this case is that arms transfers were *both* leading and lagging indicators of political relationships. Sometimes policy was formulated, announced, and then supported or contradicted by arms transfers. Other times, arms transfers foreshadowed policy changes. This inconsistency

⁴⁴⁵ State Department Briefing Paper, “Normalization,” November 1975, p. 15, DNSA, PQID: 1679040945.

⁴⁴⁶ Memorandum, Kissinger to Ford, “Your Trip to the People’s Republic of China,” 20 November 1975, p. 19, DNSA, PQID: 1679040066.

contributed to ambiguity in US policy: just looking at policy pronouncements would give one impression, whereas examining arms transfers would give a different impression.

This is therefore the most complex, but, I suspect, the most interesting case in which to examine arms transfer signals, the substitutability of signals, and the interdependence of commitments.

ARMS REDUCTIONS AND WORRY FOR THE FUTURE

Even before the US took steps to establish diplomatic relations with China, Taiwan had cause to worry about its future relationship with the United States. In the early 1970s, decreasing outlays for military aid constrained US ability to provide arms that Taiwan sought. Ambassador Walter McConaughy – who had experienced a similar situation during his tenure as Ambassador to Pakistan – knew that Taiwan would interpret a slowdown in arms as a downgrade signal. In a 1967 telegram, he warned that Taiwan, “would view such a drastic and unforeseen reduction in [Military Assistance Program arms] as evidence of a distinct shift in [US Government] policy in the direction of dilution of US concern with China issues and an attempt at partial disengagement.”⁴⁴⁷ When additional funding was not allocated, he re-emphasized that “Many in [Taiwan] tended to interpret US decisions on strictly military matters in terms of larger policy considerations, particularly the US posture toward the Chinese Communist regime.”⁴⁴⁸ And indeed, Taiwanese Defense Minister Chiang Ching-kuo asked McConaughy, in 1968, if upcoming cuts in US transfers to

⁴⁴⁷ Telegram Taipei (McConaughy) to State, 6 December 1967, p. 2, RG 59, Box 1687, Folder DEF US-Chinat 1/1/67, USNA.

⁴⁴⁸ Airgram Taipei (McConaughy) to State, 9 February 1970, p. 6, RG 59 Box 2206, Folder Pol Chinat-US 5/26/70, USNA.

Taiwan represented any change in US policy.⁴⁴⁹ When more arms aid was not forthcoming, Chiang told McConaughy “confidence in US consistency and dependability had been seriously diluted in all sectors of his government.” He felt that the reduced arms aid could not “be reconciled with the requirements of alliance and friendship.”⁴⁵⁰

As expected by my theory, the mere fact of arms reduction was enough to cause concern in the upper levels of Taiwan’s government, many of whom worried it signaled a shift in US policy. Echoing concerns expressed by Chiang, Foreign Minister James Shen said in 1970 that a reduction in arms aid “would have serious and adverse political and psychological effects, would be interpreted as the ‘beginning of the end’ of military assistance for [Taiwan] and as part of an overall US withdrawal from Asia.” He added: “There is reason to suspect that the reduction involves a significant policy change by the US.”⁴⁵¹ Though Taiwanese leaders were perhaps more sensitive to reductions in arms transfers than the other cases, they did, as expected by my theory, understand reduced arms transfers as a downgrade to US-Taiwan ties.

In recognition of Taiwan’s concerns, the US tried to paint the reductions to Taiwan as part of an overall change in US military aid programs, and not specific to the health of US-Taiwan relations. This was, in fact, part of the cause for reduced transfers to Taiwan. Worldwide, US arms aid in 1970 was \$400 million, which was 16 times less than the

⁴⁴⁹ Telegram Taipei (McConaughy) to State, 12 November 1968, p. 1, RG 59, Box 1687, Folder DEF US-Chinat 1/1/67, USNA.

⁴⁵⁰ Telegram Taipei (McConaughy) to State, 22 October 1970, p. 2, RG 59, Box 2205, Folder Pol Chinat-US 1/1/70, USNA.

⁴⁵¹ Memorandum Green to Shoesmith, 19 September 1970, p. 1, Entry A1(5142), Container 7, Folder DEF 19-8 MAP Sept 1970, USNA.

amount of aid given in 1952. At the same time, the number of aid recipients was reduced from 69 to 25.⁴⁵² In a speech to Taiwan's military commanders, US General Richard Ciccolella noted that "[Taiwan's] importance and recognition by the United States is underscored by the fact that it is one of only five nations which together account for three quarters of the total United States investment in Foreign Military Assistance this year."⁴⁵³ Though the US tried to point to the silver lining, Taiwan saw only storm clouds ahead, fearing that the US was embarking on a new strategy in East Asia.

Taiwan's fears of abandonment were further fueled by US denials of its requests for F-4 Phantom aircraft, M-48 Patton tanks, and a submarine. President Chiang Kai-shek wrote to Nixon asking for F-4s in 1969, noting that Vietnam, South Korea, and Israel had already received the plane.⁴⁵⁴ By explicitly referencing other US allies who had the F-4, President Chiang made clear his interest in learning where Taiwan stood in the US alliance hierarchy. McConaughy noted that the F-4 request was "a test case on US willingness to extend necessary defense assistance to an ally."⁴⁵⁵ Dean Rusk agreed that Taiwan's desire for the F-4 "may be motivated more by reasons of prestige and desire to obtain some reaffirmation of US defense commitment, than by anticipated military needs."⁴⁵⁶ Nonetheless, the request was denied: the US was wary of committing too strongly to Taiwan. After denying

⁴⁵² Speech by General Ciccolella to Taiwan military commanders, 16 September 1969, p. 2, Entry A1(5412), Container 6, Folder DEF 19 1969, USNA.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Letter Chiang Kai-shek to Nixon, 19 November 1969, Entry A1(5412), Container 8, Folder DEF 19-8 F4 proposal 1969, USNA.

⁴⁵⁵ Telegram Taipei (McConaughy) to State, 18 December 1969, p. 1, RG 59, Box 1688, Folder DEF 19-8 US-Chinat 1/1/68, USNA.

⁴⁵⁶ Telegram State (Rusk) to Taipei, 1 November 1968, p. 1, RG 59, Box 1688, Folder DEF 19-8 US-Chinat 1/1/68, USNA.

the aircraft transfer, the State Department noted that Taiwan “was deeply disappointed by the unwillingness of the US administration to throw its support behind the [request].”⁴⁵⁷

Feeling spurned by the F-4 denial, Taiwan requested M-48 Patton tanks. These too were boom weapons and would have been a marker of continued closeness with the US. Taiwan tried to make the transfer even easier for the US by requesting tanks that were excess from the war in Vietnam. These tanks would have been logistically easy and inexpensive for the US to transfer to Taiwan. Taiwan’s request was for signaling, rather than military reasons. The Patton tanks were too heavy to traverse bridges on Taiwan, and would have been “very constrained by the terrain.”⁴⁵⁸ This request was also turned down, and the entire stock of excess Patton tanks was transferred to Greece and Turkey, instead.⁴⁵⁹ As a consolation prize, the US stationed its own F-4 Phantoms on Taiwan. Though stationing F-4s on Taiwan gave it important air capabilities, it did nothing to help Taiwan figure out its relationship with the United States. Taiwan’s strategy to determine future US-Taiwan relations was to request a submarine, a boom weapon with a very significant prestige factor.

Submarines are particularly useful in the Taiwan Strait. As important boom weapons, the US was wary of what signal the transfer would send, particularly as the new Nixon administration was preparing overtures to China. Evidence that the submarine was an important symbol of the US-Taiwan relationship can be seen in the various versions of a

⁴⁵⁷ Airgram Taipei (McConaughy) to State, 9 February 1970, p. 5, RG 59, Box 2206, Folder Pol Chinat-US 5/26/70, USNA.

⁴⁵⁸ Memorandum (unsigned) for LGEN Warren, 1970, Entry A1(5142), Container 7, Folder DEF 1 1970, USNA.

⁴⁵⁹ Telegram Taipei to State, 23 December 1970, RG 59, Box 1697, Folder DEF Chinat 1/1/70, USNA.

submarine that were at one point under consideration. The US was torn between reassuring an ally of US support, and not wanting to oversell US-Taiwan ties. The Department of Defense wanted to sell Taiwan a former research submarine to use as a target vessel for anti-submarine warfare. It specified that the submarine “would be configured so as to have almost no combat capability.”⁴⁶⁰ This was elaborated on in a 1971 memo: “In discussing the question of the submarine for [Taiwan], we have been talking in terms of a boat which has been ‘defanged;’ i.e., had its torpedo tubes sealed or removed so that it could not be used for any offensive purposes.”⁴⁶¹ That is, the Department of Defense was willing to give Taiwan a submarine that had little to no military use. This recommendation was calibrated to provide the prestige of a submarine transfer – thus reassuring Taiwan – without the giving the military capabilities that might have emboldened it.

The State Department, however, opposed the sale of even a “defanged” submarine. Secretary of State William Rogers wrote, in August 1971, “We have again reviewed the matter of submarines for [Taiwan] and have concluded that the provision of even the research vessel described to us would give a very misleading signal to Peking in the delicate period prior to the President’s visit.”⁴⁶² In a longer memorandum, Rogers elaborated that his main concern was political: the “provision of submarines probably would be interpreted by Peking as a hostile gesture and could jeopardize our efforts to improve relations”⁴⁶³ Taiwan was so determined to get a submarine from the United States that in September

⁴⁶⁰ Letter Rogers to Laird, 13 August 1971, RG 59, Box 1698, Folder DEF 12-5 Chinat-US 1/1/71, USNA.

⁴⁶¹ Memorandum Winthrop Brown to Ambassador Johnson, 27 April 1971, RG 59, Box 1697, Folder DEF Chinat 1/1/70, USNA.

⁴⁶² Letter Rogers to Laird, 13 August 1971, RG 59, Box 1698, Folder DEF 12-5 Chinat-US 1/1/71, USNA.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*

1971 it leaked information that it was to receive a submarine from West Germany to try to convince the US to sell or loan a submarine instead.⁴⁶⁴ The US ultimately denied the request for the submarine. All signals seemed to indicate an impending change in US-Taiwan relations.

Simultaneous to the reduction in overall aid, and the denial of the submarine and F-4 transfers, the US stopped the patrols of the Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait, and Taiwan was expelled from the United Nations. The Seventh Fleet had been stationed in the Taiwan Strait since 1950, and the reversal of this long-term trend was as concerning to Taiwanese leaders as the denials of arms transfers.⁴⁶⁵ Taiwan was expelled from the UN in October 1971, even though just two years prior the US announced that it “opposes the admission of the Peking regime into the UN *at the expense of the Republic of China.*”⁴⁶⁶ The dramatic turn in Taiwan’s international diplomatic status in a short, two-year period, surely contributed to Taiwan’s interpretation of the arms aid reduction and arms transfer denials. Instead of isolated or one-time incidents, the arms issues seemed to portend a coming doom in Taiwan’s relations with the US.

US denials of the F-4, M-48, and submarine are clear downgrade signals. Taiwan was still allied with the US and had proven a loyal Cold Warrior. My theory thus expects Taiwan to pursue realignment, and, failing that, to pursue prevention against China. However, Taiwan was so dependent on the United States that its policy responses to these

⁴⁶⁴ Telegram Taipei (Gleysteen) to State, 16 September 1971, RG 59, Box 1698, Folder DEF 12-5 Chinat-US 1/1/71, USNA.

⁴⁶⁵ Copper 1992, 4.

⁴⁶⁶ Bush 2004, 115. Emphasis added.

disappointments was muted compared to other cases. Unlike Pakistan, Taiwan didn't have an alternate partner. Unlike Israel, Taiwan did not have the balance of capabilities to make prevention possible. However, Ambassador McConaughy noted that Taiwanese displeasure was reflected in a cooler and less forthcoming attitude.⁴⁶⁷ He also observed more editorial criticism of US policy, and occasional criticism by political leaders.⁴⁶⁸ The editorial criticism is particularly notable because the government generally exercised control over newspapers, and because Taiwan had been a steadfast supporter of the US, even as other allies began to criticize it.⁴⁶⁹ The loyalty of Taiwan is seen most clearly in the case of Vietnam. Where other allies were criticizing US involvement, a July 1968 editorial in the *China Post* praised US involvement in Vietnam by declaring: "Almighty God should be given credit for having brought into being a nation with such a high sense of justice and prosperity."⁴⁷⁰ Feeling stuck and confused about its relationship with the US, Taiwan's policy response was to double-down on loyalty. McConaughy assessed that overall Taiwan was exercising restraint in its criticism because its leaders were aware that "friendship and cooperation with the US are essential to its existence and that vital American trade and investment could be jeopardized by deteriorating relations between the two nations."⁴⁷¹ He did warn, however, that without the transfer of modern equipment to replace Taiwan's aging arsenal, Taiwan might launch a counter attack, ally itself with

⁴⁶⁷ Airgram Taipei (McConaughy) to State, 14 June 1971 "US Policy – Annual Assessment", p. 7, RG 59, Box 2206, Folder POL Chinat-US 8/19/72, USNA.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁶⁹ Hsieh 1985, 155.

⁴⁷⁰ Quoted in Hsieh 1985, 144.

⁴⁷¹ Airgram Taipei (McConaughy) to State, 14 June 1971 "US Policy – Annual Assessment", p. 11, RG 59, Box 2206, Folder POL Chinat-US 8/19/72, USNA.

Peking, or turn toward other nations (possibly even the Soviet Union) for support.⁴⁷² It is interesting to note that Soviet journalist Victor Louis visited Taiwan in October 1968, accompanied by rumors that he met with Defense Minister Chiang Ching-kuo.⁴⁷³ In the face of this muted, though still surprising, change in Taiwan's tenor toward the US, McConaughy recommended that the US transfer modern military equipment – including the F-4 and perhaps submarines – which would “constitute visible evidence of our live and practical interest in the security of [Taiwan] at a time of some concern here on that score.”⁴⁷⁴

There is a second reason for Taiwan's muted response to the downgrade signals. In August 1971, Taiwan received a reinforcement signal in the form of F-5E jet production. Northrop, the manufacturer of the F-5, approached the State Department about producing the jets in Taiwan. The State Department was hesitant to endorse this, and sought advice from McConaughy on how to discourage Northrop's proposal before it gained momentum. Secretary Rogers wrote, “For obvious reasons this does not appear a propitious time for us to give appearance of helping [Taiwan] add a new dimension to [Taiwan's] capacity for arms production.”⁴⁷⁵ Though no decisions were made by the end of 1971, the proposal was an indication that not all was lost for future US-Taiwan relations. The Northrop co-

⁴⁷² Airgram Taipei (McConaughy) to State, 9 February 1970, p. 10, RG 59, Box 2206, Folder Pol Chinat-US 5/26/70, USNA. Aging planes were of particular concern for Taiwan. A September 1972 survey of its aircraft showed an average age of 19 years for its F-100s; 16 years for the F-104A; 10 years for the F-104G; and 8 years for the F-5A. See Telegram Taipei (Gleysteen) to State, 16 September 1971, RG 59, Box 1698, Folder DEF 12-5 Chinat-US 1/1/71, USNA.

⁴⁷³ Hsieh 1985, 157; Tubilewicz 2005, 79.

⁴⁷⁴ Airgram Taipei (McConaughy) to State, 14 June 1971 “US Policy – Annual Assessment”, p. 18, RG 59, Box 2206, Folder POL Chinat-US 8/19/72, USNA.

⁴⁷⁵ Telegram State to Taipei, 25 August 1971, p. 2, RG 59, Box 1697, Folder DEF Chinat 1/1/70, USNA.

production proposal would become a key part of ambiguous US signals following the release of the Shanghai Communique in February 1972.

SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE AND SIGNALS OF CHANGE

In February 1972 President Nixon visited China, after which the US and China released the Shanghai Communique. This document was more of a statement of each side's policy positions, rather than an agreement.⁴⁷⁶ The Shanghai Communique was ambiguous about Taiwan's legal status, and was "full of equivocal, opaque language."⁴⁷⁷ The Communique seemed to reverse US policy by announcing that Taiwan was part of China, and by stating that the US would remove its forces and military installations from Taiwan. It is worth quoting at length from the paragraph that drew (and continues to draw) the most scrutiny:

The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves. With this prospect in mind, it affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all US forces and military installations from Taiwan. In the meantime, it will progressively reduce its forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension diminishes.⁴⁷⁸

While the US and China agreed that the US should remove its forces and military installations from Taiwan, this document also created ambiguity about the future relationship between the US and Taiwan. The paragraph above states US interest in a "peaceful settlement." But it also says that any issues between China and Taiwan are an

⁴⁷⁶ For a discussion of the wording of the communique and of US and Chinese statements, see Copper 1992, Ch. 2.

⁴⁷⁷ Copper 1992, 38.

⁴⁷⁸ Quoted in Bellows 1976, 2.

internal affair, perhaps indicating the US has no place in helping to resolve them.⁴⁷⁹

Importantly, there was no mention in this paragraph, or elsewhere in the Shanghai Communique, of the US-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty. As Nancy Tucker summarized, after the Shanghai Communique, “the United States remained tied to the formalities of a decaying alliance with the Republic of China that seemed as awkward to Washington as it was indispensable to Taipei.”⁴⁸⁰ In the words of Chiao Chiao Hsieh, “The impact of the Nixon Doctrine was tremendous. It created uncertainties in the international environment probably unprecedented in post-war Far Eastern politics.”⁴⁸¹ This uncertainty was because the US was committed to a peaceful solution, but made no mention of its ties to Taiwan. Casting issues in the Strait as “internal” might have been stage-setting for US disengagement from Taiwan.

The uncertainty created by the Shanghai Communique makes theorizing its effects more complex. The Communique was a downgrade signal, sort of. It could also be read as a weak reinforcement signal. Given this ambiguity, I expect Taiwan to cautiously seek realignment. I expect this to take the form of explorations to find a more committed partner. At the same Time, Taiwan should be wary of undertaking any actions that would push the US to break ties with Taiwan.

The period following the Shanghai Communique was one of confused foreign policy in both Taiwan and United States. The US approved Northrop’s proposal to produce fighter

⁴⁷⁹ For an in-depth discussion of the negotiations leading to the Shanghai Communique see Chen 1977; Copper 1992.

⁴⁸⁰ Tucker 2005, 134.

⁴⁸¹ Hsieh 1985, 126.

jets in Taiwan, and sent other signals that indicated it was committed to remaining an ally of Taiwan. In December 1972, Secretary of State Rogers explained his reversal on the F-5 production proposal. He wrote, “An important consideration in providing a weapon system to [Taiwan] is its effect on our evolving relationship with the People’s Republic of China. While steps to improve relations with the PRC continue, it is also our policy to assist [Taiwan] in maintaining its defensive capability...The F-5E is primarily a defensive weapon system and in Taiwan will be used to replace obsolescent aircraft.”⁴⁸² This was a risky stance, but also an important signal, because “every country that initially bought the F-5E fighter went on to acquire more advanced fighter aircraft, and the Taiwanese wanted to be part of this trend.”⁴⁸³ The co-production agreement can be seen, then, as a signal indicating a long-term and positive relationship between the US and Taiwan. Not only would there be a long-term relationship for practical reasons – Northrop would have to establish the production infrastructure, which would take a number of years – but it seemed likely that Taiwan was now “in line” for more advanced fighter jets, boom weapons that were clear signals of a solid political relationship. Poetically, the first F-5E produced in Taiwan came off the assembly line on 30 October 1974, the late Chiang Kai-shek’s birthday.⁴⁸⁴

Feeling that co-production was a positive signal for long-term US-Taiwan relations, Taiwan took efforts to prove itself a loyal and special ally. Unlike other US allies, Taiwan

⁴⁸² Telegram State (Rogers) to Taipei, 22 December 1972, p. 3, RG 59, Box 1697, Folder DEF Chinat 1/1/70, USNA.

⁴⁸³ Qingmin 2006, 241.

⁴⁸⁴ Bellows 1976, 3.

stepped up its contributions to the war effort in Vietnam. Taiwan provided some of its F-5A aircraft to South Vietnam, and in return the US stationed two F-4 squadrons in Taiwan. One diplomat described that Taiwan was “going way out of their way in their eagerness to provide services, accommodations, and favorable publicity to US personnel involved” in the F-4 operations. After demonstrating its loyalty in Vietnam and displaying positive treatment of US personnel, Taiwan requested its own F-4 squadron.⁴⁸⁵

Though US air forces were stationed on Taiwan, and the F-5 co-production agreement was given the green light, Taiwan was still uncertain about its relationship with the US. An editorial in the *China Times* in February 1973 summarized this:

There remain tremendous contradictions between America’s intention to normalize relations with the Asian communists and her constant pledge to honor treaty commitments and promises to her Asian allies... If President Nixon’s pledge that ‘new friends would not be made at the expense of old allies’ and if the pledges of continued US intention to honor her commitments to and friendship with the Republic of China and other allies are credible, then the United States should by no means hastily proceed with the normalization of her relations with the Maoists. The US steps in this direction should not be too quick or too big.⁴⁸⁶

The F-4 transfer would have been a clear signal of US support. While the US did not give Taiwan the F-4s it desired, it did take other actions that were supposed to substitute for a clear arms transfer signal, which ultimately contributed to uncertainty about future US-Taiwan relations. First, US trade with Taiwan continued to rise, from \$1.6 billion in 1971 to \$4.8 billion in 1976.⁴⁸⁷ Between 1973 and 1974, Taiwan opened consulates in

⁴⁸⁵ Letter Rowberg to Horowitz, 20 December 1972, RG 59, Entry A15412, Container 13, Folder DEF 15 1973, USNA.

⁴⁸⁶ Telegram Taipei (Clarke) to State, 10 February 1973, pp. 1-2, RG 59, Box 2694, Folder Pol 7 US/Kissinger 12/22/72, USNA.

⁴⁸⁷ Chang 1986, 38.

Atlanta, Kansas City, and Portland.⁴⁸⁸ And in 1974, the US appointed Leonard Unger Ambassador to Taipei. Many had expected the post go unfilled as the US began pursuing relations with China, but Unger's appointment signaled continuity in US-Taiwan relations. Chiang Ching-kuo, now Premier, said in October 1974, "We shall do our utmost to maintain bilateral relations with friendly countries and especially to strengthen our alliance with the US."⁴⁸⁹ While in the economic register the US-Taiwan relationship seemed to be strong, signals in the diplomatic realm remained uncertain. In October 1974, the United States repealed the Formosa Resolution, making it unclear how it would respond to military action near, but not on, Taiwan.

As a result of these ambiguous signals, Taiwan designed a hedging foreign policy. While trying to strengthen its existing ties with the US, Taiwan also pursued economic relationships with communist countries, and floated rumors about developing a relationship with the Soviet Union. The creation of new economic ties to communist countries, and the strengthening of ties to Europe were the manifestation of Taiwan's strategy to support its international status through economic power. As Economic Affairs Minister Sun Yun-suan said, Taiwan's international position is "gradually being replaced by economic power, trade and technology."⁴⁹⁰ In March 1972, Foreign Minister Chou Shu-kai announced that Taiwan was willing to develop economic and other relations with communist countries, as long as they were not "puppets of Communist China."⁴⁹¹ One year

⁴⁸⁸ Bellows 1976, 9.

⁴⁸⁹ Bellows 1976, 9.

⁴⁹⁰ Quoted in Hsieh 1985, 249.

⁴⁹¹ Quoted in Hsieh 1985, 240.

later, a close advisor to Chiang Ching-kuo said, “Why shouldn’t we trade with countries like Bulgaria and Hungary? Trade will be our weapon to make friends.”⁴⁹² In November 1975, Taiwan established the Euro-Asia Trade Organization to facilitate trade with Europe. This resulted in many European countries establishing trade offices in Taiwan, including Belgium, France, Greece, Spain, and the UK.⁴⁹³ Economic ties were one way for Taiwan to maintain its international position without breaking with or turning against the US.

The second prong of Taiwan’s hedging strategy was to drop hints that it was pursuing relations with the Soviet Union. As described by John Copper, “Taipei wants the Soviet Union as a friend and ally in reserve, and it seeks to convey the message to Peking that if the United States evacuates its forces, Taipei has alternatives.”⁴⁹⁴ It seems highly implausible that Taiwan could or would align with the Soviet Union. But seen as a matter of rhetorical coercion, this part of Taiwan’s strategy makes more sense.⁴⁹⁵ Taiwan’s willingness to even consider pursuing relations with the Soviet Union and eastern bloc was a stark reversal of previous red lines. In 1957, Chiang Kai-shek published a 300,000-word tome titled *Soviet Russia in China*, outlining the long struggle against the Soviet Union, and describing a strategy of anti-Communist warfare.⁴⁹⁶ This view was foundational in Taiwan’s development and conceptualization of its role in the international system. A reversal of this stance, even solely in terms of developing trading relations with Communist states, is therefore a significant policy change in Taiwan. The rhetoric of Soviet alignment

⁴⁹² Quoted in Hsieh 1985, 249.

⁴⁹³ Hsieh 1985, 262.

⁴⁹⁴ Quoted in Hsieh 1985, 239.

⁴⁹⁵ Krebs and Jackson 2007.

⁴⁹⁶ Hsieh 1985, 157.

gained support when, in May 1973, two Soviet warships passed through the Taiwan Strait and circumnavigated the island. This naval maneuver, which was the first time since 1949 that Soviet warships made this trip, came just one month after rumors that the Soviet Union and Taiwan were pursuing a military relationship.⁴⁹⁷ Notably, it occurred two days before US diplomat David Bruce was to arrive in Peking to set up the new US Liaison Office.⁴⁹⁸ A February article in the *South China Morning Post* reported that Taiwan would allow the Soviet Union to lease a naval base in the Pescadores if the US recognized China.⁴⁹⁹

Taiwan's dalliances with the Soviet Union never amounted to more than talk. As one contemporary scholar observed, "Taiwan obviously hopes to use such a belief to deter the US from extending full recognition to the PRC, or at least to ensure that normalization is carried out on terms which the ROC can live with. Taipei hopes that the belief in Washington in Taiwan's 'Russia option' will keep the US from abandoning Taiwan to attack or pressure from the mainland."⁵⁰⁰ A close relationship with the Soviet Union risked provoking tensions in the Taiwan Strait, between the Soviet Union, and China and the US. It also risked pushing China toward a more militant stance toward Taiwan.⁵⁰¹ Similarly, heightened tensions could scare off investors, undermining Taiwan's new economic ties. The US was unwilling to believe Taiwan's pursuit of relations with the Soviet Union was sincere. Henry Kissinger drew parallels between this attempted "re-alignment" and Pakistan's overtures to China in the 1960s, writing that "[the US] made some symbolic

⁴⁹⁷ Share 2003, 26.

⁴⁹⁸ Garson 1994, 757.

⁴⁹⁹ Hsieh 1985, 240.

⁵⁰⁰ Quoted in Hsieh 1985, 152.

⁵⁰¹ Garson 1994, 760.

military moves in support of Pakistan while China did nothing.” He also reminded Taiwan that the US “had been taking concrete actions vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.”⁵⁰² Taiwan’s past anti-communist rhetoric, as well as its alliance and relationship with the US, meant that the Soviet Union was not a feasible partner. Nor could Taiwan find a replacement for – or hedge against – the US in Europe, since states the world over were pulling their recognition of Taiwan in favor of establishing relations with the mainland.

Given Taiwan’s inability to find an alternate partner, my theory expects Taiwan to pursue prevention. Despite the military imbalance, this *was* seen as possible. Notes made in the margins of one State Department telegram list “launch a counter-attack” as an action Taiwan might take if it felt abandoned by the US.⁵⁰³ Taiwan did not, however, pursue military action against China, which I attribute to successful calibration of signals that kept Taiwan in foreign policy suspension. Yes, the F-4 denial and the Shanghai Communique were worrisome signals. But the F-5 co-production agreement, the stationing of F-4s on Taiwan, and continued trade all signaled US interest in maintaining relations with Taiwan. The lack of a clear and obvious signal to the contrary made pursuing military action just too risky. Taiwan did not want to be the party to sound the death knell for US-Taiwan relations.

⁵⁰² Memorandum, Scowcroft to President Ford, “Secretary’s talks with Chinese officials,” 21 October 1975, p. 4, DNSA, PQID: 1679040685. Strangely, Pakistan *did* align with China. Why Kissinger drew the lesson he did raises large questions about why the US did not appear to learn from previous arms transfer blunders.

⁵⁰³ Airgram Taipei (McConaughy) to State, 9 February 1970, p. 10, RG 59, Box 2206, Folder Pol Chinat-US 5/26/70, USNA.

The United States doubled down on its ambiguous signals through the responses to National Security Study Memorandum 212. Issued in 1974, this memorandum brought different US policymaking bodies together to develop a plan for future arms transfers to Taiwan. The resulting policy only served to introduce further ambiguities. Contrary to the statements made in the Shanghai Communique, the US actually increased arms transfers to Taiwan after 1975.

AMBIGUOUS SIGNALS IN NSSM 212

In National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 212, President Gerald Ford directed the Executive agencies to develop a policy for future US arms sales to Taiwan. The resulting policy was signal-sensitive, and recognized the political, rather than military, significance of arms transfers. US policy had to thread the needle between reassuring Taiwan and not angering China, and because of ambiguous previous policy in the Shanghai Communique, had no precedent on which to draw. Two primary concerns affected the resulting US policy: (1) heightened attention to the signals sent by arms transfers, and (2) the interdependence of commitments and the anticipated effects a change in US policy would have for its other allies.

The guiding assumption of NSSM 212 was the political significance of arms transfers. It said, “Over the next three to five years, the political and psychological importance of the US supply of weapons to the ROC will be greater than the objective military importance of the weapons themselves.”⁵⁰⁴ The document has an entire section titled “A Political Approach to Arms Supply,” which clearly outlined the US signaling dilemma:

⁵⁰⁴ NSSM 212: U.S. Security Assistance to the Republic of China, 12 November 1974, p. 1, DNSA.

“Current circumstances necessitate an even more political approach to decisions on supply of arms to Taiwan. The nature and level of our arms supply will obviously affect normalization of our relations with the PRC [People’s Republic of China], but it will also have a major impact on [Taiwan]’s tolerance of a changing political and security environment. To date the pattern of our arms supply, while posing no major problems with Peking, has contributed significantly to the flexibility with which [Taiwan] has adjusted to rather drastic changes in its status. As our relations with the PRC evolve, however, [Taiwan] may as for more weapons to help compensate for the weakening of its political and security situation....

“Peking keeps careful track of [Taiwan] military capabilities, but it does not appear to conduct this assessment in isolation from other political factors...our military involvement with [Taiwan] will be monitored by a PRC suspicious about our ultimate intentions on Taiwan. Insensitivity in our handling of this issue could undermine the position of those within the PRC who advocate normalization or lead them to a change in attitude.”⁵⁰⁵

As a result of this dilemma, NSSM 212 determined that the US needed to avoid actions which China would interpret as “inconsistent with normalization” or which Taiwan would interpret as “a weakening of our commitment in the Shanghai Communique to normalize relations” with China. At the same time, the new US policy needed to “Maintain confidence on the part of [Taiwan’s] leaders and public that Taiwan is sufficiently secure to minimize the dangers of domestic instability or desperate acts that would hinder US-PRC normalization, including a possible ROC attempt to involve other parties in its fate,” while also signaling to China that the US still had “an important interest in the security of Taiwan.”⁵⁰⁶

In addition to the delicate signaling to China and Taiwan, the US was also concerned with the reactions of relevant third parties. The State Department was well aware that “our other Asian allies, particularly Japan and the Philippines, have an interest in the US defense

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 2-5.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 1-2

commitment to [Taiwan] and, in the long term, in the nature of any settlement that might be reached between Taipei and Peking.”⁵⁰⁷ Kissinger stated this more bluntly: “The US does not need Taiwan. The problem we have is the impact internationally of a sudden total reversal of an American position on other friendly countries, and even perhaps on countries that are not friendly to the US.”⁵⁰⁸ With no clear way to satisfy the concerns of Taiwan, China, and other allies, the response to NSSM 212 presented four options for Ford’s consideration. The State Department, Defense Department, and CIA did not recommend the same policy, and the internal debates show the difficulties of calibrating arms transfers to send just the right signal.

The most restrictive policy option was to completely cut Taiwan off from US weapons, either immediately or over a three- to five-year period. None of the departments endorsed this option, concluding that it would undermine the US commitment to Taiwan, and could push Taiwan toward drastic measures. Option 2 was to freeze Taiwan’s access to US arms at current (1976) levels. This would mean the US would only provide spare parts and replacement for items already in Taiwan’s inventory. Option 2 would have prohibited the supply of new weapons. Option 3 had two variants. Option 3a would give Taiwan access to new weapons at a “lower range,” while option 3b would use an “upper range.” The lower range would give Taiwan access to weapons “which would not be likely to provoke the PRC.” The US defined provocative weapons as “those which the PRC might believe would

⁵⁰⁷ Memorandum, “PARA for ROC” 7 February 1973, p. 1, RG 59, Box 2206, Folder Pol Chinat-US 5/26/70, USNA.

⁵⁰⁸ Summary of Kissinger-Teng discussions, prepared for October 1975 trip to China, November 1974, p. 3, Kissinger Reports, China Memcons and Reports, Box 2, GRF Library. This problem was heightened post-Vietnam.

give Taiwan a clear technological superiority or would alter the current relative military balance.” Weapons such as F-5E aircraft, air-to-air missiles, and patrol boats were considered provocative.⁵⁰⁹ However, Option 3a would allow a limited supply of Harpoon Missiles. The upper range would expand the menu of options for Taiwan to include the “provocative weapons” as well as laser-guided bombs, C-130H transport planes, and an unlimited supply of Harpoon Missiles. It is important to note here that the weapons included in each category were not consistent, nor was the rationale for placing weapons in each category. Sometimes the F-5 was included in the lower range, sometimes in the upper. This reflects internal disagreement over how China would interpret arms transfers – whether it would be concerned primarily with the balance of power or with political signaling.

The State Department and the National Security Council preferred Option 3a, the lower range, whereas the Defense Department preferred Option 3b, the upper range. The CIA had “no formal view,” but preferred Options 2 or 3 (without specifying upper or lower range). None of the agencies had particularly strong preferences. This was partly due to the difficulties of calibrating the proper signal and of knowing which weapons fit into which category. As the State Department explained in its January 1975 comments:

It is difficult to provide precise guidelines to govern arms supply, because of a two-fold problem of (1) resolving contradictory objectives toward Taiwan with the PRC and (2) the difficulty in predicting with precision how either Chinese party will react to our decisions on specific weapons systems. Some extreme cases are obvious, e.g., the provision of offensive aircraft or long-range missiles to [Taiwan] would provoke the PRC to the point of seriously endangering normalization, but

⁵⁰⁹ Memorandum, Solomon, Granger, and Froebe, to Kissinger, “Taiwan NSSM: US force reductions on Taiwan and future US military assistance,” 23 May 1975, p. 7 PQID: 1679040949, DNSA.

there are a number of cases where our judgment cannot be confident. An example of this discussed below is the Harpoon missiles.”⁵¹⁰

The State Department preferred the lower bound because it feared adding to Taiwan’s offensive capabilities, and “it is clear that arms supply to [Taiwan] cannot be an open-ended process.”⁵¹¹ The upper range option could have signaled a longer-term commitment to Taiwan, which State was hesitant to endorse during the normalization process. In explaining its choice of Option 3a, State determined, “We regard the lower range as providing the best balance between accommodating PRC sensitivities and fulfilling [Taiwan’s] psychological needs and deterrent requirements.”⁵¹² It is important to note that this recommendation was partially based on Taiwan’s psychological need for a reassurance signal. That is, State explicitly weighed the political consequences of arms transfers alongside potential deterrent consequences.

The National Security Council was more concrete in its recommendation, and noted that arms were part of a balancing process. The NSC supported Option 3a because it would “cushion further political blows to Taipei, maintain a credibly though gradually deteriorating [Taiwan] military deterrent, and help inhibit PRC military actions against Taiwan.” But the NSC recognized this policy option “could raise doubts in Peking about US intentions toward normalization (particularly at the upper range of this option), would risk misunderstandings with the PRC upon weapons deliveries two or three years hence,

⁵¹⁰ Memorandum for Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, “Department of State’s Comments and Recommendations on NSSM 212,” 29 January 1975, pp. 1-2, DNSA, PQID: 1679041330.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

and could, at the upper range, strain [Taiwan's] economy.”⁵¹³ The NSC therefore opted out of making a decision, and instead recommended the transfer of specific weapons, including F-5E fighter jets, AIM-9J missiles (an upgrade from Taiwan's existing AIM-9B missiles), anti-submarine warfare aircraft, and two minesweepers to replace some of Taiwan's older inventory. So far, these recommendations are all in line with the more conservative Option 3a. But the NSC also recommending giving Taiwan 960 TOW missiles, commenting “These would be new weapons in [Taiwan's] inventory, but are not generally regarded as highly sophisticated weapons.”⁵¹⁴ The missiles would bolster Taiwan's deterrent posture (psychologically, if not materially), but would not be a strong signal because they are backbone, rather than boom, weapons. The NSC also cautioned “both [Taiwan] and the PRC will view our handling of this issue as an indicator of the relative importance the US attaches to each.”⁵¹⁵ This last quote is evidence of the political importance of arms transfers, and also shows the inconsistencies within the US. The NSC had previously written about arms transfers and the importance of the military balance, but was now justifying its decision based on political signals.

With characteristic bluntness, Kissinger quipped, “It is absurd to maintain a defense relationship with part of a country.”⁵¹⁶ And yet, the US did, and continues to, maintain a defense relationship with Taiwan. US military sales to Taiwan actually increased from \$45

⁵¹³ Memorandum, Solomon, Granger, and Froebe, to Kissinger, “Taiwan NSSM: US force reductions on Taiwan and future US military assistance,” 23 May 1975, p. 8, DNSA, PQID: 1679040949.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵¹⁵ National Security Council Action Memorandum, Taylor, Solomon, and Granger to Scowcroft, “US Security Assistance to the Republic of China,” 23 June 1976, p. 5, DNSA, PQID: 1679040234.

⁵¹⁶ Summary of Kissinger-Teng discussions, prepared for October 1975 trip to China, November 1974, p. 4, Kissinger Reports, Box 2: China Memcons and Reports, GRF.

million in 1973 to \$800 million in 1974-75.⁵¹⁷ Taiwan did not get all of the weapons it wanted, and the ambiguous US policy that followed NSSM 212 only added confusion and uncertainty. The debate over Harpoon Missiles, and Taiwan's resulting policy changes, show how the US navigated tense and uncertain relations to accomplish its goal of normalizing relations with China while restraining – through reassurance – actions by Taiwan.

Transfers in the wake of NSSM 212

Though the responses to NSSM did not result in a clear or coherent US policy, there was a distinct upward trend in arms transfers to Taiwan. US sales increased from \$139.4 million in 1977 to \$209 million in 1980.⁵¹⁸ Though most of this increase was in outright purchases, rather than military aid, the US did continue to extend lines of credit to Taiwan. Credit purchases increased from \$45 million in 1973 to \$80 million the following year.⁵¹⁹ However, the Carter administration denied the transfer of numerous weapons, including the TOW, Maverick missiles, infrared scanners, and sonar equipment – arms that would have given Taiwan a visible military capability. Carter did not want to give China any reason to delay the normalization process.⁵²⁰ Confusion about US arms policy came to a head in discussions about whether or not to transfer Harpoon missiles to Taiwan.

⁵¹⁷ Thompson 1976, 616.

⁵¹⁸ Lee 2000, 57, 69-70. This only continued under Reagan: in 1983 the US delivered \$388.6 million to Taiwan. From 1986-1996, Taiwan was a top Asian buyer of US arms, totaling \$10.284 billion in military sales. From 1990 to 1995, it was the second-largest buyer, just behind Saudi Arabia. See also Chang 1993, 87.

⁵¹⁹ Thompson 1976, 616.

⁵²⁰ Copper 1982, 43.

Harpoon missiles were in an ambiguous category in NSSM 212. Option 3a allowed for a limited number of Harpoons, while 3b allowed unlimited missile transfers. Taiwan renewed its request for Harpoon in November 1976. It justified the transfer as a necessary military response to growing Chinese naval power (evidenced by missile boats and naval ships) in the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan was considering buying the Gabriel missile from Israel, or the Otomat from a French-Italian company. Though the missiles were roughly comparable, Taiwan preferred the Harpoon.⁵²¹ The request for Harpoons in November 1976 was problematic, because the Harpoon was not scheduled to enter service with the US Navy until the spring of 1978. Therefore, even if the US approved the transfer of Harpoons, they would not have been deliverable for at least two years. If China-US ties grew in the ensuing years, the transfer of Harpoons could have been a setback for normalization, even if the sale had been approved in 1976.

Recognizing these concerns, one State Department official proposed a modified, less sophisticated, version of the Harpoon for sale to Taiwan. “The baseline export version proposed for [Taiwan] would lack sophisticated electronic counter-measures equipment, would possess only a surface-to-surface capability, and could not be used for delivery of nuclear weapons.” Part of the justification for even considering the missile was that it had been “approved for sale to Korea, Israel, and a number of Middle East and European countries.”⁵²² A denial, the logic went, would send a clear downgrade signal to Taiwan, something the US wanted to avoid.

⁵²¹ Department of State Action Memorandum, Hummel to Kissinger, “Sale of Harpoon Missile to the ROC,” 1 November 1976, p. 1, DNSA, PQID: 1679040442.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

In internal documents, the State Department presented arguments both for and against the transfer of the Harpoon, noting that it was a borderline transfer under Option 3a. Though State did recognize a military argument for providing the missiles, it also recognized that “Taiwan would view our handling of this issue as an important indication of our intentions toward Taiwan. Failure to meet the request will be additionally complicated by our already expressed willingness to supply Harpoon to a number of other nations, including South Korea.”⁵²³ The State Department was wary of worrying other US allies, particularly in the wake of the removal of US troops from Vietnam. Transferring the Harpoon would signal US support for its allies—assuaging broader concerns about US alliance relationships—and would also prevent Taiwan from taking drastic action.

No arguments, on the other hand, revolved around the growing US-China relationship. State explained that there was significant risk that China would “react strongly to the provision to [Taiwan] of such a highly visible and technologically advanced weapon.” The Harpoon missile transfer would likely cause Peking to “view the move as casting doubt on our willingness to proceed toward normalization on mutually acceptable terms.”⁵²⁴ State further expressed concerns that the transfer would be viewed “as a sign of US insensitivity toward normalization considerations,” that might indicate the US was “backtracking on China policy.”⁵²⁵ Of particular concern was the time gap between a possible approval of the sale and when the Harpoon would be delivered. Because of needs of the US Navy, the

⁵²³ Memorandum for Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, “Department of State’s Comments and Recommendations on NSSM 212,” 29 January 1975, p. 3, DNSA, PQID: 1679041330.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵²⁵ Department of State Action Memorandum, Hummel to Kissinger, “Sale of Harpoon Missile to the ROC,” 1 November 1976, p. 2, DNSA, PQID: 1679040442, p. 2

State Department determined the Harpoon could not be delivered until the 1980-81 fiscal year. Since China had already expressed concern about US intentions, the delivery of Harpoon missiles in 1980 would have been a problematic signal.

US fears of fallout from a possible Harpoon transfer increased after October 1976. A State Department briefing memo noted that China was hardening its stance on Taiwan because of evidence that the US was “moving toward a policy of indefinite US support for [Taiwan].” Importantly, China’s “evidence” included the sale of new weapons, US statements about guaranteeing Taiwan’s security, and support for Taiwan’s participation in the Olympics.⁵²⁶ In addition to the Harpoon issue, China was always concerned about the US potentially giving Taiwan advanced fighter jets, and regularly threatened to downgrade its relations with the US if Carter allowed the sale of FX planes to Taiwan.⁵²⁷

The approach taken with both the Harpoon missiles and fighter jets was to delay giving Taiwan an answer. Procrastination supported the US policy of ambiguity: The US did not outright deny the transfer, thus leaving the door open to Taiwan eventually receiving the arms in the future.⁵²⁸ But the US also did not approve the transfers, and thus could honestly tell China it was not giving Taiwan the Harpoon or fighter jets. US procrastination on the fighter jet issue was so successful that it was not resolved until 1992, when George H.W. Bush approved the sale of 150 F-16 fighter jets to Taiwan.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁶ Department of State Briefing Memorandum, Saunders to Kissinger, “Peking’s Hard Line on Taiwan,” 4 October 1976,” p. 2, DNSA, PQID: 1679040316.

⁵²⁷ Lee 2000, 60.

⁵²⁸ Memorandum for Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, “Department of State’s Comments and Recommendations on NSSM 212,” 29 January 1975, p. 5, DNSA, PQID: 1679041330.

⁵²⁹ Qingmin 2006, 235.

Though Taiwan did not receive the Harpoon or fighter jets, the US did support continued production of F-5s in Taiwan. As in the case of Pakistan, co-production was less of an issue to Taiwan's rival, but was enough of a signal to inject some hope into Taiwanese leaders. In September 1978, Taiwan requested permission to produce the F-5G, a more advanced version of the F-5E it was already making. The Departments of State and Defense agreed that production of the F-5G (which would become the F-20 Tigershark) should be approved. The plane would be acceptable to Taiwan, and "least likely to produce a negative [Chinese] reaction." Secretary of Defense Harold Brown hoped that Taiwan's production of the plane would also demonstrate "that key defense links to Taiwan would continue after normalization even in the absence of a formal defense treaty."⁵³⁰ On the one hand, Taiwan was increasing its capabilities to produce sophisticated weapons on its own, a step that would have decreased its dependence on the US and given it more freedom of action. On the other hand, Taiwanese leaders were disappointed that the US was not willing to send a clear signal of support through weapons transfers. The ambiguous signals meant that Taiwan remained stuck between two pathways of my theory. It received ambiguous downgrade signals, and only made feeble attempts at re-alignment. Though re-alignment failed, Taiwan did not (in contrast to Israel) progress to prevention.

Taiwan's policy response: Turning the other cheek

⁵³⁰ Quoted in Qingmin 2006, 241.

Taiwan's outlook in the mid- to late-1970s was not rosy. It was potentially losing the support of its great power patron, but did not have any serious alternate partner. States the world over were de-recognizing Taiwan in favor of China. Whereas Pakistan was able to re-align with China, and Israel pursued prevention, Taiwan had to express its dissatisfaction with the US, without giving the US justification for removing all ties with Taiwan. Taiwan's policy was to deemphasize its dependence on the US while at the same time reminding the US of the threat Taiwan faced from global communism. This resulted in a rather confused strategy of trying to credibly seek support from the Soviet Union while also increasing its statements about the danger of aligning with Communist countries.

Chiang Ching-kuo, who became Premier in 1972, began to take steps to lessen Taiwan's dependence on the United States. If the US and other European countries were pulling diplomatic recognition from Taiwan, perhaps Taiwan could find sources of international support in many of the newly-independent African countries. Taiwan thus extended its policy of developing economic ties to other countries by giving foreign aid to both developing and developed countries. Taiwan's goal was to create interdependence, and to incentivize other states to maintain or establish official ties with Taiwan.⁵³¹ This "dollar diplomacy," combined with deliberate overtures to African states, was designed to give Taiwan some level of international recognition.⁵³² This policy has served Taiwan well:

⁵³¹ Hsieh 1985, 249; Taylor 2002, 129. For an in depth description of the development and implementation of these economic programs, see Hsieh, Chapter 5.

⁵³² Taylor 2002, 134.

in 2000 its foreign trade was larger than 171 other countries, and its foreign exchange reserve was, in 1998, the third-highest in the world.⁵³³

Taiwan continued to make overtures to the Soviet Union, as well. In addition to the previous actions taken – including the visit by Soviet warships – the possibility that Taiwan would seek support from the Soviet Union entered the public sphere. A July 1977 article in the *China Times*, titled, “Exceptional Changes and Exceptional Diplomacy,” argued that US-China relations were so significant that they would have an effect on *all* relations in the international system. Therefore, no one should be surprised if Taiwan turned to the Soviet Union.⁵³⁴ Historian Michael Share described the increasing contacts between Taiwan and the Soviet Union, on matters including economic, intelligence, and defense issues.⁵³⁵ Despite the potential for growing ties, Taiwan and the Soviet Union did not embark on a new partnership. Such a relationship would have risked the chances of conflict in the Taiwan Strait, involving either China or China and the United States.⁵³⁶

Taiwan’s approach to the Soviet Union was likely intended to scare the United States into recognizing the ramifications of US-China relations. Simultaneous to its policy of deemphasizing dependence on the US, Chiang Ching-kuo reminded the US of the importance of standing up to Communism. After NSSM 212, Chiang wrote to Ford, noting

⁵³³ Taylor 2002, 127.

⁵³⁴ Garver 1978, 753.

⁵³⁵ See Share 2003. Share describes this as the result of an ideological shift within Taiwan. Czeslaw Tubilewicz takes issue with this interpretation, arguing that geopolitics, not ideology, explains relations in the 1960s and 1970s. However, Tubilewicz does not dispute the actions that Share catalogues, and in fact endorses the conclusions made by Garver in 1978 that Taiwan was restrained in its ability to align with the Soviet Union because of uncertainty about the US response. See Tubilewicz 2005.

⁵³⁶ Garver 1978, 760.

that Taiwan had been a “loyal friend and ally,” and expressing the opinion that “Any change in the status quo, especially in respect of United States relations with the Chinese Communist regime, will inevitably result in upsetting the desired equilibrium and turning the scale in favor of communist expansion.”⁵³⁷ Recognizing Taiwan’s anxieties, Ford dispatched Assistant Secretary of State Philip Habib to Taiwan, to remind Chiang that the US had “shown a prudent regard for the vital interests of your people.”⁵³⁸

Taiwan’s policy response to the changes to arms transfers after NSSM seems, at first glance, confused and incoherent. On the one hand, it feebly tried to align with the Soviet Union, a communist state. On the other, Taiwan communicated its continued opposition to and wariness of communist countries to various US officials. Taiwan did not realign with the Soviet Union, nor did it pursue diplomatic or military action against China. Taiwan was suspended between policy options because of ambiguous US policy: arms transfers reassured Taiwan that the US would continue to remain involved in the defense of the island, even as the postponement of decisions on other arms made Taiwan question the strength of this US commitment.

The US policy of strategic ambiguity was cemented with two final documents, the Taiwan Relations Act and a 1982 US-China communique about arms transfers to Taiwan. As the concluding section discusses, these documents, combined with NSSM 212 and the

⁵³⁷ Letter Chiang Ching-Kuo to Gerald Ford, 14 October 1975, Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders, Correspondence with ROC Premier Chiang Ching-kuo, Box 1.

⁵³⁸ Letter Gerald Ford to Chiang Ching-Kuo, 24 January 1976, p. 1, Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders, Correspondence with ROC Premier Chiang Ching-kuo, Box 1.

Shanghai Communique, form the foundation of the policy of strategic ambiguity, which continues to inform US actions, and shapes Taiwanese policy, today.

CONCLUSION: INSTITUTIONALIZED AMBIGUITY

Questions about US policy were not answered when the US officially recognized mainland China in December 1978. The US Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act in 1979, which was supposed to clarify the US position with respect to Taiwan. This document contained a “substantive ambiguity” about Taiwan, particularly concerning weapons transfers. Section 3 of the Act states: “the United States will make available to Taiwan such defensive articles and defensive services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.”⁵³⁹ Since the Act does not define “defensive weapons,” it is unclear what Taiwan could, or should, expect to receive from the US. As one scholar noted, “there is a case to be made that if the island were attacked the most effective defense would be attacks on air, missile, and naval based on the Chinese mainland, which would require weapons of a tactical offensive capability.”⁵⁴⁰ The Taiwan Relations Act leaves the determination of the “quality and quantity” of these weapons up to the US President and Congress, in consultation with military authorities.⁵⁴¹ Nonetheless, the Act signals continued US involvement in the defense and political survival of Taiwan, even as it raises questions about just what shape that involvement would take.

⁵³⁹ Quoted in Clark 2010, 4.

⁵⁴⁰ Bush 2004, 157.

⁵⁴¹ Hickey 1994, 31.

Were the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act the last word of US-China-Taiwan relations, the policy of strategic ambiguity would likely not have persisted for so long. However, the Act was contradicted less than three years later in a 1982 US-China communique. This communique would seem to pledge the US to stopping arms transfers to Taiwan. In the August 1982 communique, the US pledged “that it does not seek to carry out a long term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, that its arms sales will not exceed, either in qualitative or quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, and that it intends to reduce gradually its sales of arms to Taiwan, leading over a period of time to a final resolution.”⁵⁴² It is unclear what “final resolution” means. It could mean a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan-China issue, or it could mean the formulation of new US policy toward Taiwan, or anything in between. Adding further confusion, the Reagan administration “clarified” that the communique would *not* supersede the clause about arms transfers in the Taiwan Relations Act.⁵⁴³ In response to press questions, Reagan said “we’re doing all the things we have always done. The shipments are regularly going on...our Taiwan friends are going to continue to get everything they need for their own self-defense.”⁵⁴⁴ More confusingly, just two days after the 1982 communique, the US increased its arms sales to Taiwan, beginning with the sale of 30 F-5E and 30 F-5G jets. Three months later, in November 1982, the US sold Taiwan \$79 million worth of armored vehicles.⁵⁴⁵ Though the US was

⁵⁴² Quoted in Lasater 1985, 56.

⁵⁴³ Lasater 1985, 57; Hickey 1994, 33.

⁵⁴⁴ Quoted in Hickey 1986, 13283.

⁵⁴⁵ Lasater 1985, 58-59.

willing to sell Taiwan weapons that it already had (or produced), the US dragged its feet on modern fighter jets, because this would have been “such a visible transaction.”⁵⁴⁶ If arms sales were indeed a “barometer of US behavior,” the barometer gave inconsistent readings.⁵⁴⁷ Like the previous documents concerning US Taiwan policy, neither the Taiwan Relations Act or the 1982 Communique defined what arms could be transferred. Arms transfers – and postponements and denials – help maintain ambiguity in the Taiwan Strait.

The longstanding policy of ambiguity means that Taiwan and China are both sensitive to signals in other domains which might indicate a change in US policy. In the contemporary period, this was seen in speculation that Donald Trump’s phone call with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen signaled a new direction in US policy. Described as “protocol-breaking” and “historic,” some analysts said the phone call “appeared calculated to signal a new, robust approach to relations with China.”⁵⁴⁸

Anything remotely involving weapons is the target of overreaction on all sides. In April 2015 two US fighter jets landed in Taiwan after experiencing mechanical problems. A spokeswoman for the Pentagon said, “While this landing was unplanned and occurred exclusively out of mechanical necessity, it reflects well on Taiwan that they permitted

⁵⁴⁶ Lasater 1985, 60.

⁵⁴⁷ Copper 1992, 50.

⁵⁴⁸ Anne Gearan, Philip Rucker, and Simon Denyer, “Trump’s Taiwan phone call was long planned, say people who were involved,” *The Washington Post*, 4 December 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trumps-taiwan-phone-call-was-weeks-in-the-planning-say-people-who-were-involved/2016/12/04/f8be4b0c-ba4e-11e6-94ac-3d324840106c_story.html?utm_term=.835736f02783; Tom Philips, Nicola Smith, and Nicky Woolf, “Trump’s phone call with Taiwan president risks China’s wrath,” *The Guardian*, 3 December 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/dec/03/trump-angers-beijing-with-provocative-phone-call-to-taiwan-president>.

pilots in distress to land safely.”⁵⁴⁹ While the US expressed gratitude for Taiwan’s help in an emergency, China’s Foreign Ministry made “solemn representation to the US,” and demanded “that the United States strictly abide by the ‘one-China policy.’”⁵⁵⁰ The emergency landing was the target of outrage because it was the first time US jets had landed on Taiwan in 30 years, and because the F-18 is a flashy boom weapon.⁵⁵¹ The rise in tensions was certainly not helped by speculation within Taiwanese media that the landing was a subtle signal in response to Chinese air force exercises east of Taiwan.⁵⁵² One US analyst agreed with this interpretation, saying that the landing appeared to send “a political message to China,” since the F-18s could have landed at a Japanese airfield, instead.⁵⁵³

The United States appears willing to allow, if not encourage, speculation about its motivations. Uncertainty continues to breathe life into the policy of strategic ambiguity, and has, for nearly forty years, prevented the outbreak of war between China and Taiwan. Because signals sent by weapons transfers have been such an integral part of this policy, for such a long period of time, China and Taiwan have also developed sensitivity to signaling in other domains. This suggests that as states learn to understand and interpret

⁵⁴⁹ “China angered after US fighter jets land in Taiwan,” *Reuters*, 2 April 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-usa-taiwan/china-angered-after-u-s-fighter-jets-land-in-taiwan-idUSKBN0MT0SA20150402>; Scott Neuman, “China protests emergency landing of US warplanes in Taiwan,” *NPR*, 2 April 2015, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/04/02/397088868/china-protests-emergency-landing-of-u-s-warplanes-in-taiwan>.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵¹ Agence France-Presse, “China objects after US fighter planes land in Taiwan,” *ABS-CBN News*, 2 April 2015, <http://news.abs-cbn.com/global-filipino/world/04/02/15/china-objects-after-us-fighter-planes-land-taiwan>.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵⁵³ Quoted in Bill Gertz, “Marine fighter jet landing on Taiwan sends China message,” *The Washington Times*, 1 April 2015, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/apr/1/inside-the-ring-marine-fighter-jet-landing-on-taiw/>.

signals over longer periods of time, signals in one area can bleed into other ways of communicating.

The history of US signaling in East Asia further suggests that uncertainty can be, at times, a goal of signaling. Compared to the other two cases, signaling designed to communicate uncertainty was more successful than signals designed to send specific messages about an upgrade or downgrade in relations. Whether this is a lesson that future policymakers should take heed of is less clear. Though intended signals are often misperceived – that is, the receiver often reads a stronger signal than the sender often wishes to send – it might be the case that some signal is better than no signal. Further, I'm skeptical that the deliberate use of uncertainty could be as effectively used in many other situations. The structural environment and the political context seem unique: where else will the US – or another state – have the option to abandon one ally in favor of establishing relations with a newly internationally-focused former adversary? What this case does say for policy should come from the simultaneous reassurance signal (to Taiwan) and deterrence signal (to China) that the US sent through arms transfers. This type of multi-register/multi-audience signaling is frequently desired by states, and could be of use in other areas, including NATO's eastern border with Russia. However, the high stakes of the Taiwan case – the potential abandonment of a loyal anti-communist Cold Warrior – increased actor's sensitivity to and interest in signals. It is unclear if a similar sensitivity yet exists in Eastern Europe, or if current political leaders would be able to display the nuance needed for this type of delicate signaling.

Chapter 6. Receivers Turned Suppliers

Most of the top-tier weapons manufacturing companies are located within the major powers. Arms manufacturers in the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, Italy, and Germany, as well as trans-European countries accounted for 88.1 percent of all arms sales in 2016.⁵⁵⁴ Even if they aren't home to major manufacturing companies, many smaller states are interested in developing the capacity to produce weapons domestically. This can take the form of co-production agreements, like the US offer to help India produce an aircraft engine, or assembly and license agreements, like Taiwan's production of the F-5E fighter jet. Most theories would expect states to prefer co-production agreements over the transfer of a completed weapon: the ability to make/assemble a weapon domestically reduces a state's vulnerability to embargoes, and should give it more political freedom to use its weapons. While the receivers in the historical case studies had the option to produce (part of) weapons, this was usually not an appreciated offer. States were more interested in the transfer of a completed, off-the-shelf weapon, than in developing their own production capacity. Part of this is likely because states like the US and UK, which have the top weapons suppliers, are reluctant to allow other states access to their most sensitive weapons technology. Therefore, co-production agreements are rarely allowed for the newest, or most sophisticated weapons systems. From a purely military power perspective, then, states

⁵⁵⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Arms production graphics," 2017, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/styles/body_embedded/public/2017-12/figure_3_shares_2016-01.jpg?itok=_BNqNraf.

are often better off buying weapons, rather than investing the time and money to build factories that will produce older, less advanced weapons.

Since the end of the Cold War, the number of states that produce and export weapons has increased. This raises a complicating question for the theory of arms transfers as signals: what happens when a receiver becomes a sender? Are these new senders still interested in receiving signals from arms transfers? Do the signals decrease in power or meaning? This chapter analyzes the rise of production capacity in India and Israel to show that becoming a weapons sender does not change a state's interest in *receiving* signals from arms transfers.⁵⁵⁵ That is, indigenous production capacity is not a substitute for the upgrade or reinforcement signals states get when they receive arms. This chapter begins by discussing the implications of indigenous production capacity for the theory of arms as signals. It then examines domestic weapons production in India and Israel, and addresses whether and how those states remain interested in receiving signals.

DOMESTIC PRODUCTION AND ARMS SIGNALS

Arms transfers send signals about political alignment. The previous case studies showed that these signals were more powerful than other signals, and that they often provided clear lines through otherwise complex diplomatic situations. If this is generally the case, then domestic production capacity shouldn't change a state's interest in signals. States should still want to receive arms because of their political signaling function. However, as states

⁵⁵⁵ India and Israel are the only states analyzed in the preceding chapters that make their own weapons. Though Taiwan and Jordan have been senders, the weapons they transfer are second-hand US arms, not arms that they produced.

develop their capabilities to produce weapons, they are likely to buy fewer weapons from other states, for reasons of economic prudence. If states buy fewer foreign weapons, then the range of signals they are able to receive shrinks. For example, if a state builds its own boom weapons, then it is hard for that state to receive an upgrade signal. A state that can build backbone weapons removes a key source of reinforcement signals. Domestic production capability should shrink the range of signals states are interested in: they'll want to maintain existing relationships, but because they won't be purchasing boom weapons might have to find other ways to upgrade and sustain relationships.

However, in practice, few states produce all types of weapons. Even when states have the industrial and technological capabilities to produce weapons, they often find it easier to buy abroad rather than produce at home. The Deputy Director of Singapore's Defense Science and Technology Agency explained, for example, "we acquire whatever is available on the market, and if what we require is not available, only then do we develop."⁵⁵⁶ Singapore most frequently buys weapons from other states, and adjusts the technology or firepower at home. It did this with French AMX-13 tanks, and German Cold War-era Leopard tanks, as well as US C-130 transport planes. Singapore even upgraded Gulfstream jets with surveillance technologies. Singapore's acquisition strategy suggests that many, if not most, states will not develop a robust domestic arms industry, even if they have the capabilities to do so.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁶ "Delivering Capability to Singapore," Seminar, DSEI, September 2015.

⁵⁵⁷ There are many reasons for this, including the opportunity costs of developing these industries, as well as the ongoing pressure to sell weapons once the industry is established. With the exception of the United States, states cannot sustain their domestic arms industry without exports. Because arms are not like other

The few states that do have the capacity to produce a full range of weapons usually get there by sharing technology and research with other states. This type of exchange generally happens only between close states. France and Italy, for example, frequently co-develop and produce weapons, and the US shares more of its technology with the UK and other NATO allies than it does with other states. This means that in practice, states will still buy some boom weapons, but these boom weapons are expected weapons transfers, and thus function as reinforcement signals. When states are at this level of closeness, the most important signals are downgrade signals – sent through the interruption of transfers.

The situation is different for states who are in the process of developing domestic production capacity. It is extremely difficult to develop the ability to design and manufacture weapons without external support, so these transitional states are frequently interested in joint production and technology transfers. This changes the way states make decision about arms transfers: they have incentives to choose weapons suppliers based on who is most willing to help them develop their production capabilities, either by locating production facilities in the purchasing state, or by sharing technology. States in transition thus might follow an economic, rather than a political signaling, logic. I examine this in the following section by discussing arms sales to Israel when it was not fully self-sufficient, as well as through an analysis of India, a state that is currently going through the receiver-supplier transition.

goods, states are more constrained in who they can sell to – which makes developing and sustaining a domestic arms industry a risky endeavor.

ISRAEL: MAJOR WEAPONS PRODUCER

Israel is an ideal case to examine how, if at all, states with advanced domestic production capabilities consider the signals they receive from arms transfers. Israel is one of the top ten weapons exporters in the world; in 2015 its exports totaled \$5.7 billion.⁵⁵⁸ Israel has distinguished itself as a weapons producer of drones, and it accounts for nearly 60 percent of the global market. By comparison, US drones account for only 24 percent.⁵⁵⁹ Israeli arms companies also produce main battle tanks, missiles, jets, and small arms, making it is nearly self-sufficient for military hardware production.

Israel's domestic production began in earnest after the 1967 war and the resulting French arms embargo. Today, it exports weapons to nearly all parts of the globe. The majority of Israeli arms go to Asia and the Pacific (\$2.3 billion), followed by Europe (\$1.6 billion), the US and Canada (\$1 billion), Latin America (\$577 million) and Africa (\$163 million).⁵⁶⁰ Though African states receive the least amount of arms from Israel, Israel has made a concerted push to sell its arms to African states including Morocco, Cameroon, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Africa. Israel's 2014 exports to African states were up 40% compared to the previous year.⁵⁶¹ This section outlines the development of Israel's

⁵⁵⁸ "Israeli arms sales to Africa mark steep rise in past year," *Times of Israel*, 24 May 2015, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-arms-sales-to-africa-mark-steep-rise-in-past-year/>; Yuval Azulai, "Israeli defense exports up despite fears," *Globe*, 6 April 2016, <https://www.globes.co.il/en/article-israeli-defense-exports-maintain-level-despite-fears-1001115342>.

⁵⁵⁹ Katz and Bohbot 2017, 68.

⁵⁶⁰ Yuval Azulai, "Israeli defense exports up despite fears," *Globe*, 6 April 2016, <https://www.globes.co.il/en/article-israeli-defense-exports-maintain-level-despite-fears-1001115342>.

⁵⁶¹ "Israeli arms sales to Africa mark steep rise in past year," *Times of Israel*, 24 May 2015, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-arms-sales-to-africa-mark-steep-rise-in-past-year>.

domestic arms industry before turning to the signals Israel sends through its own arms transfers, and the signals it still looks for when receiving arms.

Development of Israel's arms industry

Though today Israel is perhaps best known for its drones and the Iron Dome missile defense system, Israel has a long history of developing its own conventional weapons systems. Many of these systems were developed in response to Israel's security situation, or as the result of embargoes or transfer denials. Referencing Israel's security environment, former Defense Minister Moshe Arens said, "Living in the Middle East is difficult. Having to stay on your guard all the time is also difficult...Building up a defense industry in a small country is difficult and one can only maintain it if you export."⁵⁶² In other words, part of the reason Israel needed to become a weapons exporter was to support and sustain its own defense production – a particularly important industry because of the frequent arms embargoes placed on Israel.

Israel's first tank, the Merkava, was developed in 1974, in direct response to the United Kingdom's unwillingness to sell Israel the Chieftain tank.⁵⁶³ The Merkava was the first major conventional weapon platform made entirely within Israel, without relying on engines or other parts from other states.⁵⁶⁴ Israel was also an early mover on drones, first using domestically-produced drones in 1979. By December 1983, the United States asked Israel for assistance with its own drone program, and the US Navy ordered 175 drones

⁵⁶² Quoted in Klieman 1986, 117.

⁵⁶³ The UK demurred on the sale because it feared the Arab reaction. See Rubin 2017, 231.

⁵⁶⁴ Katz and Bohbot 2017, 98.

from Israel in 1986. The US used these drones in the 1991 Gulf War.⁵⁶⁵ Israel's weapons production capabilities stem part from its collaborations with other major weapons producers. Israel had manufactured jets under French license, and some of its programs received research and development program from the US Pentagon.⁵⁶⁶ For example, during the mid-1980s, the Reagan administration invited Israel to participate in the development of the Star Wars missile defense program. Israel's innovations during those meetings resulted in Pentagon financing for the Arrow system, Israel's first anti-missile battery.⁵⁶⁷ The Arrow was the precursor to the Iron Dome, which also received funding from the US.⁵⁶⁸

As a matter of policy, Israel's defense ministry has to approve weapons exports. However, recent reports suggest that 99.8% of all sales were permitted.⁵⁶⁹ Many states seek Israeli weapons because Israel has gained a reputation for producing effective weapons systems. Because Israel frequently uses its own weapons, it has become a proving ground of sorts.⁵⁷⁰ Israel has used this reputation to build its own military assistance program. Like the US, Israel provides arms to states it hopes to develop a political relationship with. As Aaron Klieman noted, "Arms have been useful, for example, in creating narrow openings for political contacts and in cultivating commercial ties. This even pertains to several

⁵⁶⁵Katz and Bohbot 2017, 62-63.

⁵⁶⁶ Katz and Bohbot 2017, 147-158; Reiser 1989, 38; Klieman 1985, 21.

⁵⁶⁷ Katz and Bohbot 2017, 147.

⁵⁶⁸ Katz and Bohbot 2017, 157.

⁵⁶⁹ Gili Cohen, "Israel approves 99.8 percent of all weapon export requests," *Haaretz*, 12 June 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-approves-99-8-percent-of-all-weapon-export-requests-1.5483170>.

⁵⁷⁰ Klieman 1986, 122.

countries which are reluctant for a variety of reasons to conduct normalized relations with Jerusalem and yet are more than willing to do business with it because they respect the value of defense support from Israel”⁵⁷¹ Overall, then, Israel’s development over time has seen it move from the position of primary importer to primary exporter. But does Israel still seek signals from arms transfers.

Transfer Signals

As a sender of weapons, Israel generally operates as my theory expects. This is face validity for applying the theory to all weapons exporters, regardless of their power standing in the international system. Israel uses arms transfers as a way of “showing the flag” for symbolic support.⁵⁷² Some analysts have called Israeli arms transfers “Uzi diplomacy.” First described by a journalist from *Haaretz*, Uzi diplomacy is a way of cultivating “diplomatic and strategic alliances” from its arms exports.⁵⁷³ Transferring arms became a central pillar of Israel’s diplomatic strategy after the 1973 war.⁵⁷⁴

Sometimes, however, Israel’s use of arms transfer signals seems to have a more coercive logic. Israel will give arms with the expectation of a quid pro quo of recognition or international support, what Klieman calls “the close interplay between the logic of necessity and of opportunity.”⁵⁷⁵ Israel is sometimes coerced from the other end, too. It is

⁵⁷¹ Klieman 1986, 121. See also Katz and Bohbot 2017, 226; Klieman 1985, 1-2.

⁵⁷² Klieman 1986, 121.

⁵⁷³ Jonathan Cook, “Israel maintains robust arms trade with rogue regimes,” *Al Jazeera*, 23 October 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/israel-maintains-robust-arms-trade-rogue-regimes-171022100816302.html>.

⁵⁷⁴ Klieman 1985, 30.

⁵⁷⁵ Klieman 1985, 30.

both wary of causing friction with the US based on who it sells arms to, but is also willing to act as an “alternate supplier” in instances when the US is unwilling or unable to directly transfers weapons to other states. During the Cold War, this meant that many Israeli transfers to states in Latin and South America were actually at US bidding.⁵⁷⁶

The short answer to the question of Israeli interest in signals from arms transfers is yes, Israel still seeks reassurance and continuity through arms transfers. It has, over time, shown sensitivity to the signals its own transfers will send. The longer answer, however, is that even though Israel can produce most of the weapons it needs for its own purposes, Israel remains sensitive to the signals that the US, in particular, sends to Israel—through denials or slowdowns—and to upgrade signals The US sends to other states in the region. This interest in signals has been relatively constant over time, as demonstrated through the 1986 transfer of AWACS to Saudi Arabia, Israel’s purchase of Hellfire missiles in the mid-2000s, and the September 2016 US military aid package for Israel.

AWACS sale

The US sold Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) to Saudi Arabia during the Reagan administration. At the time, this was the largest foreign arms sale in US history: it included five E-3 Sentry AWACS and eight KE-3 refueling aircraft, to be delivered between June 1986 and September 1987. Leaders within the US tried to downplay the significance of the sale, because they feared Israel’s reactions. West Virginia Senator Robert Byrd, then the Senate minority leader, opposed the sale and stressed that the vote on the sale “is not a test of the US-Saudi relationship or a test of the US-Israel

⁵⁷⁶ Klieman 1985, 44-49.

relationship.”⁵⁷⁷ One day after the announcement of the sale, the Reagan administration issued a statement that said it was “firmly committed” to Israel’s security.⁵⁷⁸ In Israel, Prime Minister Menachem Begin read an official protest to the US Ambassador, and expressed “profound regret and unreserved opposition.”⁵⁷⁹ Israeli Ambassador Ephraim Evron met with State Department officials in Washington to ask them to reconsider the AWACS sale.⁵⁸⁰

Interviews conducted with Prime Minister Begin show that he opposed the AWACS sale in part because of the capabilities it would give Saudi Arabia. Begin said he was concerned about Saudi Arabia’s capabilities to surveil Israel.⁵⁸¹ But he also thought that the US was not acting as a true friend. When asked about US-Israeli relations, Begin said, “We’re friends and allies. I will always quote that expression by the Secretary of State, we are in a permanent alliance.” But “relations are not as they used to be.”⁵⁸² Begin’s objection to the sale doesn’t make much sense on military capabilities grounds. Though the planes

⁵⁷⁷ “Excerpts from Senator Byrd’s speech opposing AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia,” *The New York Times*, 22 October 1981, <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/10/22/world/excerpts-from-senator-byrd-s-speech-opposing-awacs-sale-to-saudis.html?pagewanted=all>. Most State Department documents from the Reagan era remain classified.

⁵⁷⁸ Bernard Gwertzman, “US says Saudi deal will not endanger security of Israelis,” *The New York Times*, 23 April 1981, <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/04/23/world/us-says-saudi-deal-will-not-endanger-security-of-israelis.html>.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Television Interview with Menachem Begin, 16 April 1981, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook5/Pages/8%20Interview%20with%20Prime%20Minister%20Begin%20on%20Israel%20Te.aspx>; Radio Interview with Menachem Begin, 11 September 1981, <http://www.israel.org/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook5/Pages/55%20Interview%20with%20Prime%20Minister%20Begin%20on%20Israel%20R.aspx>.

⁵⁸² Television Interview with Menachem Begin, 14 June 1981, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments/Yearbook5/Pages/31%20Interview%20with%20Prime%20Minister%20Begin%20on%20CBS%20Tele.aspx>.

were useful for surveillance purposes, the deal included a provision that would have had US experts monitoring the intelligence gathering, in a direct attempt to limit Saudi abilities to surveil Israel. The AWACS also would not have been equipped with the same advanced computers as the ones used by the US. As a 1981 article from *Newsweek* put it: “[The AWACS] are ponderous, ungainly, and wholly unarmed – hardly the sort of modern warplanes that, to a layman, seem likely to alter the military balance throughout the Middle East.”⁵⁸³ And yet, Israel’s strenuous objection to the AWACS sale shows that it was still quite sensitive to the signals sent by arms transfers, even after it had developed its own weapons production capabilities.

The perspective that the AWACS sale would inaugurate a new US-Saudi relationship was not unique to Israeli leaders. An opinion piece by William Safire in the *New York Times* said that the sale represented a diplomatic shift that indicated the Reagan administration wanted to make Saudi Arabia “America’s Arab linchpin.”⁵⁸⁴ The *Christian Science Monitor* similarly reported that the sale demonstrated Reagan’s intent to “include Saudi Arabia now as the third favored nation on which the US bases its strategic planning...”⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸³ Tom Morgenthau with John Walcott, “The battle over AWACS,” *Newsweek*, 7 September 1981, <http://digitalcollections.library.cmu.edu/awweb/awarchive?type=file&item=475590>.

⁵⁸⁴ William Safire, “Israel after AWACS,” *The New York Times*, 1 November 1981, <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/11/01/opinion/essay-israel-after-awacs.html>.

⁵⁸⁵ Geoffrey Godsell, “The AWACS crossroad; Reagan and Begin spar over crucial Saudi alliance,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9 September 1981, <https://www.csmonitor.com/1981/0909/090938.html>.

Although Israel was concerned about Saudi Arabia's new surveillance capabilities, it was also concerned about what the transfer signaled about future US-Saudi relations. Israel wanted to stop the sale, thus preventing a strengthened US alignment with Saudi Arabia.

Hellfire Missile Stoppage

Israel ordered Hellfire missiles from the United States in 2005, and again in 2014. The Hellfire is an air-to-surface missile used against armored targets, like tanks or reinforced structures, and it can be launched from the Predator drones. After learning that Israel used Hellfires in Gaza and against civilian infrastructure, the Obama administration stopped shipment of the missiles to Israel in August 2014.

Israel's reaction shows that importance it places on reinforcement signals: even though Israel is capable of making its own, similar missiles, it was concerned that the interruption to the missiles' delivery signaled a downgrade in its relations with the US. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that the Obama administration stopped the transfers to show "Israel that military assistance once taken for granted is now under closer scrutiny."⁵⁸⁶ In response to the cessation of arms shipments, Israeli Finance Minister Yair Lapid said, "This is a worrying trend and we cannot allow it to continue. Our relations with the United States are a strategic asset that must be maintained."⁵⁸⁷ The interruption of transfers that were otherwise expected was, at one point, unthinkable. Former Israeli Ambassador Michael

⁵⁸⁶ Lucy Westcott, "US/Israel relations at low ebb: Hellfire missile supplies halted," *Newsweek*, 14 August 2014, <http://www.newsweek.com/usisrael-relations-low-ebb-hellfire-missile-supplies-halted-264724>.

⁵⁸⁷ Marissa Newman, "Israeli official confirms US nixed arms shipment; pols argue over who's to blame," *The Times of Israel*, 14 August 2014, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-official-confirms-us-nixed-missile-sale-pm-blamed-for-soured-ties/>. See also Barak Ravid, "US halts missile transfer requested by Israel," *Haaretz*, 14 August 2014, <https://www.haaretz.com/white-house-ordered-halt-to-missile-transfer-requested-by-israel-1.5259366/>

Oren said that the US would never halt or reduce weapons supplies to Israel: “It would never happen. It can’t happen. Israel does not want to change the relationship, and it’s not in the US interest for it to change either.”⁵⁸⁸

The Hellfire saga likely evoked memories of US actions in the wake of the 1973 war. Gerald Ford refused to sell F-15 fighter jets and Lance missiles to Israel. Yitzhak Rabin feared would lead Arab states to “conclude that the US was singling out Israel.”⁵⁸⁹ Perhaps recognizing that the stoppage would send a downgrade signal, US officials tried to blame “the bureaucracy” and said that it was not a “signal of disapproval.”⁵⁹⁰ Nonetheless, Israeli officials read a signal in the temporary pause of transfers from the US.

Arms Aid Negotiations

Finally, in September 2016 President Obama announced a \$38 billion military aid package for Israel, to be disbursed over the next ten years.⁵⁹¹ Israel had hoped for as much as \$45 billion, and many within Israel saw the deal as a signal of a downgrade, or at least a cooling, of relations between the US and Israel. The arms aid, however, did include squadrons of the F-35 – the modern-day equivalent of the F-104 Starfighter, the ultimate bling weapon. Nonetheless, Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak called the deal “a failure

⁵⁸⁸ Sudarsan Raghavan and Ruth Eglash, “In deaths of civilians in Gaza, Us weapons sales to Israel come under scrutiny,” *The Washington Post*, 23 August 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/in-deaths-of-civilians-in-gaza-us-weapons-sales-to-israel-come-under-scrutiny/2014/08/23/4f6565e7-da0f-4ecb-b005-5b2202463d1f_story.html?utm_term=.8b93c4c12ded.

⁵⁸⁹ Reiser 1989, 130.

⁵⁹⁰ “US resumes supply of Hellfire missiles to Israel,” *Times of Israel*, 28 September 2014, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-resumes-supply-of-hellfire-missiles-to-israel/>.

⁵⁹¹ Matt Spetalnick, “US, Israel sign \$38 billion military aid package,” *Reuters*, 14 September 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-israel-statement/u-s-israel-sign-38-billion-military-aid-package-idUSKCN11K2CI>.

and a sign of the withering relationship between the US and Israel.”⁵⁹² As he explained in a *Washington Post* editorial, Barak felt that already poor relations between Israel and the US were reflected in this less than satisfactory deal. He said that if US-Israel relations had been stronger, the aid package would have been better.⁵⁹³ For Barak, arms transfers still reflect the strength of US-Israel ties.

One of the provisions that made the deal under Obama different than previous deals is that it prohibits Israel from asking Congress for additional aid. An opinion piece in *Haaretz* said that this provision was “humiliation,” and that it means the aid package is in actuality a decrease from prior years as a result.⁵⁹⁴ One contrary view came from Ilan Goldenberg, director of the Middle East Security Program at the Center for a New American Security, who said, “The most important thing about this is the strategic message. The fact that Obama and Netanyahu are able to get this done even when they don’t agree on a lot of things and they don’t have a very good personal relationship is a very strong signal that this is a vital alliance and each side recognizes it transcends politics and personalities.”⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹² William Booth and Ruth Eglash, “Some Israelis see \$38 billion us military aid offer as a failure,” *The Washington Post*, 19 September 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/some-israelis-see-38-billion-us-military-aid-offer-as-a-failure/2016/09/19/2a2c298c-f878-4213-8e65-fcde59032f4c_story.html?utm_term=.b77cdbbfbfcb.

⁵⁹³ Ehud Barak, “Ehud Barak: Netanyahu’s reckless conduct endangers Israel,” *The Washington Post*, 14 September 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/ehud-barak-netanyahus-reckless-conduct-endangers-israel/2016/09/14/73686d3a-79ed-11e6-bd86-b7bbd53d2b5d_story.html?utm_term=.246b7bc574c6/

⁵⁹⁴ Nehemia Shtrasler, “How Obama humiliated Netanyahu over military aid,” *Haaretz*, 20 September 2016, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-how-obama-humiliated-netanyahu-over-military-aid-deal-1.5438904>.

⁵⁹⁵ Peter Baker and Julie Hirschfeld Davis, “US finalizes deal to give Israel \$38 billion in military aid,” *The New York Times*, 13 September 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/14/world/middleeast/israel-benjamin-netanyahu-military-aid.html>.

Regardless of interpretation, the debate over the arms aid shows that US and Israeli leaders still treat transfers as signals of political alignment.

The case of Israel shows that even when states are largely self-sufficient, they still care about the signals sent by arms transfers. For Israel, that manifested in special attention to downgrade signals and to interruptions to reinforcement signals, as well as attention to the signals its neighbors received.

INDIA: A STATE IN TRANSITION

Unlike Israel, India is a more typical case of a state transitioning from receiver to supplier. India has the capabilities to produce small arms, ammunition, and larger ordnance, but has not yet achieved the ability to design and manufacture the larger conventional weapons. Most of what it transfers are second-hand weapons, like Soviet-era T-55 tanks, or light helicopters that have been produced by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited in India. Overall, its defense exports, at about \$150 million per year, are less than that of Israel, South Korea, and even Singapore.⁵⁹⁶ India has struggled to transfer weapons it has produced at home. In 2016 India sold light helicopters to Ecuador, but after a number of these helicopters crashed, Ecuador pulled them from use and said it had received poor support and training from India.⁵⁹⁷ India remains undeterred in its quest to become a producer of major weapons

⁵⁹⁶ Committee of Experts for Amendments to DPP 2013, July 2015, p. 32, <https://mod.gov.in/report-committee-experts-dpp>; NC Bipindra, "India wants to be one of the world's biggest arms exporters," *Bloomberg*, 27 January 2016, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-01-27/india-s-3-billion-arms-export-goal-puts-china-in-modi-s-sights_

⁵⁹⁷ Sanjay Badri-Maharaj, "Indian Arms Sales to Latin America," Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, 5 July 2016, http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/indian-arms-sales-to-latin-america_sbmarharaj_050716.

systems, and since the 2010s has embarked on a concerted effort to develop its indigenous production capabilities beyond small arms and ordnance.⁵⁹⁸ An analysis of India's recent arms transfer decisions thus affords the opportunity to see how, if at all, India considers the signals sent by arms transfers. This section overviews the Indian government's efforts to become a major arms supplier, before turning to two specific arms transfers: India's search for a medium multi-role combat aircraft, and its purchase of Sea Guardian drones from the United States.

Indigenous Weapons Development

At the Defense & Security Equipment International Weapons Exhibition in London, the Indian government had a large pavilion to display its capabilities as a weapons producer. The weapons exhibition coincided with the release of the "Make in India" campaign, which is the government's policy for weapons procurement. Make in India requires the government to first look at domestic producers before purchasing from abroad. If a foreign producer is necessary, the Indian government requires the manufacturer to produce 60 percent of the weapon components within India.⁵⁹⁹ This policy is an attempt to coerce manufacturers into sharing their technology with Indian firms, which the government believes will help India become a major arms producer. Indian Defense Production Secretary A.K. Gupta said that this policy, "Will not only take us toward the goal of self-reliance in defense production, but will also create tremendous employment

⁵⁹⁸ Fieldwork at DSEI, September 2015

⁵⁹⁹ DSEI; Amit Cowshish, Jan. 20, 2016 "New Defence Procurement Procedure: A stimulating Preview" http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/india-new-defence-procurement-procedure_acowshish_200116.

opportunities.”⁶⁰⁰ This seems to be evidence, then, that India is primarily concerned with economic and technological logistics, rather than the political signals it would receive (or send) through arms transfers.

The economic logic of arms transfers is also evidence in India’s Defense Production Policy. This policy, developed in August 2012, doubles down on the economic logic by prioritizing defense offsets. Offsets are agreements that require the selling state to undertake some activity to offset the purchase value of the weapon.⁶⁰¹ The Indian government prioritizes offsets in the form of technology transfer and locating production within India.⁶⁰² The policy states that “The key objective of the Defense Offset Policy is to leverage capital acquisitions to develop Indian defense industry by (i) fostering development of internationally competitive enterprises (ii) augmenting capacity for Research, Design, and Development related to defense products and services and (iii) encouraging development of synergistic sectors like civil aerospace and internal engineering.”⁶⁰³ Rather than choosing a supplier based on the lowest cost or the political alignments that would result, the Indian government makes its decisions based on a combination of lowest cost and superior technology, what is known as the LIT1 method.⁶⁰⁴

Even though there is an economic underpinning to India’s procurement policies, the

⁶⁰⁰ NC Bipindra, “India wants to be one of the world’s biggest arms exporters,” *Bloomberg*, 27 January 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-01-27/india-s-3-billion-arms-export-goal-puts-china-in-modi-s-sights>.

⁶⁰¹ Petty 1999; Hall and Markowski 1994.

⁶⁰² “Doing Business in India,” Seminar, DSEI, September 2015.

⁶⁰³ Defence Procurement Policy, 2011, revisions of Defence Offset Guidelines, p. 2

⁶⁰⁴ DPP Analytical overview – Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
http://www.idsa.in/specialfeature/dpp-2016_lkbehera_120416.

government believes self-sufficiency in arms production is just good international politics.

A 2015 amendment to the Defense Production Policy opened with a quote from Machiavelli's *The Prince*: "Now the main foundation of all States, whether new, old or mixed, are good laws and good arms."⁶⁰⁵ Official Indian policy is therefore to use arms transfers as a means to an end. By requiring weapons components to be produced in India, it hopes to establish the manufacturing infrastructure to produce major conventional weapon transfers. By seeking the transfer of technology, India hopes to turn single weapons deals into the technological knowhow that will allow it to produce multiple types of weapons.

Despite this coordinated effort, India has not come close to achieving its goals. The Indian army rejected an Indian-made rifle (twice!) because the rifle failed quality tests. The Arjun tank and the Tejas light combat aircraft, both of which were locally produced, can't be deployed to India's border with China or to Kashmir, because of performance issues.⁶⁰⁶ India had slightly better luck with co-production and development. The Brahmos cruise missile, jointly produced with Russia, is a capable military weapon that India is seeking to export. It hopes to build on its experience with Brahmos by seeking similar joint-production arrangements with other states.⁶⁰⁷ Because India's domestic production

⁶⁰⁵ Committee of Experts for Amendments to DPP 2013, July 2015, <https://mod.gov.in/report-committee-experts-dpp>.

⁶⁰⁶ Iain Marlow, "India struggles to match China as elite world weapons exporter," *The Economic Times*, 1 February 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-struggles-to-match-china-as-elite-world-weapons-exporter/articleshow/62733075.cms>.

⁶⁰⁷ Huma Siddiqui, "India looks to West Asia to launch drive for arms exports," *Financial Express*, 8 July 2016, <http://www.financialexpress.com/economy/india-looks-to-west-asia-to-launch-drive-for-arms-exports/310066/>.

capabilities are lower than Israel's, India continues to seek weapons from other states. Two deals in particular illustrate the competing pressures of economics and political signals.

Transfer Signals

India remains interested in using arms transfers to signal political alignment, but often for instrumental reasons. India's desire for technology transfer has made it interested in developing closer relations with the United States, because it knows that only close allies get access to US weapons technology. For reference, even the United Kingdom did not get full access to the technology suite inside the F-35 fighter jet. The US designated India a Major Defense Partner in December 2016, indicating that a closer relationship was on the horizon.⁶⁰⁸ Vivek Kapur, an analyst with India's Institute for Defense and Security Analyses wrote, "While India is not an ally of the US, the current US offer of technology transfer places India at a level of high trust and strategic importance with the US."⁶⁰⁹ The Indian government does display an interest in using arms for signaling purposes, though its desire for those signals might be motivated by economics rather than more general political alignment.

Sea Guardian Sale

The Sea Guardian is a maritime unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). It is the non-lethal version of the MQ-9 Reaper drone. In 2017, the Trump administration authorized the sale

⁶⁰⁸ Sushant Singh, "India, US finalize major defense partner agreement," *Indian Express*, 9 December 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-us-major-defence-partner-agreement-manohar-parrikar-ashton-carter-4418019/>.

⁶⁰⁹ Vivek Kapur, "US-Indian Defence Technologies for Transfer: Cultural Change," Institute for Defense and Security Analyses, Oct 15, 2013, http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/USIndiaDefenceTechnologiesforTransfer_vkapur_151013.

of 22 Sea Guardians to India, a sale worth more than \$2 billion.⁶¹⁰ This was the first arms transfer to India since it was designated a major defense partner. According to my theory, the Sea Guardian transfer should play the role of a first transfer, cementing the new ties that came with the Major Defense Partner designation.

The Sea Guardian transfer was, in fact, seen as inaugurating a new relationship between the US and India. The two states released a joint statement noting that “The US and India look forward to working together on advanced defense equipment and technology at a level commensurate with that of America’s closest allies and partners.”⁶¹¹ Expert observers agreed that this was a significant step in US-Indian relations. A report by the Atlantic Council noted that the transfer is a “seminal event” because it is the first time the UAV was sold to a non-NATO/non-coalition partner. The report determined: “This should be viewed as a significant step in cementing the US-India bilateral defense relationship.”⁶¹² Similarly, the *Times of India* also called the deal “a significant step” for US-India ties.⁶¹³ An opinion article in the *Hindustan Times* emphasized that this was the first Sea Guardian sale to a non-ally, and noted “in announcing this offer to India, Trump effectively signaled

⁶¹⁰ “US approves sale of drones to India: General Atomics,” *Reuters*, 23 June 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-usa-drone/u-s-approves-sale-of-drones-to-india-general-atomics-idUSKBN19E2DA>.

⁶¹¹ “Modi-Trump meet: US clears sale of predator Guardian drones to India,” *The Indian Express*, 27 June 2017, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/narendra-modi-donald-trump-meet-guardian-predator-drones-4724924/>.

⁶¹² Bharath Gopaldaswamy, “Drone sale would cement US-India ties,” *The Atlantic Council*, 17 August 2017, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/drone-sale-would-cement-us-india-ties>.

⁶¹³ “US looks forward to completing Sea Guardian drone deal with India,” *The Times of India*, 24 October 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/us-looks-forward-to-completing-sea-guardian-drone-deal-with-india/articleshow/61199619.cms>.

that the US has staked out a new policy position in India's favor..."⁶¹⁴ It continued: "in offering India Sea Guardians, the US recognizes that India is a maritime partner and the interests of both nations are aligning."⁶¹⁵ US Senator John Cornyn, co-chair of the Senate India Caucus tweeted (yes, tweeted), "Drone sale would cement US-India ties."⁶¹⁶

These interpretations fit with other signs that US-Indian relations are warming. US Secretary of Defense James Mattis traveled to India in 2017 to discuss US-Indian cooperation and said that the US was looking forward to sharing advanced defense technology. Reports noted that the visit "underscored the growing salience of defense ties in shaping the trajectory of Indo-US relations."⁶¹⁷ One analyst observed that "As India and the US expand military cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, new alignments are emerging which have the potential to reshape the regional security architecture."⁶¹⁸ India's pursuit of military technology is thus a cause of its search for closer ties with the US.

The Sea Guardian transfer seems to indicate that India is aware of the signals sent by arms transfers, and that it remains interested in upgrade signals, even as – or perhaps because of – its attempts to build its own defense industrial base. Should India receive advanced technology from the US, and if it is able to translate this into the ability to produce

⁶¹⁴ John Schaus, "US offer of Sea Guardian drones to India signals converging strategic interests," *Hindustan Times*, 5 July 2017, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/us-offer-of-sea-guardian-drones-to-india-signals-converging-strategic-interests/story-kQxzKe2fj6KrcGWE5IEBN.html>.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ "Drone sale to India would cement bilateral ties with US," *The Times of India*, 19 August 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/drone-sale-to-india-would-cement-bilateral-ties-with-us/articleshow/60128973.cms>.

⁶¹⁷ Harsh V. Pant, "Expanding the common ground," *The Hindu*, 29 September 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/expanding-the-common-ground/article19772864.ece>.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

and repair US/Western weapons, India will find itself in a unique position. Most of India's weapons are of Soviet/Russian origin, and it is capable of maintaining and repairing these weapons. If India can develop the same capabilities for Western weapon systems, it will be the only state with the expertise and infrastructure to integrate and upgrade Russian, US, and European weapons systems.⁶¹⁹ This would be an extremely powerful position, because India would be a link in the supply chain for nearly all weapons sales. But to get there, India first needs to cultivate a strong and close political relationship with the US and European states, in order to receive technology commensurate with its status as a close ally.

Mother of All Defense Deals

India's interest in the signals sent by the Sea Guardian transfer sharply contrast to the way India handled its search for a medium multi-role combat aircraft (MMRCA). The MMRCA tender, known as the "mother of all defense deals," was purported to be a US\$13-15 billion deal for 200-300 jets.⁶²⁰ As of April 2018, the MMRCA tender was effectively canceled, but the way India approached negotiating with potential sellers followed an economic, rather than a political or strategic, logic.

India was prioritizing manufacturers who would transfer it the technology so that more than half of the planes could be produced and assembled within India.⁶²¹ India needed

⁶¹⁹ Danny Lam, "Why Lockheed Martin's bid to build lethal F-16 fighters in India could be a game changer," *The National Interest*, 12 August 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/why-lockheed-martins-bid-build-lethal-f-16-fighters-india-17329>.

⁶²⁰ Ankit Panda, "After the Rafale deal, is the ghost of the MMRCA back in India?" *The Diplomat*, 31 October 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/10/after-the-rafale-deal-is-the-ghost-of-the-mmrc-back-in-india/>; Franz-Stefan Gady, "Confirmed: India's 'mother of all defense deals' is dead," *The Diplomat*, 5 August 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/08/confirmed-indias-mother-of-all-defense-deals-is-dead/>

⁶²¹ Ankit Panda, "India's MMRCA is officially dead. Now what?" *The Diplomat*, 5 August 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/08/indias-mmrc-is-officially-dead-now-what/>.

foreign support for this because for more than thirty years India has tried to build its own single-engine fighter jet, without success.⁶²² India tried, in the early 1980s, to produce its own successor the Russian-produced MiG-21, which was a staple of India's inventory.⁶²³ In 2011, India issued requests for information to manufacturers in France, the US, Russia and Sweden, and stressed its desire to have most of the planes built in India.⁶²⁴ As Vipin Narang noted, the purchase of jets from the US would "mark a watershed moment in India's strategic outlook as it would be the first major shift away from Russian platforms, embedding India in a deeper commercial and military relationship with the United States for parts, weapons, maintenance, and operational training, generating an integrated client-side relationship."⁶²⁵ Ashley Tellis, a senior fellow with the Carnegie Endowment, similarly wrote that a purchase from the US would be unparalleled because of the gains accruing to New Delhi from a stronger partnership with the United States. Such a development would be cheered in Washington and would send important signals to all India's neighbors – especially its adversaries, China and Pakistan.⁶²⁶ However, India

⁶²² Sandeep Unnithan, "MMRCA redux," *India Today*, 3 February 2017, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/defence/story/20170213-aero-india-exhibition-mmrc-contract-fighter-aircraft-985686-2017-02-03>; Dinakar Peri, "Why has India struggled to buy fighter aircraft?" *The Hindu*, 25 November 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/why-has-india-struggled-to-buy-fighter-aircraft/article20915834.ece>.

⁶²³ Dinakar Peri, "Why has India struggled to buy fighter aircraft?" *The Hindu*, 25 November 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/why-has-india-struggled-to-buy-fighter-aircraft/article20915834.ece>.

⁶²⁴ Vasabjit Banerjee and Prashant Hosur, "The Rafale acquisition scandal: A potential threat to France-India defense relations," *The Diplomat*, 12 December 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/the-rafale-acquisition-scandal-a-potential-threat-to-france-india-defense-relations>.

⁶²⁵ Vipin Narang, "India's MMRCA deal: Muddled rationale, costly adventure?" University of Pennsylvania Center for the Advanced Study of India, 26 October 2009, <https://casi.sas.upenn.edu/iit/narang>.

⁶²⁶ Ashley Tellis, "Dogfight! India's medium multi-role combat aircraft decision," Carnegie Endowment for international Peace, 2011, p. 102 <https://carnegieendowment.org/files/dogfight.pdf>.

ultimately chose France's Dassault, and began the process to purchase and produce the Rafale fighter jet. India's decision was based on France's willingness to transfer technology to India and because Dassault came in as the lowest bidder.⁶²⁷ One analyst, quoted in *The Hindu* said that India had "settled for a plane, not a relationship."⁶²⁸ Ultimately, the deal with Dassault failed because of disagreements over how much of the plane would be produced within India, and because of Dassault's lack of confidence with the ability of firms in India to produce the plane.⁶²⁹

Nonetheless, the India's focus on technology transfer and lowest costs shows contradictions within India about the role and purpose of arms transfers. The MMRCA saga suggests that India's interest in becoming a self-sufficient arms producer negated its interest in the political signals sent through arms transfers. And yet, India's response to the 2017 Sea Guardian deal suggests that India remains quite interested in using arms transfers to signal, and produce, closer political ties.

CONCLUSION

Even when states are able to produce their own weapons, they remain interested in the signals sent by arms transfers. In the case of Israel, the signals sent by arms transfers remain important indicators of political relationships in the Middle East. For India, the signals sent

⁶²⁷ Dinakar Peri, "Why has India struggled to buy fighter aircraft?" *The Hindu*, 25 November 2017, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/why-has-india-struggled-to-buy-fighter-aircraft/article20915834.ece>.

⁶²⁸ Mohanty and Purushothaman 2011, 1.

⁶²⁹ Vasabjit Banerjee and Prashant Hosur, "The Rafale acquisition scandal: A potential threat to France-India defense relations," *The Diplomat*, 12 December 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/the-rafale-acquisition-scandal-a-potential-threat-to-france-india-defense-relations>; Ankit Panda, "India's MMRCA is officially dead. Now what?" *The Diplomat*, 5 August 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/08/indias-mmrcas-officially-dead-now-what/>

by arms transfers can lead to closer political relationships, which should ultimately help India increase its domestic production capacity. Regardless of the interests of the states in the transfer dyad, observing states continue to interpret arms transfers as signals of political alignment. Importantly, even India, where there are hints of an economic logic to arms transfers, the signals sent by arms transfers are significant. This suggests that arms transfers will continue to play a signaling function, even if the global arms trade shifts to operate under a more strictly economic logic. As seen in the historical case studies, arms transfers send signals about political alignments, regardless of the intent of the sender or receiver. This brief investigation into the choices receivers make has provided further face validity for the applicability and generalizability for the theory of arms transfers as signals.

Conclusion

As credible signals of the strength and depth of international alignments, weapons transfers have proved an essential tool in states' diplomatic toolkits. Weapons transfers expand the foreign policy options available to states by allowing them to hold on to otherwise contradictory relationships. For the United States, at least, weapons transfers built intra-group hierarchies and established nuanced relationships with friends and allies – formally or informally defined. Israeli diplomat Abba Eban, describing US foreign policy said: “It is characteristic of American diplomacy that it seeks to accommodate a bewildering pluralism of objectives within every definition of its interests. It recoils from sharp, exclusive alignments and thus ends up by distributing displeasure across a broad field. Other nations complain that the United States is not a [one hundred] percent friend; but they also acknowledge that its adversarial postures are not intense and immutable. America’s allies always have something to fear and its foes have something for which to hope.”⁶³⁰ This vast, and often contradictory, US foreign policy would not have been possible without the signals sent through US weapons transfers. Weapons transfers can represent a ray of sunshine in an otherwise bleak situation, or they can be a looming storm in an otherwise friendly relationship. This final chapter summarizes the findings of the dissertation, assesses its applicability in other settings, and outlines implications for both scholars and policymakers.

⁶³⁰ Quoted in Rodman 2007, 1.

SUMMARY OF THE CASES

This project developed a theory to explain the foreign policy effects of conventional weapons transfers. It showed how arms transfers are signals of political alignment, and how different signals lead to different foreign policy outcomes. The chapter on US arms transfers to India and Pakistan, which was the least complex of all the cases, helped explain why India and Pakistan went to war in the spring of 1965, and why Pakistan turned away from its chief ally, the US, and toward China in the early 1960s. Pakistan's foreign policy shift was the result of a downgrade signal, in the form of denied F-104 Starfighter transfers. Lacking confidence in its ties with the US, Pakistan pursued new relations with China. Simultaneous to Pakistan's shift, India was disappointed by the lack of boom and bling weapons transfers from the United States. Even though the US rushed aid to India during its 1962 border war with China, the lack of subsequent transfers of prestigious weapons ultimately prevented the rise of a US-India coalition. The signals sent by arms transfers explain fluctuations in US relations with both India and Pakistan, and the ebbs and flows in tensions on the subcontinent.

The chapter on arms transfers to the Middle East begins to add complexity to the explanation of arms transfers as signals. It offers an amended explanation of the June 1967 war, centered on the missteps the US made in its relationships with Jordan and Israel. Crucially, this chapter shows how arms transfers send signals regardless of the intentions of the sender. Though the US tried to couch all of its transfers to Israel – beginning with the 1962 transfer of Hawk missiles – as one-time, uneventful transfers, Israeli leaders believed the transfers foretold growing strategic alignment with the US. Israeli leaders were

therefore surprised, in April 1967, to learn that US leaders did not share their view of a close Israeli-US partnership. With respect to Jordan, the US thought that the transfer of backbone and blip weapons in the spring of 1967 would reinforce US-Jordan ties. But the US severely miscalculated: Jordan had hoped for bling weapons in the form of supersonic jets. This disappointment led King Hussein question the US commitment. Unsure of true US intentions, Hussein realigned with Egypt, a shift in Middle East power coalitions which ultimately led to the 1967 war. Despite US intentions, the signals it sent through arms transfers contributed to uncertainty and to anxieties – creating an environment ripe for war.

The case of US arms transfers to Taiwan in advance of the opening to China presents the most complex, and hardest, case for the use of arms transfers as signals of political alignment. This chapter highlights the key role arms transfers played in producing and sustaining US policy of strategic ambiguity. Even as the US was normalizing relations with China, it used arms transfers to Taiwan to simultaneously deter China and reassure Taiwan. This was arguably the most successful use of arms transfers as signals, as the policy of strategic ambiguity has persisted through the present period, and has worked to prevent the outbreak of armed conflict between China and Taiwan. This case also showed just how much effort goes in to maintaining the status quo. Contrary to the belief that change is harder than maintaining the status quo, the United States and Taiwan had to put significant time, resources, and effort into continuing their relationship over time.

Overall, then, the theory performs well in explaining otherwise puzzling foreign policy shifts, and should continue to offer insights into contemporary or future cases that share the context of an enduring rivalry or high tensions. Contemporary parallels might include

tensions between Russia and the Baltic region,⁶³¹ Russia and the Ukraine,⁶³² as well as rising tensions between Turkey, Syria, and the European Union states.⁶³³ The final empirical chapter addresses arms signals once states are able to produce their own weapons. This chapter shows that arms remain important and sought-after signals even once states have domestic production capabilities. That is, the ability to produce one's own weapons does not remove the function or effect of arms transfers as signals. India, which has, over the previous fifteen years, embarked on an extraordinary program to develop its production capabilities, still seeks signals through its arms purchases abroad. Even Israel, which develops its own, highly sophisticated weapons, still cares about the signals it receives from the US, as well as the signals other states in the region receive from the US. Though the economics of arms transfers have becoming increasingly important in 21st century, arms continue to be credible signals of international alignment.

⁶³¹ Sewell Chan, "Senators reassure wary Baltic nations that US won't abandon NATO," *The New York Times*, 27 December 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/27/world/europe/nato-baltic-states-russia.html>; Sydney Freedberg, "Russian threat drives Lockheed's JASSM sales," *Breaking Defense*, 28 September 2015, <http://breakingdefense.com/2015/09/russian-a2ad-threat-drives-lockheeds-jassm-sales/>; Eric Schmitt, "US lending support to Baltic states fearing Russia," *The New York Times*, 1 January 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/01/us/politics/us-baltic-russia.html>; Piotr Szymanski, "NATO's presence in the Baltic states – reassurance of allies or deterrence for Russia?" *Center for European Studies*, 29 April 2015, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2015-04-29/natos-presence-baltic-states-reassurance-allies-or-deterrence>.

⁶³² Oren Dorell, "United States mulls arming Ukraine as Russian menace grows near NATO border," *USA Today*, 31 July 2017, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/07/31/united-states-mulls-arming-ukraine-russian-menace-grows/517997001/>; Damien Sharkov, "US is considering arming Ukraine, says new special envoy after seeing 'hot war'," *Newsweek*, 25 July 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/trump-may-arm-ukraine-says-new-us-special-envoy-641512>.

⁶³³ See, for example, the recent split between Germany and Turkey. Luisa Beck and Griff Witte, "Germans up in arms about weapons sales to Turkey and others," *Washington Post*, 27 January 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/germans-up-in-arms-about-weapons-sales-to-turkey-and-others/2018/01/26/a4f190b0-02a0-11e8-86b9-8908743c79dd_story.html; "Germany bows to outcry over Turkey tanks," *BBC News*, 15 January 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42820151>; Ginger Hervey, "Germany faces calls to end arms exports to Turkey," *Politico*, 24 January 2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-faces-calls-to-end-arms-exports-to-turkey/>.

This final chapter suggests that arms transfers will continue to remain relevant tools in international politics, and begs the question of how they might operate outside of an enduring rivalry or high-tension context. Overall, not much should change, though states' attention to the signals sent by arms will likely shift. In contexts where states significantly share interests and arms are part of a standard operating procedure of relations, an interruption to arms transfers will send a signal. The regular transfer of arms matters, but more as a background feature of the existing relations – it is only when this background stream is interrupted that states are reminded of the critical role arms play in reinforcing ties. For example, the US and many European countries regularly send arms to Saudi Arabia, but beginning in 2016 these states faced calls to suspend their arms transfers as a result of Saudi human rights violations in Yemen.⁶³⁴ Until then, the transfers had been part of regular interactions between these states, making the interruption – even if temporary – a notable signal.

Outside of an enduring rivalry context, the transfer of prestige weapons will be the most potent signal. Boom or bling weapons are still powerful symbols, and thus should still have a signaling effect. Low prestige weapons, on the other hand, have lower signaling value outside of rivalry/conflict contexts. In the contemporary period, China has transferred

⁶³⁴ Daniel Depetris, "The US has suspended an arms deal with Saudi Arabia over its role in the Middle East's 'hidden conflict'," *Business Insider*, 22 December 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/us-suspended-arms-saudi-arabia-yemen-2016-12>; Catherine Philip, "MPs demand block on arms sales to Saudis," *The Times* (UK), 16 December 2016, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/mps-demand-block-on-arms-sales-to-saudis-3t7cw3fq7>; Agence France-Presse, "Report: Germany halts arms exports to Saudis," *Defense News*, 25 January 2015, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2015/01/25/report-germany-halts-arms-exports-to-saudis/>; Gerard O'Dwyer and Awad Mustafa, "Sweden may lose Gulf allies over Saudi spat," *Defense News*, 15 March 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/europe/2015/03/15/sweden-may-lose-gulf-allies-over-saudi-spat/70222682/>.

prestigious weapons to many African states in support of China's One Belt One Road initiative. In the words of one analyst, Chinese transfers of drones, main battle tanks, and aircraft serve "Beijing's end-game [of] longer-term geopolitical and strategic influence."⁶³⁵ Two-thirds of all African states now receive Chinese arms, even though most states are not in an enduring rivalry or high-conflict environment. This suggests that even as the incidence of major conventional war decreases, arms transfers will retain their signaling function.

Because the primary empirical analysis in this project focuses on the Cold War period, there are remaining questions about arms transfers in the 21st century, particularly as new suppliers enter the market. It might be the case that economic pressures constrain or otherwise modify the applicability of the arms-as-signals theory. This dynamic was partially seen in the case of contemporary India: the government's procurement process now emphasizes technology transfer alongside capabilities and lowest cost. States that have little to no domestic production capacity, or that are seeking to significantly grow their economic power, might find value in weapons transfers as a means to economic ends. Brazil, for example, concluded a US\$5.4 billion deal with Saab of Sweden for Gripen aircraft. Sweden's Minister for Economic Development said of the deal: "It paves the way for a long-term strategic partnership with Brazil in a whole range of areas ranging from

⁶³⁵ Ron Matthews and Xiaojuan Ping, "Why the world should fear China's military (exports)," *The National Interest*, 27 September 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/why-the-world-should-fear-chinas-military-exports-22494>. See also Sam Nussey, "Africa is a new frontier for China's arms-makers," *Nikkei Asian Review*, 19 February 2016, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/Africa-is-a-new-frontier-for-China-s-arms-makers>; US Department of Defense, "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2017," Annual Report to Congress, 15 May 2017, https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2017_China_Military_Power_Report.PDF.

defense to civilian industry-related projects.”⁶³⁶ Similarly, Malaysia has used recent weapons purchases to fund domestic infrastructure development, and to fund green and cyber technology companies, healthcare, and post-secondary educational programs.⁶³⁷ The Malaysian government explains its weapons procurement strategy as giving priority to “activities that provide active platform for local industry participation in selected sectors contributing to the national aspiration towards achieving developed country status.”⁶³⁸ If states are interested in the economic side benefits – or offsets – they can get from arms transfers, do such transfers still send political signals? Do political signals enter into these states’ calculations? More research is needed to understand the long-term effects of using arms transfers in this way.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This dissertation has identified a number of avenues for future research, four of which I discuss here. First, how do arms become symbols? The approach in this project has been to determine prestigious weapons inductively, by searching for instances where leaders

⁶³⁶ Victor Barreira, “Brazil reveals Gripen production schedule, Embraer’s manufacturing role,” *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, 9 October 2017, <http://www.janes.com/article/74696/brazil-reveals-gripen-production-schedule-embraer-s-manufacturing-role>; Gerard O’Dwyer, “Sweden, Brazil Pursue Cooperation With \$4.7B Gripen NG Deal,” *Defense News*, 8 August 2017, <http://www.defensenews.com/home/2015/10/24/sweden-brazil-pursue-deeper-cooperation-with-4-7b-gripen-ng-deal/>. Note that in 2016, Brazilian prosecutors opened an investigation into the deal, accusing former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of corruption. The deal, however, looks to be on track.

⁶³⁷ Kogila Balakrishnan, Global Supply Chain panel, DSEI, 16 September 2016. See also Ron Matthews and Tracy Yip, “The Push and Pull of Offset in the Development of Malaysia’s Defense and Security Technology Park” *Defense Review Asia*, 28 January 2013, http://www.defencereviewasia.com/articles/203/The-Push-and-Pull-of-Offset-in-the-Development-of-Malaysia-s-Defence-and-Security-Technology-Park_

⁶³⁸ Malaysian Ministry of Finance, “Policy and Guidelines on Industry Collaboration Programme in Government Procurement,” 2013, p. 2, <http://tda.my/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICPpolicyBI.pdf>.

discussed the prestige of the weapon without reference to, or in spite of, its capabilities. But it would be useful to know if some weapons are more likely to be symbols than others. I have suggested that there is a baseline of technology and/or firepower that weapons need to reach in order to be candidates for prestige, since the notable prestige weapons were the F-104 fighter jet (high technology), submarines (technology and potentially firepower), and main battle tanks (firepower). Technology is a necessary, but not sufficient, cause of prestige. While there is some work in the feminist literature about the symbols *of* weapons – that, for example, the missile is phallic, that the names of arms evoke gender stereotypes, or that the military and weapons are masculinized spaces⁶³⁹ – this literature doesn't speak to the same type of symbolic meaning that is at the heart of this project. And alternate pathway might connect with sociological and anthropological work on the rituals of gift-giving, and seek to find the weapons-equivalent of the conch shell that was an integral part of gift-giving rituals and the creation of alliances between different tribes.⁶⁴⁰ The conch shell itself wasn't particularly useful, but it was an important signifier of status and standing.

It remains, though, an open question whether prestige is something that can be pre-determined, or if it must always be determined inductively. We also know, however, that weapons with identical characteristic will be treated differently. The F-104 fighter jet was *the* symbol of the NATO alliance, but the F-5 and F-4, equally capable jets, did not take

⁶³⁹ Sjoberg and Via 2010; Masters 2005; Cohn 1987a, b.

⁶⁴⁰ Thanks to Jack Snyder for pointing to the ritual and meaning of passing a conch shell, as something that likely shares processes with how weapons come to have shared meaning. See Broome 1982; Lawrence 1998.

on this same shared meeting, even though all three planes had similar capabilities. Understanding how weapons become symbols, and the link between prestige and symbol, will add more insight into the ways in which different actors understand weapons, and how those weapons affect, and are affected by, international politics.

Second, future research should examine the extent to which signals are substitutable. The chapter on China and Taiwan showed the interplay between arms transfer signals and diplomatic signals – including diplomatic recognition, high-level visits, and the opening/closing of embassies. Are signals directly substitutable for one another? Can a lot of diplomatic signals overwhelm an arms-based signal? Are there certain points in a relationship where a signal in one domain is more impactful than a signal in a different one? The evidence in the preceding chapters would seem to suggest that arms are unique in their ability to expand states' foreign policy options, but a more systematic analysis is needed to address this issue. Similarly, can arms send signals through different uses, such as the forward positioning of arms? This might be a weaker signal, since the “receiving” state doesn't actually take ownership of the weapon, but there might be signaling dynamics in play here. Alternately, the forward positioning of weapons would provide the opportunity to examine signaling in a more narrowly confined deterrence and compellence context.⁶⁴¹ It might be the case that forward positioning shares more in common with the military moves states use to signal will and capability, than it does to the more general signaling of political alignment through arms transfers. Finally, there is a remaining question about substitutability where nuclear weapons are concerned. As was only briefly

⁶⁴¹ Slantchev 2005; Fearon 1997.

alluded to in the case studies, nuclear weapons have implications for both the sender and receiver of conventional arms. As with the case of US arms transfers to Israel, the sender might be willing to give a state more conventional weapons to forestall the receiver's nuclear development. This means that the receiver can threaten and take steps toward nuclear development to gain independence within the alliance, or to extract more conventional weapons, as Taiwan did in the late 1970s.⁶⁴²

Future research should also more deeply investigate non-US transfers. This would require access to archival evidence from other states, such as France, Russia, China, Germany, or the United Kingdom. The theory described here draws primarily on US transfers, but scholars and policymakers will both want to know if there are scope conditions on *who* can use arms transfers to send signals. Is the US in a relatively unique position, since it is the largest exporter and sends arms to most regions of the globe? Can medium-sized powers also engage in this type of signaling? Future research should add nuance and depth to this dimension of the theory.

Though the dissertation explains how the receiver's foreign policy changes after receiving – or being denied – a weapons transfers, the sender was treated as the primary decision-maker. The largest task for future research, then, is to determine how receivers make their choices when they have multiple options, and how the receiver's choices affect foreign policy in the sender. Some of the cases touched on this: the chapter on the Middle East discussed Israel's choices between the US and UK, and Taiwan had a choice of missile

⁶⁴² On Taiwan's nuclear development, see Hersman and Peters 2006; Albright and Gay 1998. On Israel see Cohen and Burr 2006.

supplier between the US, Israel, and France. But particularly in the post-Cold War period, where there is a larger number of suppliers and thus greater flexibility for receiving states, we need more research in to how receivers choose between possible suppliers. It would be especially useful to determine how receivers decide between supplier from the same political group. Does it matter, for example, if a state chooses France over Germany, if its ultimate goal is to get a NATO weapon? Since second-tier suppliers depend on arms sales, they often offer additional incentives such as technology transfer or co-production. This might shift the decision-making calculus made by receivers. It is an open question whether or not these economic incentives shape or overwhelm the political signaling dynamics.

Future work would find value in studying arms transfer decisions in India, Brazil, and East Asia, either the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, or Singapore. Each state varies in its hostility environment, its level of domestic production capacity, and its geographic location, but hold the overall level of development relatively constant. Tensions are highest in East Asia and the South China Sea, followed by India and then Brazil, whereas India has the greatest capacity for producing its own weapons, followed by Brazil, and then the East Asian states. Additionally, India and Brazil are likely to be among the top purchases of arms over the next five years,⁶⁴³ so understanding how they make their decisions, and the relative weight of political alignment compared to other factors will be of use to scholars and policymakers.

⁶⁴³ Gill Plimmer and Victor Mallet, "India becomes biggest foreign buyer of US weapons," *CNBC*, 23 February 2014, <https://www.cnbc.com/2014/02/23/india-becomes-biggest-foreign-buyer-of-us-weapons.html>.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOLARS AND PRACTITIONERS

Finally, this project offers implications for scholars of international politics. First, signaling is simultaneously less and more complex than acknowledged by existing scholarship. International communication is less complex because it doesn't require the verbal gymnastics of audience costs.⁶⁴⁴ Though leaders' statements can still matter, communication can be credible without invoking the audience cost or hands-tying mechanisms. This, of course, also means that international communication is more complex because it is political, social, and contingent. Arms transfers send signals because there are symbolic meanings and shared understandings about particular weapons. Scholars need to be aware of history, meaning, and the perception of stakeholders in order to explain why, for example, the F-104 sent a different signal than did planes with similar capabilities. Scholars interested in how states make credible commitments, or how they signal alignments and friendships should pay attention to the circulation of things like weapons. Though this project holds that arms are unique in their symbolic signaling role, it is possible that there are other things – whether goods, services, or ideas – that states use to make and unmake relations. One potential area is disaster relief and reconstruction aid. Egypt and Jordan offered aid to help reconstruct cities within Syria, and Israel, and many other states flooded Mexico with aid following the earthquake in Mexico City in September 2017. In each instance, the states offering aid seemed to be signaling something – whether about their desire for a closer relationship or about their role as “good” states in the international

⁶⁴⁴ Fearon 1994; Gartzke and Lupu 2012; Levy et al. 2015; Snyder and Borghard 2011; Trachtenberg 2012.

system. As with arms transfers, the signal comes from the symbol of the transfer/aid, rather than its material effects.⁶⁴⁵

Second, this project has implications for scholars interested in hierarchy and order in international relations, and encourages scholars to think more broadly to the ways in which structure can constrain and enable action.⁶⁴⁶ One of the key insights is that the structure of the international system writ large can have variable manifestations at the regional level. During the Cold War, Pakistan had more flexibility in its alignment than did Israel – and Pakistan, in fact, did align with China in the mid-1960s. The chapter on the Middle East shows changes in regional alignment, and the power of the non-aligned movement as an alternate to the bipolarity of superpower relations. Understanding flexibilities in the structure of the international system is essential for understanding each state’s menu of policy options.

One lesson from this project is that maintaining relationships is hard work. States cannot transfer a weapon, sit back, and expect their relationships to stay the same. As is the case in individual social relationships, continuity of relations takes investment of time, energy, and resources. Receiver’s appetites can grow insatiable, and the sender can feel

⁶⁴⁵ Mohamed Abdu Hussanein, “Egypt eyes broad participation in Syria’s reconstruction,” *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 8 January 2018, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1136936/egypt-eyes-broad-participation-syria%E2%80%99s-reconstruction>; “Egypt, Jordan cooperate to ‘rebuild’ Syria,” *Egypt Today*, 27 July 2017, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/14150/Egypt-Jordan-cooperate-to-%E2%80%98rebuild%E2%80%99-Syria-Iraq>; Joshua Partlow and Paul Imison, “Mexico may now have too much earthquake aid,” 27 September 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/mexico-may-now-have-too-much-earthquake-aid/2017/09/22/31b02a4c-9fa1-11e7-b2a7-bc70b6f98089_story.html?utm_term=.99fb1faa7bc2; “Israel to dispatch rescuers, aid after quake devastates Mexico,” *The Times of Israel*, 20 September 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-to-dispatch-rescuers-aid-after-quake-devastates-mexico/>.

⁶⁴⁶ Lake 1996; Nexon and Wright 2007; Goddard 2017.

compelled to feed the constantly ravenous beast. This raises larger questions about the effects of aid: if the sender is the one feeling compelled, the idea that military aid confers leverage to sender is foolhardy. It is in fact the sender—who is often the more powerful state—who feels the pressure to continually act. This is even more so the case for military aid, as there is always another suitor. Dependence, it would seem, is experienced more by the giver than the receiver. The implication, then, is that states get very little in return for the weapons and military aid they give to others.

Finally, this project has significant methodological implications for how we conduct research in and draw inferences about international politics. The theory developed in this project sits at the intersection of materialist and constructivist approaches to international security, and does not hue to a single method of inquiry. It takes advantage of standard statistical analysis, network analysis, and process tracing through case analysis. It draws from participant observation at weapons shows and extensive archival work. Most importantly it emphasizes relationalism: that states act in and are acted upon by a social structure, and that states are not separable from their relations. I have fused heuristics from political psychology, the balance of power from traditionally rationalist schools of thought, and work on signaling and communication from across the spectrum with new insights about the inner workings of the global arms trade. I join the growing ranks of those calling for epistemological pluralism, and the importance of a historical sensibility in our theories.⁶⁴⁷ The stakes of this kind of work concern the inferences we are able to make

⁶⁴⁷ See, among others, Hadden 2015; Krebs 2015. for examples of this type of mixed-method work. On cultivating a historical sensibility, see Gavin 2007, 166-176; Cohen 2005, 575,585.

about why actors behave the way they do, and the expected effects of their behavior. A historical sensibility and a pluralistic epistemology equip scholars to deal with, and even appreciate, surprise, unintended consequences, and uncertainty in international events.⁶⁴⁸

Any one of the methods used on their own would have left us with an incomplete explanation of the causes and consequences of weapons transfers. For example, the statistical analysis highlighted past arms transfers type as a significant variable, but gave no guidance about why or how this affected state behavior. The network analysis got us closer to an explanation, suggesting there were network effects leading to the development of reciprocal ties and the creation of strategic triangles. But we are still in search of the mechanism that tells us why and how. The process tracing without the guidance of the previous methods would have been more of a wild goose chase than the tracing of a process. This is not to say that all inquiries must adopt a mixed methods approach. But for areas of research like state behavior – where there is rarely a single, readily identifiable cause of action – we need to use more tools at our disposal in order to increase the chance that our inferences are based on accurate information. The final implication of this approach, then, is that it demonstrates one of the ways in which scholars can adopt an epistemologically pluralist approach in order to develop more robust theories.

This project has two primary implications for policymakers interested in foreign policy and grand strategy. First, policymakers should think more deliberately about the connections between military/defense and diplomatic actions. If anything, the cases demonstrate the power of arms transfers to override other common signals, such as

⁶⁴⁸ Gavin 2007, 174, 2015.

diplomatic visits, (costly) public statements, and development/economic aid. Foreign policy, therefore, should be approached holistically, with the different pieces of a state's policy apparatus supporting, rather than contradicting, one another. Though advocating for more coordination in bureaucratic processes might seem like a fool's errand, the costs of discoordination are high. Lastly, a consistent theme throughout the empirical analysis was the unintended consequences of states' actions. Arms transfers are signals that are extremely difficult to manipulate, so policymakers need to be careful and cautious in developing arms transfer policies, and need to consider the *multiple* audiences that will draw inferences from each transfer. States will often find themselves in a signaling bind: the signal that it desires to send to one state might be counterproductive to relations with a third state. Recall in the case study of Pakistan, arms transfers that the US and India thought had little signaling value were taken by Pakistan as harbingers of future doom. In general, policymakers should continue to be aware of the interconnectedness of actions, and be wary of assuming too much control over the consequences of their actions.

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Appendix A. New Dataset and Models

This appendix describes the dataset creation and analyses that are discussed in broad outlines in Chapter 1. The dependent variable in the dataset I created is the number of arms from the United States to the recipient country. Though the master dataset includes all transfers 1950-2015, I only analyzed transfers from the US in the following models. The variables are described below.

Military and Defense Variables

From the Correlates of War (COW) Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) dataset, I used a variety of indicators concerning conflict.⁶⁴⁹ *Fatality* is a 0-6 scale of overall fatalities in the dispute. The cut points for the variable are: 1-25 deaths; 26-100 deaths; 101-250; 251-500; 501-999; and more than 1,000 deaths. *Hostility Level* is the highest level of hostility reached in the dispute. It is coded on a scale ranging from 1 (no militarized action) to 5 (war). The intermediate stops are threat to use force (2), display of force (3), and use of force (4). The variable *Highest Action* records the highest action by an individual side in the dispute; it is correlated with hostility level, and I used it only in the robustness models. In the models that follow, I lagged the MID variables by one year. From the COW National Material Capabilities dataset (v5.0), I used variables concerning military spending.⁶⁵⁰ *Military Expenditure* is thousands of US dollars spent on the military in a given year, and *Military personnel* is thousands of military personnel each year. In the following analyses,

⁶⁴⁹ Palmer et al. 2015. Because of ambiguities surrounding the coding of “revisionism,” I excluded this variable from my analyses. See MID dyadic-level codebook, v3.10, 2 and Palmer et al. 2015, 222.

⁶⁵⁰ Singer 1988.

I logged both of these variables. Finally, I included information from COW's alliance dataset on whether or not the state had a defense pact with the United States, with 1 representing a defense pact.

Economic Variables

I included variables designed to capture the recipient state's purchasing power, its level of development, and its trade networks. First, from the COW Trade dataset, *Flow 1* represents imports of the supplier from the recipient, in millions of US dollar and *Flow 2* is imports of the recipient from the supplier, also in millions of US dollars.⁶⁵¹ I logged both of these variables. From Kristian Gleditsch's expanded GDP data, I used data on real GDP in 2005 US dollars, as well as per capita GDP, and again logged each variable.⁶⁵²

Political Variables

Finally, I included political variables designed to capture latent political alignment between the sender and receiver. From Erik Voeten's dataset, I included two variables on voting similarity and affinity. *UN voting* is the voting similarity index using three-category vote data (yes/approval, abstain, and no/disapproval), *Affinity Index* is the sum of metric distances between voted by dyad members in a given year. More concretely, this term uses three category vote data to calculate an indicator of closeness, based on the formula $1 - 2*(d)/dmax$, where d is the sum of the distance between votes, and $dmax$ is the largest

⁶⁵¹ Barbieri, Keshk, and Pollins 2008.

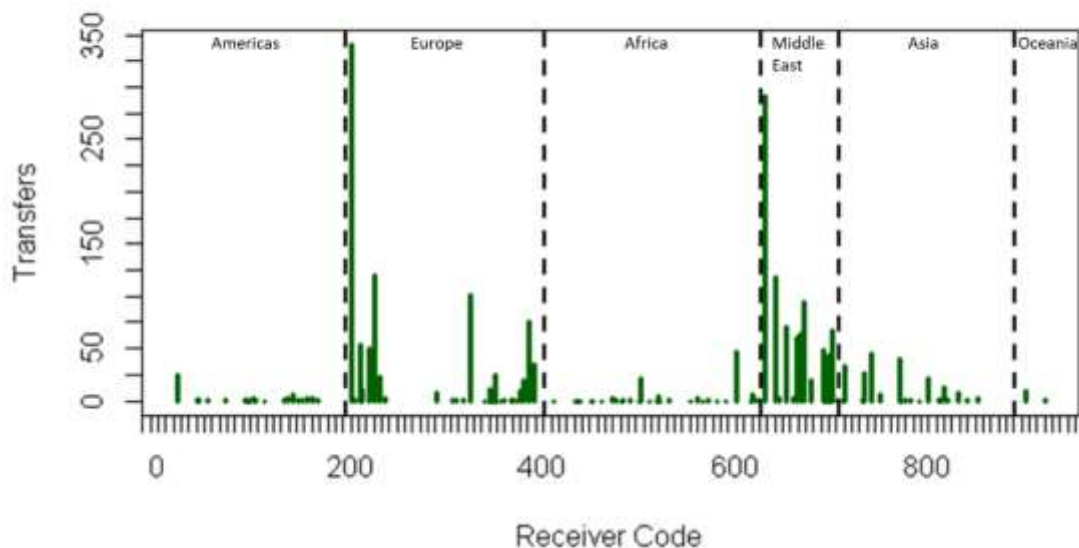
⁶⁵² Gleditsch 2002. I used version 4.1, available from <http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~ksg/exptradegdp.html>

possible distance for these votes.⁶⁵³ I also included data on regime type, as coded by the Polity project.⁶⁵⁴ The revised *Polity Score* variable captures, on a -10 to 10 scale, whether the state is more autocratic or democratic.

DATA ANALYSIS

Before describing the models I used, I first present some descriptive analysis of the new dataset. Figure 11, below, shows the average amount of arms received by each state, for the period 1950-2010. The graph shows significant variation between countries; many receive little to no arms, while some countries receive significant amounts of weaponry. The x-axis in this graph is each state's COW country code (the US, for example, is coded 2). States are coded based on their region, as indicated by the vertical lines in the figure.

Figure 11: Transfers by Receiver



⁶⁵³ Voeten, Strezhnev, and Bailey 2017.

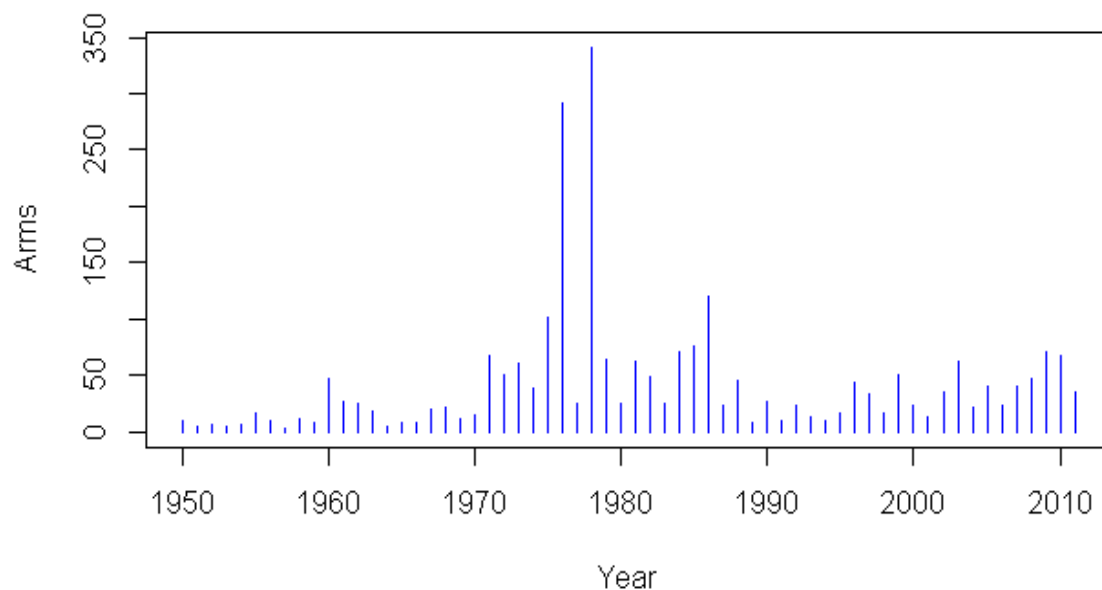
⁶⁵⁴ See <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html>

States in the Western Hemisphere (numbers through 200) have much lower levels of arms imports than states in Europe or the Middle East.

Within Europe, the 200s represent Western Europe, whereas the 300s represent Eastern Europe. There is a difference between these groups, too, with Western Europe importing more arms than the east. In the middle of the figure, African states have significantly lower levels of arms transfers than most other regions. Transfers to the Middle East (600s) are among the highest, while most of the Asian states have a lower level of imports. As this graph clearly shows, there is significant variation in transfers by region.

Narrowing in on weapons transfers sent from the United States, there is again variation over time. Figure 12 represents the number of arms transferred on the Y-axis, and the year on the X-axis. The figure shows a spike in arms transfers in the mid-1950s, with much less variation in the post-Cold War period. To analyze the variables associated with these arms transfers, I estimated both fixed- and random-effects models.

Figure 12: Total US transfers over time



The dependent variable – number of arms transferred – is continuous, so I use standard OLS models. I estimated the first set of fixed-effects models using the entire dataset, 1950-2015. Table 5, below, shows the results from a full model that included all the independent variables, as well as two models drawn from existing literature. The second model, the “conflict model” uses all of the conflict or military-related variables as independent variables. The last model in this table is the “economic and diplomatic” model, which narrows in on the economic and political independent variables. Across all three models, the only independent variable with statistical significance is the previous years’ transfers. Many of the variables run in the opposite direction than expected. For example, the Polity Score has a negative coefficient, which means states that are less democratic are more likely to receive arms from the United States. Similarly, the hostility variable is negative, suggesting that conflict in the previous year does not lead to an increase in arms transfers. While the full model is the best fit of the three in this table, the conflict model is not much worse, though the economic and diplomatic model underperforms.

Though fixed effects models allow one to examine the effects of factors within the same county over time, these models don’t directly allow one to examine the potential for temporal breakpoints in these effects. I therefore split the data into Cold War and post-Cold War periods, under the assumption that the international system was different before 1990 than it was afterwards. These differences are reflected in the network graphs in Chapter 1: the Cold War-era networks showed sharper clusters than did the post-war networks. Table 6 reports the results from the economic and conflict model in both periods. Notably, none of the independent variables are statistically significant in either split sample period.

Though none of the variables are significant, it is notable that some of the independent variables' relationship to arms transfers changes in direction from one period to the next. For example, UN voting, having an alliance with the US, and the Polity Score variable all have positive coefficients during the Cold War period, but negative coefficients during the post-war period. This could suggest that there were different logics to US arms transfers during the Cold War as compared to the post-Cold War period. It might be the case, for example, that political alignment was a primary determinant of arms transfers during the Cold War, whereas arms transfers accord to a more free-market logic, and are less constrained by superpower bipolarity in the post-Cold War era. However, since none of the variables are statistically significant, we should not draw strong inferences from these models.

To check the robustness of the fixed-effects models, I substituted in other affinity and military variables. I estimated one model using the Affinity Index rather than voting similarity index, and included military personnel, the highest action level, and fatality level. There was one change to the results: using the logged military personnel variable turned the US imports variable significant. However, the coefficients are negative, and the substantive effects of the variable remain minimal, and the model fit remains the same. The previous years' arm transfers are far and away the strongest explanatory variable. As a final check on the quantitative models, I estimated a random-effects variable. The results, as reported in Table 8, are very similar. The only difference between the fixed- and random-effects models, is that in the latter the receiver's GDP is statistically significant. A higher GDP is correlated with receiving more arms from the United States. Overall, though, these

results show the difficulty of estimating arms transfers using quantitative models. Further, the minor differences in variable significance shows that results are sensitive to model choice, which means that it is risky to draw inferences about the relationships between the independent variables and arms transfers.

Table 5: Modeling Arms Transfers

	Full Model (1)	Conflict Model (2)	Economic/Diplomatic Model (3)
UN Voting	-0.137 (0.627)		0.451 (0.235)
US imports(log)	-2.431 (1.413)		-0.680 (0.460)
US exports(log)	2.559 (1.845)		0.937 (0.593)
GDP(log)	4.899 (2.781)		1.235 (0.908)
Polity Score	-0.052 (0.179)		-0.030 (0.074)
Alliance	-0.018 (0.207)	-0.015 (0.188)	
Mil.expend(log)	-2.301 (1.490)	-0.054 (0.405)	
Hostility lev. (lag)	-0.016 (0.045)	-0.015 (0.041)	
transfers lag	0.628*** (0.031)	0.621*** (0.029)	0.504*** (0.017)
Constant	-28.059 (27.825)	2.601 (6.662)	-20.064* (9.290)
Observations	893	973	2,670
R2	0.383	0.377	0.320
Adjusted R2	0.347	0.345	0.289
Residual Std. Error	15.927 (df = 842)	15.321 (df = 925)	13.338 (df = 2552)
F Statistic	10.470*** (df = 50; 842)	11.913*** (df = 47; 925)	10.282*** (df = 117; 2552)
Note:	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001		

Table 6: Cold and Post-Cold War Comparison

	Cold War (1)	Post-Cold War (2)
UN Voting	0.329 (0.911)	-0.046 (0.657)
US imports(log)	-3.710 (2.168)	-0.969 (1.995)
US exports(log)	4.944 (3.008)	2.530 (1.876)
GDP(log)	7.560 (4.173)	0.003 (4.644)
Polity Score	0.055 (0.250)	-0.392 (0.255)
Alliance	0.013 (0.261)	-0.017 (0.206)
Mil.expend(log)	-2.386 (2.277)	-1.400 (1.645)
Hostility level(lag)	-0.002 (0.070)	-0.001 (0.028)
arms lag	0.624*** (0.039)	0.318*** (0.055)
Constant	-77.856 (45.579)	10.062 (43.523)
Observations	582	311
R2	0.394	0.255
Adjusted R2	0.341	0.161
Residual Std. Error	19.388 (df = 534)	5.643 (df = 275)
F Statistic	7.400*** (df = 47; 534)	2.695*** (df = 35; 275)
Note:	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

Table 7: Robustness checks

	(1)	(2)	(3)
UN Voting	-0.152 (0.654)	-0.157 (0.655)	
Affinity Index			-0.076 (0.327)
US imports(log)	-3.063* (1.422)	-3.043* (1.423)	-3.063* (1.422)
US exports(log)	1.641 (1.792)	1.627 (1.795)	1.641 (1.792)
GDP(log)	3.832 (2.607)	3.784 (2.607)	3.832 (2.607)
Polity Score	-0.063 (0.179)	-0.062 (0.180)	-0.063 (0.179)
Alliance	-0.016 (0.207)	-0.020 (0.207)	-0.016 (0.207)
Military Personnel(log)	-2.213 (1.825)	-2.151 (1.838)	-2.213 (1.825)
Highest MID act	-0.081 (0.083)		-0.081 (0.083)
Fatality level(lag)		0.167 (0.267)	
Arms lag	0.626*** (0.031)	0.631*** (0.031)	0.626*** (0.031)
Constant	-22.322 (28.871)	-22.641 (28.916)	-23.083 (26.790)
Observations	894	894	894
R2	0.383	0.383	0.383
Adjusted R2	0.347	0.346	0.347
Residual Std. Error (df = 843)	15.919	15.924	15.919
F Statistic (df = 50; 843)	10.482***	10.464***	10.482***
Note:	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001		

Table 8: Random Effects Model

```

=====
UN voting                0.026
                        (0.325)

US imports(log)         -1.677
                        (1.084)

US exports(log)         1.296
                        (1.345)

GDP(log)                1.785*
                        (1.064)

Polity Score            0.036
                        (0.109)

Alliance                -0.041
                        (0.161)

Military Expenditure(log) -0.432
                        (0.772)

Hostility level(lag)   -0.009
                        (0.042)

arms lag                0.631***
                        (0.029)

Constant               -11.080
                        (7.604)

-----
Observations            893
Log Likelihood          -3,723.743
Akaike Inf. Crit.      7,471.485
Bayesian Inf. Crit.    7,529.020
=====
Note:                   *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

```

Appendix B. Weapons Exhibitions as Field Sites

Over the course of a year I participated in two international weapons exhibitions: Defense & Security Equipment International (DSEI) in London in September 2015, and the Eurosatory Land and Air Exhibition in Paris, France in June 2016. Each of these sites informed my knowledge of the logistics of the global weapons network, and allowed me to examine how manufacturers and buyers each talk about weapons. This appendix describes the exhibitions as field sites and explains what I learned through participant observation.

I spent the five days of each show walking the conventional halls, collecting brochures from weapons manufacturers as well as “swag” – things like a pin in the shape of the Eurofighter jet, earphones from Leidos, and canvas bags from the Indian Ordnance Manufacturing Board. Where allowed, I took pictures of both weapons on display and the layout of the convention hall.

Each show used a color-coding system to classify guests as either industry, military, government, or exhibitor. I was classified as industry personnel, though my name badge, which had to be visible at all times, clearly stated that I was from the University of Minnesota. Other than that they both displayed major conventional weapons systems, the shows were radically different sites. This appendix first describes DSEI, paying particular attention to the hierarchy of exhibitors, before explaining some of the key insights from the show. It then describes Eurosatory, paying particular attention to the ways in which a music soundtrack was used during the demonstration of weapons, before also explaining

the ways in which Eurosatory informed this project. The appendix concludes with a reflection on how my positionality affected my experiences at the field sites.

DEFENSE & SECURITY EQUIPMENT INTERNATIONAL

This show was held at the Excel Center in London, UK in September 2015. There were 1,683 exhibitors representing 54 countries, and 34,038 unique attendees representing 108 countries. After paying for and passing a background check, I was allowed to attend this show as a member of the industry. My name badge, which included a QR code that the exhibition hall staff scanned each day, clearly stated that I was from the University of Minnesota.

In addition to providing space for manufacturers to display their weapons, DSEI was also the site of mini-conferences and seminars, as well as a naval and UAV outdoor demonstration. The seminars addressed issues as wide ranging as the future of naval warfare, to recruiting a skilled military force, to teaching industry representatives how to sell or market their weapons in different countries. I attended a number of seminars throughout the week.

DSEI was geared toward those buying and selling weapons, making it difficult to take pictures during the show without drawing significant attention to my participation. Participants were more interested in the materials describing the weapons than in taking pictures, so in order to observe without drawing attention to myself, I have very few images from the event. I did collect nearly 30 pounds of written material, and I also have sketches of a few different exhibitor booths.

Layout of the show

Security to enter the Excel Center was extremely tight; visitors had to show their badges three times and passports twice before being allowed to queue in a line to enter the convention center. Most participants arrived via the DLR train, which had a dedicated stop for the Excel Center. Inside, exhibitors were grouped both geographically and topically. There was, for example, a section of the convention center where most Indian manufacturers were stationed, as well as sections dedicated to electronic warfare or naval warfare. There were 42 country-specific areas of the show. See the map at the end of this section for a layout.

In addition to the inside space, there was an outside static display area where helicopters and a replica fighter plane were stationed. The convention center is on the river Thames, which was the site of moored naval vessels. Large speakers played music as you approached the outdoor area. When I first approached the area I thought a live band was playing “pump up” music: the music was vaguely patriotic and relied on a heavy brass section, but was marched along by a drum kit that gave it more of a peppy feel than a “stand and salute” feel. The ships moored outside were from Canada, Belgium, Germany, Britain, and India, as well as a private French company (though that ship was registered in Aberdeen, Scotland). The Thames was the site of the naval demonstration, where we watched British soldiers run through a boarding exercise, all of which was monitored by a UAV, whose footage was relayed to a large-screen display in front of the audience section.

Back inside the convention hall, there was a clear hierarchy to exhibitors. Major weapons manufacturers, like Lockheed Martin, MBDA, and Raytheon, had two-story

structures. Their weapons, or videos displaying demonstrations of their weapons, were on the first floor, which also included a reception booth where you could pick up brochures. The second floor and back half of the first floor were private rooms. The first floor rooms had closed doors and windows only along the bottom of the wall – this is where negotiations took place. You could not enter this area unless you were escorted. The second story was essentially a reception hall. Most afternoons there would be food, drink, and some sort of music coming from these big structures; these were also invite-only. The reception booths were staffed by attractive young women wearing outfits that harkened back to 1960s flight attendant clothing.

Lower down on the exhibitor hierarchy were slightly raised platforms. Platforms usually had weapons and weapon replicas on display in the front, and closed-door rooms in the back. Since the platforms did not have a second story, they could not hold parties in the afternoons. Finally, the lowest tier exhibitor had a table and a banner displaying their name – they were the lemonade stand equivalent at the weapons show. See the end of this document for some of my sketches of different booths and structures.

Spaced throughout the structures and platforms were the seminar “rooms” – a collection of chairs, raised stage, podium, and TV screen roped off from the rest of the room. Anyone could attend the seminars – again, the assumption was that if you were at DSEI you were a “legitimate” actor in the global weapons network – but the QR code on your badge was scanned by the staff prior to each seminar.

Attendees

The 34,000 attendees skewed male. Most women were either in charge of the reception stands on exhibitor booths or were staff from the Excel Center. Both civilian and military leaders attended DSEI. Official military delegations from foreign countries were assigned a UK military escort; the higher the importance of the foreign delegation, the higher ranking the UK officer. I identified delegations from Chile, the United States, Italy, Ghana, Egypt, China (army and navy), Australia, India, Scotland, Norway, Turkey, South Africa, Singapore, and Japan. This is not a complete list; I was unable to identify some delegations just by their uniforms. This list does, however, show the wide range of countries that attended DSEI. Among the civilian (or non-uniformed) people, many wore large gold rings on the pinky or ring finger of their right hand. The rings did not look like service academy rings, but were common among male participants.

In addition to the formal meetings that took place in the exhibition hall, meetings between exhibitors and non-uniformed people happened in the back of armored vehicles. For example, the Rheinmetall medical armored vehicle called Survivor R was the site of many meetings, as was Nexter's infantry fighting vehicle.

Though the infrastructure for negotiating weapons deals was in place at the Excel Center, much of the real negotiations took place offsite. Waiting in line to enter one morning I overheard two British government officials talking about their meeting at a strip club the previous night. The older official was ribbing the younger one for leaving early, and was also bemoaning his hangover. I was able to identify the two men as British government officials based on the purple color of their badge and the "British" inscription.

Unfortunately, it was not possible for me to observe the after-hours negotiations at strip clubs. The gender imbalance was so great that it would have been very noticeable if I had followed a group to a secondary location, and my very presence likely would have changed the type of conversations taking place.

I did try to have conversations with the exhibitors. However, no one was interested in talking to an academic, even when I framed my research in industry-friendly terms such as “the economics of national security.” I approached a very small booth – one that belonged to the bottom tier of the exhibitor hierarchy – placed on the outer perimeter of the exhibition hall. The colorful banner hanging from the table announced the booth as belonging to “Less Lethal Africa.” I thought that if anyone might be willing to talk to an academic, surely it would be two individuals working on reducing gun lethality. I approached the booth and inquired as to the array of bullets on the table. The bullets were silicone-tipped, which was supposed to make them less lethal than typical bullets. The American man running the booth reached under the table to take out pictures of someone who had been shot with one of these bullets – while the shot was not lethal, there was a large, dark purple bruise covering about one half of the circumference of the person’s lower calf. The American man did also admit that, at close range, the bullets remained lethal. It was at this point that he looked down at my badge, looked back at me, and asked, “What is someone from the University of Minnesota doing here?” I explained to him that I was studying the international economics of weapons, to which he grunted, put the picture of the bruised leg away, and said, “Ok.” After a few seconds of awkward silence, I thanked him for his time and moved on.

Encounter with a protestor

As I left the exhibition hall Thursday afternoon—the fourth day of the show—a woman police officer (a rare sight to begin with) approached me before I left the first secured area outside the show. She told me to take off my name badge, which was very strange because we had been instructed to keep our identification visible at all times. I asked her why, and she glanced over her shoulder before telling me to remove my badge. To my knowledge, neither this officer nor other officers asked anyone else to remove their badge before leaving the secured area; a number of people on the train platform—the only destination from this particular exit—were still wearing their identification.

I followed the officer's instructions, and as I passed through the next security area (toward where the police officer had glanced) I learned why: a single, middle-aged woman, dressed in pink was wearing a cardboard sign that said "war is hell" and "arms deals are unethical." She was also carrying a smaller sign condemning participants at DSEI. There were numerous police officers in the vicinity, so I kept walking toward the train platform. I don't know how this woman was able to enter into the secured area, or why the police just observed her; we had been told earlier in the week that protests were kept contained off-site.

Even though I did not make eye contact with the protestor, she decided to yell at me. It was clear her words were directed at me, as she let multiple people pass in front of me without words, and I did not hear any of her protests prior to or after this. She yelled "Arms deals make war and suffering! How can you be a part of this?" I don't know why she chose to yell at me. Maybe because I am a young woman and don't fit the usual DSEI

demographic. Maybe it was because I was carrying a bright red bag from an Indian arms manufacturer that had a target and cross hatch on it. Once I reached the train platform with the other DSEI participants (all still wearing their badges), a British Royal Navy and Royal Army soldier were chuckling and rolling their eyes at the protestor.

How DSEI informed the project

From the seminars I attended and from observing how people looked at and talked about the weapons on display, I learned more about the logistics of the global weapons network and of the importance of weapons' prestige. On the former, I spent most of my time in the Global Partnerships Theatre (GPT), which held a number of seminars about how to do business in different countries. For example, three former military and government officials from India spent 90 minutes talking about how the Indian government issues its requests for proposals, key words to include in your bid, and a timeline of decision-making. The Singapore and Malaysian governments spoke about their priorities over the next few years, and how they plan to use offset agreements to get more from weapons manufacturing companies. The primary take-away from these seminars was that the weapons market is not a grocery store: states rarely can go out and "shop" and come home with a weapon the same month, never mind in the same year. Thus, our assumptions that states can get what they want when they want it are deeply flawed. Even when a weapon is transferred through grant aid, the sending state must budget out the funding, and states craft their budgets years in advance. The Indian government said that it works on a five-year timeline, and that it recognized that this was an extremely *short* timeline compared to most other states.

I also learned that weapons “sales” are often not sales the way we usually think of economic transactions. Yes, actor A gives actor B a weapon (the tie is directional, has an intensity, and a specific content). Usually, we imagine B giving A money (the tie is directional, has an intensity, and a monetary content). The buzzword of DSEI, however, was “offsets”. Instead of B giving A money in return for the weapon, B required A to give additional things. For Malaysia, these things were support for green technologies, and investment in infrastructure and higher education. For India, these were domestic production capabilities and technological knowledge to build weapons systems. Thus, instead of simply reciprocal ties between A and B, A *also* transferred non-weapons items. We can think of this as two ties. The US, for example, sells Malaysia a missile defense system (the tie is directional from A to B, has an intensity of 100, and the content is missiles). Malaysia gives the US some money in return (the tie is directional from B to A, has an intensity of some millions of dollars, and the content is money). The transaction continues, however, as the US also gives Malaysia solar panels and their technical specification (the tie is directional from A to B, has an intensity of 1,000, and the content is both solar panels and technical knowledge). The key takeaway here is that thinking of the weapons market as a typical economic exchange network often overlooks the second tie going from A to B.

Finally, on logistics, I learned that states treat weapons transactions as interdependent. Quite contrary to many social science models that treat each dyad as independent from other dyads, states look to one another for ideas about how to write their weapons contracts, for evidence of what weapons proved effective in different contexts, and to learn how

different weapons transfers were followed, or not, by greater political investment. A former official within the Malaysian government said Malaysia's new policies on weapons imports were based on policies from South Korea and Turkey dating to the 1970s.

The other important lesson from DSEI concerns weapon prestige. Unlike many other weapons shows, DSEI only had one weapon demonstration—the naval demonstration that took place on the Thames. Therefore, in trying to differentiate their weapons from available others, manufacturers used their brochures and sales pitches to link weapons to perceptions of prestige. Brochures on armored vehicles tried to link the vehicles to tanks, by showing how they could both transport troops and be used for firing on targets. This is an attempt to move a weapon out of a more support-type role and into the category of tanks, which are a perceptually prestigious weapon. Future work will further investigate how manufacturers try to manipulate perceptions of prestige through their marketing materials.

EUROSATORY

This land and air exhibition was held in Paris, France in June 2016. It featured many of the same exhibitors as DSEI, but was a radically different show. There were 1,572 exhibitors representing 56 countries, and 57,018 unique visitors from 151 countries. To attend Eurosatory I did *not* need to pass a background check, and it was possible to register and attend the show on the same day. Though there were security guards around the show, security was not nearly as visible as at DSEI.

The most important difference between the shows is that while DSEI took place over a single week, Eurosatory ran for three. Of the three weeks, civilians were allowed to attend one week; it was this civilian week that I was able to attend. As at DSEI, badged were color

coded, but keeping the badge visible was of less importance at Eurosatory. The show took place at the convention center just outside Paris, and had the feel of a comic-con convention or a festival, rather than a serious international arms market.

Layout

The show spanned two halls of the five-hall convention center and also used most of the outdoor parking space. Inside the convention center, the hierarchy of booths mirrored that at DSEI with one notable exception. At DSEI Israel was represented only by the weapons manufacturer Rafael. Their booth in London was red and white, and the reception booth was placed in the middle of the raised platform. The outside was covered in TV screens showing demonstration videos, and of missile models. In order to get to the reception area at DSEI, you had to walk down a hall; the layout was such that one would not walk down that hallway unless one had reason to do so. Israel's participation at Eurosatory was the exact opposite. There was an entire Israeli pavilion in one of the halls, with an inviting reception booth where the staff handed out bags, Israeli flags, and information about Israeli-produced weapons systems.

The outdoor area at Eurosatory was significantly larger than at DSEI. There was no river for ships, but Eurosatory was primarily for land and air weapon systems. Located outside were static displays of tanks, armored vehicles, and aircraft. The outdoor area spanned about one and a half football fields. There were pop-up restaurants and food trucks parked throughout this area, again fueling the sense that this was a tourist stop and not a military or government site. You could also take a shuttle to the "demo area" where, twice a day, about ten weapons were demonstrated in a mock exercise.

Outdoor Demonstration

About 150 seats arranged on risers and covered by an awning faced mounds of dirt and corrugated metal shacks. There was an announcing booth behind the audience seats – if I had not known better I would have thought I were attending a high school football game. The announcer was a young-sounding British man, who announced each weapon, its specifications, and its manufacturer as the weapon entered the demo area. There was a large display screen in front of the demo area, where video from four videographers, as well as pre-recorded field video from field tests, was relayed throughout the demo.

Prior to the demonstration beginning, a cop in full body armor was roaming the audience area, stopping to talk to attendees. The cop spoke French, but seemed to be casually chatting with attendees. The cop smiled and laughed often, but he was at least 6’ 2” tall, and was carrying what looked like a semi-automatic weapon, making him rather intimidating.

Pictures of the demo area are at the end of this appendix. The area the audience faced was staged as a small town on a hill, with one large dirt hill to the right, a scattering of metal shack-type structures, and an improvised bridge spanning two hills in the middle. The announcer said that it was supposed to be a “typical town in Eastern Europe,” which seemed to me an allusion to Ukraine. The narrative of the demo was that rebel forces held this town, so the “good guys” were going to take it over, using a variety of different weapon systems. The roles of rebels and good guys were both played by British special forces. As the demo began, a rock soundtrack blasted over the speakers, softened just slightly when

the announcer talked. The music had a relatively high beats per minute, and was composed primarily of drums, bass, and guitar – no singer.

The demo began with 8-wheeled ATV-type vehicles “extracting” the advance team that was already in the village. The vehicles sped up and down the dirt hills, and did donuts in front of the audience. Next, two infantry fighting vehicles entered the scene and “good guys” poured out of the back. They engaged in firefight with the rebels, giving the IFVs the opportunity to drive up and down the dirt hills to demonstrate their capabilities.

The demonstration continued this way, until suddenly things were interrupted by the piercing scream of a young woman coming from my right. As I looked in the direction of the scream, I saw a man wearing a bandana holding a young blond woman, with what looked like a knife in his hand. The hulking cop ran toward them, and the man in the bandana ran down in front of the audience area. Thankfully, this was part of the demonstration, as other men in bandanas, holding rocks and bricks, emerged from the side of the demo area and began advancing on a line of cops that had emerged from a parked vehicle. The cops were dressed like the one who had been roaming the audience area prior to the show: complete armor and similarly large guns. Two of the cops had dogs with them. This was, we learned, a demonstration of the RoboCop gear and of a riot rifle that shot a soft projectile rather than bullets. The cops also allowed the dogs to demonstrate their ability to disarm a protestor.

The diversion from military to police was not the only diversion during the demonstration; soon after the “protest” ended, a white Jeep Wrangler with “UN” on its door in what looked like black tape drove onto the pavement in front of the audience. The

announcer gleefully said that the UN had arrived to negotiate with the rebels, but a large boom and smoke near the Jeep's front tire indicated that an IED had gone off. The white Jeep sped away, allowing the bomb squad to enter and for the audience to witness new bomb-detonation tools. I was surprised by the inclusion of the "UN" vehicle (and that it was white), but the audience primarily chuckled at the speedy departure of the UN vehicle. Even in this weapons demonstration, the UN was the source of momentary humor.

It took attending the demonstration a few times for me to pick up on the subtle changes in the music that occurred throughout the demo. The type of music never changed – we were serenaded by rock music throughout the show. But the tempo and intensity of the music changed depending on the weapon on display. When the "rioters" were on stage, the feedback in the guitar increased, there was less silence between guitar riffs, almost as if the music were trying to echo the chaos and noise of a riot. Toward the end of the demo, a fire control vehicle sped around the dirt track, demonstrating the range of its hose. Never has a firetruck been so majestically or enthusiastically serenaded. It was as if the least prestigious weapons were given the highest tempo and the most coherent music of the demonstration. Guitar and bass, supported by the now-constant hits of the cymbal, propelled the fire truck along. As our heart rates increased with the beats per minute of the soundtrack, so did our adrenaline, and so did (at least in my case, and, I'd wager, for many others), our positive feelings toward the firetruck. The music made me happy; had I attended the show only once I would have associated that happiness with the firetruck. It was only after multiple times viewing the demo – and a misspent youth learning music theory and composition –

that I was cued on to the ways in which music was used to manipulate our assessments of weapons.

Attendees

While there were some attendees in uniform, they seemed to be treating the week at Eurosatory as a tourist event – their arms were filled with keychains, pens, and other handouts from the exhibitor booths. Unlike at DSEI, there were no official military escorts, and I primarily saw French military personnel, rather than foreign military personnel.

Because more civilians were able to attend this show, the gender balance was slightly better, but attendees and exhibitors were still overwhelmingly male. The women who were working with the exhibitors were dressed in a way designed to appeal to men. The platform of a Turkish arms manufacturer was staffed by women in tight-fitting dark gray tops and very tight pants in a camouflage pattern. Most of the women also wore a civilian version of combat boots.

I did not stand out as much at Eurosatory as at DSEI; the high number of civilian tourists mean that taking pictures and video was a more typical behavior of attendees.

Encounter with protestors

Whereas DSEI kept the protestors – for the most part – a few kilometers away from the show, protestors occupied the space between the metro station and the first security checkpoint at Eurosatory. The protestors objected to profiteering from war, and carried signs and banners urging people to stop supporting the war industries. Interestingly, these protestors were silent. To get from the Metro to the convention center, you had to go up a

small flight of stairs. Protestors stood at the bottom of the stairs – but in front of the railings so that they were not blocking anyone’s walking path – handing out small postcards to participants. If you refused to take one, the protestor would smile and look to the next person. The protestors, and their stunning silence, remained throughout the show.

On the one hand, it seemed odd to me that there was not some chant or attempt at dialogue. On the other, their silence drew us all in. We did not know, that first day, who these people were, and as a result I think the protestors were able to get many more people to blindly accept their postcards than they would have if chanting had been involved. It is also much harder to demonize or laugh at protestors – as people did at DSEI –when they stand in silence.

How it informed the project

Eurosatory was important primarily for the ways in which it differed from my experience at DSEI. Eurosatory increased the confidence I have in the information I gathered and the inferences I drew from DSEI. Unlike Eurosatory, DSEI was the real deal.

Eurosatory was also important for what it revealed about prestige and perceptions. The use of a rock soundtrack, and the demonstration of less-prestigious weapons revealed how manufacturers try to manipulate perceptions of their weapons. In this case, that manipulation was done through music. The attempt to make a firetruck seem cool was the best example of this, but it indicated that perceptions of prestige are subtle and not always visible at first glance.

The demonstrations also made apparent the fluidity between the domain of the military and the domain of the police. This has two implications. The first is addressed in this

project: the division of weaponry into conventional vs. small arms light weapons is tenuous at best. Not only are police forces – especially in the US – increasingly receiving discarded military equipment, but they’re also using weapons that are marketed and displayed at the same major international events as typical military equipment. The second implication is not explicitly addressed in this project but will be a focus of future work. When we think of weapons transfers, we often look for outcomes in terms of interstate conflict, or rebellions against a government. Eurosatory, by merging the police and military, suggests that we need to pay much more attention to the linkages between weapons transfers and suppression of domestic dissent. The same vehicles that were used on the mock battlefield could also be modified for use on city streets. The same weapons that were used by the “rebels” were used by the police. The spread of small arms and light weapons, as well as the transmission of tactics and strategies, has been understudied thus far.

POSITIONALITY AND FIELD EXPERIENCE

As a young woman not working an exhibitor’s booth, I was in the minority at DSEI and Eurosatory. However, the gender imbalance had a greater effect on my experience at DSEI than it did at Eurosatory. Because Eurosatory was open to the general public, I fit in as a tourist and did not often garner a second glance from the exhibitors. When I did stop at a booth to either pick up materials or take a souvenir, exhibitors did not rise to greet and ask me questions, as they did with people who had government or military identification. The benefit to this treatment was that it gave me more space to observe different booths and to watch interactions between exhibitors and other people. However, this meant that I was unable to hear sales pitches or other conversations about the weapons. The metro line out

to the convention center in Paris terminated at Charles de Gaulle airport two stops later. Therefore, based on dress and gender it was difficult to tell who was attending Eurosatory as a tourist and who was going to the airport. It was quite easy to pick out the official visitors to Eurosatory, as they either displayed their identification on the train, or were dressed in suits or military uniforms. Because they were mixing with the general public, conversations between official visitors were hushed. It would have been very obvious if I had tried to position myself to listen to any of these conversations.

Though gender was not the primary division between attendees at Eurosatory, it did play a role. I asked a male colleague to attend the show with me one day. Though we entered together, I asked him to explore on his own and to let me know how it went when we met back up for lunch. Though he had the same type of identification as I did, he said exhibitors were more willing to talk to him when he paused at booths and platforms. This could be a function both of his age and gender, but I think it shows that there is an assumption that the women in attendance were not experts or exhibitors. I was assumed to be a tourist, and my experience at Eurosatory reflected that assigned role.

At DSEI, divisions between participants were gender- and age-based, and I stood out. This meant that lingering at booths attracted attention, so I spent time when I was not in seminars walking through the halls. It was possible to “attach” myself to small groups, and to shadow them from a few feet away. This allowed me to listen to sales pitches and conversations, without drawing much attention to myself.

The Excel Center in London is on a DLR train line. Because the train departs from central London most of the DSEI attendees were able to get seats on the train; those

passengers boarding at stations between London center and the Excel Center had to stand. This meant that the rear and front of each car – which had very few standing places – were occupied almost entirely by DSEI attendees. Because this exhibition was business casual, dress was one way to narrow down likely attendees. Tank-shaped tie clips, and visitor badges made it quite easy to identify DSEI participants. The relative separation of DSEI-goers from the general population made conversations on the DLR more free-flowing. I overheard conversations about booths visited, and observed one woman sharing images from inside the show with her colleague.

While there were some women at DSEI, they were usually staff from the Excel Center or were working as receptionists for exhibitors. The few women who did not fit this pattern appeared to be ten to fifteen years older than me. My relatively young age and gender thus marked me in two ways as not fitting the pattern of typical attendees. While I was able to observe much of the day-to-day workings of the show, most of the useful information I obtained was by sitting in on the seminar series. Further, some important conversations took place off-site (at strip clubs or bars), places at which my presence would have been noticeable. Certain aspects of the international arms trade were thus foreclosed to me for factors outside of my control. I experienced DSEI as an outsider who had earned permission to see, but there was still a barrier between my experience and that of the typical attendee.

Though my experience at both of these shows was not that of a typical attendee, my outsider status did carry with it some advantages. The point of attendance was less to sit on negotiations between manufacturers and buyers, and more to observe the logistics and

lay out of the weapons exhibitions. While observing negotiations would have been an interesting point of information, it would have been just that: a single point. By instead focusing on the totality of show and the regular actions between attendees, I got a better picture of how industry insiders use weapons exhibitions. Return trips to DSEI in September 2019, and perhaps expanding my participation to additional conferences in future years, will allow me to compare weapons exhibitions across time and space.