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TO ARM OR TO ALLY?

THE PATRON'S DILEMMA AND THE STRATEGIC LOGIC OF ARMS TRANSFERS AND ALLIANCES

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Under what conditions do great power patrons give client states alliances, arms, or both? Why do great powers sometimes provide arms to their clients and why do they sometimes form alliances with their clients?

These questions are important in international politics because great powers face a "patron's dilemma." Great powers must adopt policies to provide security to their allies without becoming entrapped in an unwanted conflict. Strong commitments, such as treaty alliances, worsen the risk of entrapment—that is, the patron's fear of being dragged into an undesirable war. Weak commitments, such as verbal assurances, intensify fears of abandonment—that is, the client's fear of receiving inadequate support should a crisis develop. Such is the traditional alliance dilemma.[2]

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[2] Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Grasping the patron's dilemma is central to understanding not only U.S. security commitments, but also many related patterns of interstate behavior. Efforts to secure an Iranian nuclear deal have produced calls for stronger defense ties between the United States and Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, among others. Such ties could include formal treaty alliances or the sale of additional arms. Experts warn that insufficient assurances could trigger nuclear proliferation or even regional war. Elsewhere in the world, China's assertiveness has made U.S. allies, such as Japan and the Philippines, and partners, such as Vietnam and Taiwan, anxious. This alliance anxiety has forced the United States to reconsider its provision of arms and alliances. Similar issues are at play with Ukraine. Russian aggression toward Eastern Europe has fueled debate about whether existing U.S. security guarantees are sufficient and whether Ukraine should receive lethal U.S. arms. In all these regions, we expect the patron's dilemma to remain intense. Our article elucidates the choices and constraints facing decisionmakers managing this dilemma.

The decisions of great powers to transfer arms or form alliances often present intriguing empirical puzzles. In 2015, the United States supported thirty-two treaty allies and allocated billions in security assistance worldwide. Surprisingly, U.S. treaty allies received only 2 percent of all U.S. foreign military financing, whereas five non-allied countries received over 90 percent. Among this group of five non-allied U.S. partners, Israel received $3.1 billion (55 percent of U.S. foreign military financing), Egypt $1.3 billion (23 percent), Jordan $300 million (5 percent), Pakistan $280 million (5 percent), and Iraq $250 million (5 percent).[3] This variation is even more intriguing when considered historically. During the Cold War, the United States provided

[3] "Foreign Military Financing Account Summary," U.S. Department of State, 2015, http://www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/sat/c14560.htm.

weapons and alliances to many states, including Pakistan and Taiwan, but transferred arms to Israel without a formal defense pact. Yet Pakistan and Taiwan eventually lost their alliances despite seeing U.S. arms transfers continue, if not increase. Why did the United States modulate its arms and alliances provision during the Cold War? And why would it today decline to offer some states defense pacts but give them more military financing than its treaty allies?

A patron's choice to provide arms, alliances, or both, raises academic questions because extending alliances and transferring arms produce many similar benefits. Both policies are useful for deterring adversaries and reassuring clients while exerting some influence over them. Alliances strengthen deterrence and defense by aggregating capabilities and enhancing combined operations and planning. Arms transfers deter and defend by altering the local military balance. Like alliances, arms transfers can signal a patron's commitment to maintain its client's security. Still, the conditions under which major power patrons transfer arms and extend defense pacts have been under-examined. Prominent scholars have argued that U.S. military assistance to clients is driven by nonstrategic calculations, such as domestic political factors or commercial motivations.[4]

In this article, we offer a unified strategic logic that explains how patrons calibrate the provision of these security goods. We argue that patrons primarily make such decisions on the

[4] For domestic political explanations, see Galen Jackson, "The Showdown That Wasn't: US-Israeli Relations and American Domestic Politics, 1973-1975," *International Security*, vol. 39, no. 4 (2015): 130-169. See also John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008); Edward Tivnan, *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Robert H. Trice, *Interest Groups and the Foreign Policy Process: U.S. Policy in the Middle East* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1976); and Mitchell Geoffrey Bard, *The Water's Edge and Beyond: Defining the Limits to Domestic Influence on United States Middle East Policy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1991). For explanations based on commercial motivations see Lawrence Freedman, "IV: Britain and the Arms Trade," *International Affairs*, vol. 54, no. 1 (1978): 377-392. On a mixture of motives, see Edward A. Kolodziej, "France and the Arms Trade," *International Affairs*, vol. 56, no. 1 (1980): 54-72.

basis of two factors: first, the extent to which the patron believes it and the client have common security interests; and second, whether the patron believes that the client has sufficient military capabilities to deter its main adversary and prevail should deterrence fail. These two variables interact to shape the bundle of security commitments the patron offers to its client. Our analysis reveals when patrons use security goods as substitutes and complements.[5] We shed light on how patrons manage the alliance dilemma by using arms transfers to affect the behavior of their clients. We show that such tools can improve reassurance and mitigate abandonment fears by complementing existing alliances while minimizing entrapment risks. Simply put, the patron's dilemma relates to how best to use arms transfers to address the alliance dilemma.

Our theoretical framework builds upon previous work regarding how great powers calibrate the provision of security goods to serve their interests while managing their clients' behavior.[6] We extend this approach by showing how security commitments change over time. In so doing, we show how decisionmakers concerned with entrapment take measures to mitigate such concerns. Our analysis thus challenges the notion that clients can entrap patrons that are providing arms rather than alliances. Using primary documents, we assess how decisionmakers regard the risks and opportunities that come with providing arms and alliances.

Our empirical findings provide weak evidence for claims that domestic politics and commercial interests explain patrons' decisions to transfer arms or form alliances. Rather, our evidence strongly suggests that even in controversial cases where such alternative explanations

[5] On foreign policy substitution, see T. Clifton Morgan and Glenn Palmer, "Selecting the Right Tools for the Job(s)," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2000): 11-32; Benjamin A. Most and Harvey Starr, "International Relations Theory, Foreign Policy Substitutability, and "Nice" Laws," *World Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (1984): 383-406.

[6] David Lake, *Entangling Relations: American Foreign Policy in its Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

are plausible, strategic variables are more salient to U.S. decisionmakers. We do not dismiss the importance of these alternative explanations, but instead show how U.S. decisionmakers focused primarily on the commonality of security interests and the local military balance in determining what bundles of military assistance to give to client states.

More broadly, our argument advances a growing literature on interstate signaling by examining the conditions under which arms transfers and alliances serve as alternative or complementary costly signals of support to a client. Of course, patrons can use other goods (e.g., forward deployments and joint military exercises) to further their clients' security interests. We focus on arms transfers and alliances, however, because both can be described as distinct signals of patron support with separate cost structures. Alliances reflect *ex post* costs whereas arms transfers hinge on the logic of *ex ante* sunk costs. Our theory and empirical analysis demonstrates how variation in these cost structures explains utilization of these policies, and how leaders perceive the relative utility of these tools.[7]

We proceed as follows. The first section reviews existing conceptualizations of arms and alliances. The second section describes our theory. The third section discusses our research design and reviews the two main alternative arguments: domestic political and commercial explanations. The fourth and fifth sections study U.S. efforts to provide arms and alliances to Taiwan and Israel, respectively. The sixth section concludes and outlines policy implications.

Alliances and Arms: A Theoretical Overview

[7] Matthew Fuhrmann and Todd S. Sechser, "Signaling Alliance Commitments: Hand-Tying and Sunk Costs in Extended Nuclear Deterrence," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (2014): 919-935.

Instead of asking when states respond to a threat by choosing between alliances and self-armament, we consider What factors, from the perspective of a great power patron, determine whether to support a potential client through an alliance commitment or through arms transfers. Whatever the trade-offs involved, we explain the extent to which both security goods serve similar functions, and how differences between them shape when each is selected. Below we consider each security good in turn.

ALLIANCE COMMITMENTS

Alliances are written pledges between two or more states that are intended to formalize some form of security cooperation.[8] In this article, we set aside offensive alliances and non-aggression pacts to focus on defensive alliances (or defense pacts), in which members pledge to come to each other's aid in the event of external aggression. Alliances deter adversaries by aggregating and, through joint military exercises and operational planning, enhancing capabilities. Alliances are ex post commitments that bolsters the credibility of promises to intervene by implicating a state's reputation for reliability to its actions.[9] Reneging on commitments is costly because it affects a state's ability to negotiate future alliance treaties.[10]

[8] On alliances as a bundle of some mixture of security goods, see Matthew Fuhrmann and Todd S. Sechser, "Signaling Alliance Commitments." For alliances as written pledges, see James Morrow, "Alliances: Why Write Them Down?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 3 (2000): 63-83.

[9] James D. Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands versus Sinking Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (1997): 68-90. Some but not all formal alliance commitments also feature extensive military cooperation and coordination,. Indeed, many alliances include few signals of commitment beyond verbal promises. Sechser and Fuhrmann, "Signaling Alliance Commitments."

[10] See Douglas M. Gibler, "The Costs of Reneging: Reputation and Alliance Formation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (2008): 426-454; Mark J.C. Crescenzi, Jacob D. Kathman, Katja B. Kleinberg, and Reed M. Wood, "Reliability, Reputation, and Alliance Formation," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (2012): 259-274; and Gregory Miller, *The Shadow of the Past: Reputation and Military Alliances Before the First World War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

States face a dilemma in deciding the strength of their alliance commitments. Too weak a commitment could embolden an adversary and inspire abandonment fears in an ally because the patron might decline to assist it during a crisis. Too strong a commitment, however, such as one that is explicit, broad, and binding, could embolden a client to pursue risky or aggressive policies. This latter worry reflects a patron's fear of being militarily entrapped by a risk-taking ally that could drag the patron into an unwanted war.[11] Of course, all alliance commitments imply some risk of entanglement, which Tongfi Kim defines as "the process whereby a state is compelled to aid an ally in a costly and unprofitable enterprise *because of the alliance*."[12]

Institutional arrangements sometimes enable the patron to mitigate this entanglement risk. Ambiguous commitments can make both clients and adversaries cautious because they are unsure which obligations and conditions would trigger an alliance response.[13] Defense pacts are unconditional if they leave unspecified the terms under which the patron would aid its client. Defense pacts are conditional if they attach public or private terms or ambiguous language designed to reduce an ally's moral hazard.[14] These arrangements are imperfect, however. For example, determining whether an attack was provoked can be difficult, thereby calling into question the applicability of a conditional defense pact. Accordingly, conditional alliances can undercut deterrence if a potential adversary believes that it can circumvent a great power's alliance commitments.[15]

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[11] See Michael Beckley, "The Myth of Entangling Alliances: Reassessing the Security Risks of U.S. Defense Pacts," *International Security,* vol. 39, no. 4 (2015): 7–48.
[12] Emphasis in original. Tongfi Kim, "Why Alliances Entangle But Seldom Entrap States," *Security Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2011): 3555.
[13] Beckley, "Myth."
[14] Brett V. Benson, *Constructing International Security: Alliances, Deterrence, and Moral Hazard* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 99-100.
[15] Snyder, *Alliance Politics.*

ARMS TRANSFERS

Arms transfers refer to weapons that states give each other to augment their military capabilities. Like alliances, arms transfers deter and defend by shifting the local balance of power in the recipient's favor. Yet arms transfers differ from alliances in three ways. First, a patron can decide to transfer arms quickly and sometimes without involving domestic legislatures, whereas alliances often take time to negotiate and ratify. Second, a patron can modulate the magnitude and type of military assistance it provides over time. Alliance commitments are generally more static and difficult to calibrate. Third, although alliances are mainly an *ex post* indicator of commitment, arm transfers are primarily an *ex ante* signal of commitment—the costs of which result from supplying credit to purchase or granting a weapons shipment.[16]

Arms transfers can signal a patron's intentions by demonstrating its interest in maintaining the security of its client. Three characteristics of arms transfers affect their signaling value. The first characteristic is the size of the arms transfer. A large transfer can function as a sunk cost. Such costly signals cause a client and its adversary to reason that only a patron with a strong interest in maintaining the security of its client would significantly augment its arsenal. We define the size of an arms transfer as the percentage of the patron's total military transfer budget devoted to a certain client relative to other regional clients.[17]

The second characteristic concerns the type of weapons being transferred. Defensive weapons limit the client's ability to conquer territory or to launch a first strike. By contrast,

[16] If the arms transfer comprises advanced weapons, then the patron might have to bear not only a budgetary burden but also some risk of undesirable technological transfer to the client. Such technological spillover could make the client less dependent on the patron for arms in the future, thereby depriving the patron of leverage.

[17] See http://www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/sat/c14560.htm. Arms transfers may be a substitute for crisis intervention should hostilities between the client and the adversary breakout. Yet it remains unclear how the patron can remain neutral and not be dragged into an undesirable conflict.

offensive weapons that (those that favor mobility over protection or firepower) constitute a more costly signal.[18] The adversary might even regard the patron's willingness to supply offensive weapons as a signal that the patron approves of a client's offensive aims. The adversary and other outside observers are therefore likelier to believe that the patron will come to its client's aid in a crisis. Alternatively, whatever the patron's intentions, an adversary might blame the patron for providing weapons that enabled its client to undertake offensive operations, thereby implicating the patron in the conflict and increasing the likelihood that the adversary will target the patron.[19] Transferring offensive weapons to a client thus means that the patron is accepting a higher risk of entrapment.

The third characteristic of arms transfers is institutionalization. The more institutionalized the practice of transferring arms, the stronger its signaling value. A single arms transfer is an ambiguous signal of a client's future commitment because it provides limited information about the patron's future behavior. More institutionalized arrangements produce expectations of future weapons transfers, increase the anticipated cost of the client's commitment to the patron and the anticipated benefit to the client, and are much harder to reverse. With institutionalization, the patron is more likely to suffer reputation costs if its client is defeated. At stake is not the patron's reputation for resolve but rather the patron's desire to be seen as being on the winning side. Institutionalized arms transfers can take many forms. Patrons might commit to provide a certain amount or type of arms within a specified time frame. Alternatively, patrons might offer some guarantee that their clients maintain a sufficient self-defense capability. By creating expectations

[18] Some offensive weapons are indistinguishable from defensive ones. In such cases, the signaling logic of arms transfers might be less pronounced compared to cases where unambiguously offensive weapons are supplied.

[19] Sophistication might be another criterion. The more technologically sophisticated the weapon—operationalized by measuring the time passed since its initial fielding--the stronger the signal. Newer weapons are often qualitatively superior and may embolden the client. We omit this category because newer weapons are often more expensive and thus costly.

of future arms transfers, institutionalization provides a new focal point for relations between the patron and client. Thus, arms transfers convey the most significant and costliest signal of a patron's support when they include institutionalized provision of a large quantity of offensive and defensive weapons.[20] Costly arm transfers have at least two of these characteristics. When arms transfers are *ad hoc* and feature small quantities of defensive weapons, we argue that the signal conveys insignificant support.

This conceptualization of arms transfers covers multiple methods of provision, including sales, grants, and loans. Although the payment mechanisms may differ, each type of arms transfer requires a similar set of decisions by the patron's' leaders. In the United States, for example, foreign military sales and financing are both governed by the Arms Export Control Act, determined by the secretary of state, and executed by the secretary of defense. The president must formally decide that providing arms will "strengthen the security of the United States and promote world peace."[21] The central policy questions are similar even though the exact structure of each arms transfer arrangement may differ.

Arms transfers have disadvantages that limit their deterrence, defense, and signaling value. First, arms transfers provide a quick solution to slight shifts in the local conventional military balance, but they cannot rapidly induce large changes in a client's wartime military capabilities relative to a much more powerful adversary. The supply of arms is unlikely to achieve similar battlefield results as fighting alongside a major power. When the client faces a

[20]Arms transfers sometimes create reputation costs. An illustrative example is the alleged use by insurgents in eastern Ukraine of Russian anti-aircraft missiles against flight MH17. This accident hurt Russia's reputation and led to economic sanctions. Suspending arms transfers during a crisis could also create reputation costs. The United States risks appearing unreliable if it suspends military aid to Israel during a conflict.

[21] See "Foreign Military Financing," Defense Security Cooperation Agency, accessed December 31, 2015, http://www.dsca.mil/programs/foreign-military-financing-fmf; "Foreign Military Sales," Defense Security Cooperation Agency, accessed December 31, 2015, http://www.dsca.mil/programs/foreign-military-financing-fms.

significant disadvantage and thus cannot deter or defend against an adversary, the transfer of weapons might be insufficient to turn the tide of a conflict, but it could buy the client some time while the patron decides whether and how to intervene. A second limitation is that *ex ante* arms transfers do not constitute a promise to rescue the client in a militarized crisis, though they could entangle a patron perceived as complicit in a conflict. Although the steady supply of significant military arms could establish the perception of a close partnership between the patron and the client, such partnerships typically do not include an explicit commitment to support the client in wartime. Therefore, relative to formal alliance commitments, even significant arms transfers are unlikely to entrap a patron concerned about its reputation.

Theoretical Framework

To highlight the patron's dilemma, and to explain the complementarity and substitutability of arms transfers and alliances, we offer a new theoretical framework. Building on the realist observation that threat perceptions drive alliance formation, our theory emphasizes two independent variables, both of which are perceptual. The first independent variable is the patron's assessment of the commonality of security interests with its potential client. The second is the patron's assessment of the client's military capabilities relative to its shared adversary.[22] We argue that patrons assess these two variables in turn. A patron first reviews the commonality of security interests with a potential client to determine whether an alliance is desirable. Then the patron decides whether to transfer arms depending on the client's perceived military capabilities relative to a shared adversary. Although we focus on these two strategic variables, we also discuss the importance of other factors such as domestic politics and commercial interests.

[22] Stephen Walt, *The Origin of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

Commonality of security interests refers to the extent of the threat that the client's primary adversary poses to the patron's core security interests. This variable is perceptual because it depends on decisionmakers' threat assessments. In situations of high compatibility the patron must determine whether its client's severest security threat also poses a significant threat to the patron's core security interests. The patron must also determine whether the client is in an adversarial relationship with a third country with which the patron has an alliance or wishes to improve diplomatic relations. If the client is not in an adversarial relationship, then the security interests of the patron and the client will be highly compatible, making the patron likelier to sign a formal defense pact with its client than not. Even when interests might be harmonious in theory, a formal alliance is attractive for clarifying the deterrent signal for adversaries, protecting the alliance from changes in government, and facilitating military-to-military cooperation in peacetime.[23] In such situations, the patron will regard such a commitment as enhancing its own security and will be less concerned with entrapment.[24] An example of a patron and a client exhibiting highly compatible security interests is the case of the United States and West Germany. Both countries saw the Soviet Union and its allies as their principal adversaries during the Cold War and West Germany did not face another significant adversary.

In relationships with limited compatibility, the primary threat confronting the client does not appear to pose a threat to the security interests of the patron. Divergences in security threats are also significant for the patron when the enemy of its friend is also its friend, thereby complicating the making of a general hand-tying commitment. All else equal, we expect alliances that are based on some degree of common interests to exhibit a lower level of

[23] Relatively strong patrons can also better deter adversaries from attacking its allies. See Paul Huth, "Extended Deterrence and the Outbreak of War," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 82, no. 2 (1988): 423-443.
[24] Of course, major powers have more interests than their weaker allies, but they can still prioritize threats similarly.

commitment compared with those based on high commonality, because the patron prefers not to be involved directly in the disputes that the client has with those unshared adversaries. In such situations, an unconditional formal defense treaty between a patron and a client is very unlikely.[25] An example of a security relationship with limited compatibility is that between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Although Iranian nuclear capabilities have long concerned the United States, Saudi Arabia has significant security concerns that the United States does not share, including Israel. Consequently, no formal U.S.-Saudi defense treaty exists.[26]

A client's military capabilities are the second independent variable. The patron evaluates whether the client can effectively deter an attack from the client's main adversary, and prevail militarily if deterrence fails. In this situation, the patron conducts a net assessment that combines quantitative measurements and qualitative indicators to infer the strength of the opposing militaries. It must consider dynamic and contextual factors that affect the client's capabilities in both the present and the short-term future. When the client enjoys a favorable military balance, a transfer of arms could encourage the client to undertake offensive operations. In such situations, particularly when the patron and client have a formal alliance, the patron is unlikely to transfer arms that could embolden its client and thereby entrap the patron. When the client's military capabilities are low relative to its adversary, however, arms transfers could enhance the client's deterrence and defense capabilities while signaling the patron's support. An example of a client

[25] Benson, *Constructing International Security.*

[26] To be exhaustive, consider a situation of zero compatibility. The patron could offer at best a weak commitment to the potential client in return for something that the patron values. Yet such commitments should be empirically rare. Our theory cannot explain such alliances given its emphasis on shared threat assessments.

with high (conventional) military capabilities is South Korea relative to North Korea. An example of a client with low military capabilities is Taiwan relative to China.[27]

Before describing the predicted outcomes generated by interacting these two variables, we must clarify our assumptions. First, we assume that the patron always wants to preserve the status quo between the client and the client's adversary. Indeed, the patron faces an optimization problem: it wants to deter an adversary from challenging the client (and ensure the client's ability to prevail if deterrence fails) but at the lowest possible cost. Second, we assume that the client wants to extract the greatest commitment possible from its patron, regardless of the form it takes.[28]

[27] Scott L. Kastner, "Is the Taiwan Strait Still a Flash Point? Rethinking the Prospects for Armed Conflict between China and Taiwan," *International Security*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2016): 54–92.

[28] Admittedly, clients might have domestic reasons that could, for example, lead them to prefer arms to a formal alliance. Admittedly, clients might have domestic reasons that could, for example, lead them to prefer arms to a formal alliance. For example, McManus and Yarhi-Milo show that the United States is less likely to provide highly public signals of support to its more autocratic clients due to fears of domestic backlash in both the United States and the client country. Roseanne W. McManus and Keren Yarhi-Milo. 2016. "The Logic of 'Backstage' Signaling: Domestic Politics, Regime Type, and Major Power-Protégé Relations," Working paper.

Table 1. The Patron's Dilemma

		patron's assessment of client's relative current and projected military capability vis-à-vis adversary	
		unfavorable	favorable
patron's assessment of commonality of security interests	highly compatible	provision of both costly arms and defense pact	provision of defense pact without costly arms
	somewhat compatible	provision of costly arms without unconditional defense pact	provision of neither costly arms nor defense pact

Table 1 displays our four predicted outcomes. Consider first the situation in which the patron perceives highly compatible security interests but the client faces an unfavorable local military balance (the top-left cell). Because their security interests overlap and the client needs military assistance, the patron will provide both costly arms and a defense pact. In this scenario, a defense pact is desirable because it issues a strong deterrent signal to adversaries, facilitates military-to-military coordination, and sustains the partnership against changes in government. Arms transfers bolster the deterrent value of the alliance—which by itself is a piece of paper—by making the ally more capable of at least holding off potential aggressors until reinforcements arrive.[29]

[29] James D. Morrow, "Alliances, Credibility, and Peacetime Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 38, No. 2

The second situation involves highly compatible security interests but a military balance that favors the client rather than the adversary (the top-right cell). In this scenario, the patron would still provide or maintain an alliance commitment to deter the common adversary. The alliance offers some leverage over the client and a hedge in case the client's relative military advantage suddenly deteriorates. Although alliances carry some costs and risks, they remain more cost-effective way of thwarting aggression against the client than having to intervene on behalf of a non-treaty security partner should local deterrence fail. To minimize moral hazard, however, the patron could add conditions to the alliance to ensure that it is only activated following an unambiguous attack on the client. For the client, notwithstanding its relative military preponderance vis-à-vis the adversary, an alliance with the patron remains attractive because it enhances deterrence, reduces the risk of a simultaneous attack by multiple adversaries, and lowers the overall cost of providing for its own defense by way of burden-sharing. Nevertheless, for the patron, providing costly arms is redundant and even dangerous because it could encourage the client to press its claims against the adversary.[30]

The next two situations occur when the patron and the client have only somewhat compatible security interests. Despite the lack of common security interests, the patron does not wish to leave the client vulnerable. Accordingly, it will forgo an unconditional defense pact to avoid getting entrapped in conflict with unshared enemies. If it were to offer a commitment, then it would at most be a highly conditional defense pact so as to reduce these dangers. Nevertheless, designing conditional defense pacts is difficult because clarifying the terms of assistance could

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(1994): 270-297.

[30] The patron might still choose to supply some arms occasionally to maintain the client's deterrent capability, ensure interoperability should deterrence fail, and allow time to come to the client's defense. We do not expect the provision of costly arms in this scenario, so institutionalized provisions of a large amount of offensive weapons are unlikely.

invite either the client or the adversary to skirt the treaty. Moreover, they are difficult to implement because it is often unclear which state was the primary aggressor. Adversaries might still find conditional alliances threatening. Consequently, the patron could abrogate the alliance altogether to reassure the courted adversary.[31]

Whether the patron transfers costly arms in these two situations will depend on its assessments of the client's military capabilities. When the patron concludes that the military balance in unfavorable to the client (the bottom-left cell), the patron is likely to send costly arms to enable the client to deter its main adversary. If the patron desires cooperative relations with that particular adversary, then relying on arms transfers can also signal continued diplomatic support without a commitment to intervene militarily. Still, the patron will likely prefer to transfer weapons that would reduce instability and thus potential entrapment risks, thereby supplying defensive rather than offensive weapons.[32] The resulting ambiguity still has deterrent value: potential challengers might refrain from attacking if they are uncertain of how the patron will aid the client. Moreover, the relative flexibility of arms transfers is advantageous for the patron when it desires the cooperation of both its client and that client's adversary. By providing arms to both parties, the patron could extract mutual concessions and create strategic ambiguity about which side it would support in a crisis, thereby decreasing the chance for war.[33]

Finally, if the patron and client have somewhat compatible security interests and the patron assesses that the military balance is favorable to the client (the bottom-right cell), costly

[31] Glenn Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics*, vol. 36, no. 4 (1984): 471.
[32] The patron could also attach end-use agreements to provisions of arms so as to clarify that it would not tolerate their use against a particular target state. However, clients can violate such agreements during crises. Verifying any violations could also be difficult.
[33] Timothy W. Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence: Third-Party Statecraft and the Pursuit of Peace* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

arms are unnecessary. Arms will probably offer marginal deterrent value but nevertheless empower the client so that it can sabotage the patron's efforts to avoid regional conflict or pursue relations with the client's adversary. Anticipating these dangers, the patron will likely withhold both an alliance and costly arms. An alliance is likely to be seen as undesirable because their interests have insufficient overlap and the client is militarily superior to its main adversary.[34] The patron might still choose to arm its client occasionally if it believes that the client's deterrent capabilities are likely to erode in the near future, but such transfers will be sporadic, relatively limited, and defensive in nature.

If the patron believes that the client has revisionist intentions, then its entrapment fears will be greater. Security commitments should retain the form predicted in table 1, but these entrapment fears would increase the conditionality of alliances and limitations on arms across all cells. Greater alliance conditionality serves to lower moral hazard and to restrain the client by clarifying that the patron would not support the client's aggressive behavior. They could appear in secret annexes either to render them invisible to potential domestic opposition groups or because the patron wishes to maintain the deterrent value of the alliance.

[34] Some security ties between the patron and client could continue under these circumstances. For example, a client may desire to decrease its defense spending by relying increasingly on external support. A patron may also wish to lessen its own requirements for global military deployments by seeking to increase its client's own defensive capabilities. Thus, although we predict that new alliances and major arms sales will be unlikely, they might still occur in highly conditional or limited forms that would minimize moral hazard.

Research Design and Alternative Explanations

Using primary documents and newly declassified materials from the presidential libraries of Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter, we test our theoretical predictions. We focus on American commitments to two client states: Taiwan and Israel.

These historically important cases allow us to test the causal mechanisms of our theory. Each case features significant variation in one of our independent variables over time. In the Taiwan case, our first independent variable, commonality of security interests, changes in value. In the Israel, our second independent variable, the patron's assessment of its client's military capabilities, changes in value. The extensive documentary evidence in each case permits us to process trace how perceived shifts in threats and client capabilities causally affected the commitments the United States offered its clients. Moreover, because neither client had credible alternative sources of patronage, both were beholden to the United States, thus validating our exclusive focus on U.S. decisionmaking and our decision to hold client preferences constant.

Finally, our theoretical framework highlights the role of threat perceptions and military capabilities, but we recognize that other factors could affect arms transfer and alliance decisions. We analyze cases that are relatively 'easy' for the domestic political and commercial motivations arguments because they involve countries with major political lobbies in the United State as well as large arms packages for which strong commercial interests would be at stake. By examining Democratic and Republican administrations, we control for potentially confounding variables.

U.S. Commitments to Taiwan

Taiwan today occupies an ambiguous place in the U.S.-led security order in East Asia.[35] However, its security relationship with the United States was once much more clear-cut. In 1954, the United States formed an alliance with, and began sending costly arms to, Taiwan to contain communist expansion. No direct high-level ties existed between the United States and China until sweeping changes took place during Richard Nixon's presidency, culminating in his famous 1972 visit to Beijing. In 1979, the United States normalized relations with China and ended its alliance and formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan while maintaining its policy of arms transfers. Our theory predicts that before the normalization, the United States would have coupled an alliance commitment to Taiwan with a steady supply of costly arms (table 1, upper-left cell). During this period, the United States and Taiwan had common security interests, as both were highly concerned about the Chinese communist threat. U.S. threat perceptions changed dramatically in the early 1970s, however, as growing tensions in the Sino-Soviet relationship allowed Washington to use China for containing the Soviet threat. Accordingly, U.S. interests diverged from those of Taiwan, resulting in the United States' rapprochement with China. Following normalization, costly arms transfers to Taiwan should have become the United States' preferred means of signaling reassurance and practicing deterrence (table 1, bottom-left cell).

[35] Consistent with U.S. government records, we refer to the People's Republic of China as "China" and the Republic of China as "Taiwan."

COMMON INTERESTS: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS BEFORE NORMALIZATION WITH CHINA

In the early 1950s, U.S. policymakers assessed that mainland China was a primary threat to the United States and that it was stronger militarily than the Republic of China in Taiwan. Driven from the mainland, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government became a bulwark against communism during the Korean War. President Harry Truman provided Taiwan with economic aid and deployed the U.S. Seventh Fleet to neutralize the Taiwan Strait, thereby preventing cross-strait attacks by either Taiwan or China. Truman's successor, Dwight D. Eisenhower viewed Taiwan as central to its Asia policy. Eisenhower thought that Taiwan's "existence, under American protection, was essential in maintaining the belief in Asia that the mainland juggernaut could be stopped and that the United States would stand by its anticommunist friends."[36] Eisenhower therefore lifted Truman's neutralization of the Taiwan Strait, allowing Chiang's forces to fortify the islands of Quemoy and Matsu off the mainland's coast. These developments prompted China to begin shelling Quemoy in August 1954.[37] Communist Chinese media declared contemporaneously that "China must liberate Taiwan."[38]

Alarmed by China's belligerence, the United States signed a Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan on December 2, 1954. The treaty required the United States to defend Taiwan if the main island of Formosa or the outlying Pescadores Islands were attacked. In exchange, the treaty

[36] Steven M. Goldstein, "Dialogue of the Deaf?" The Sino-American Ambassadorial-Level Talks, 1955-1970," in *Reexamining the Cold War: US-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973*, eds. Robert S. Ross and Changbin Jiang (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002): 201.

[37] Gordon H. Chang and He Di "The Absence of War in the US-China Confrontation over Quemoy and Matsu in 1954-1955: Contingency, Luck, Deterrence," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 98, No. 5 (1981): 1508.

[38] See Hongshan Li and Zhaohui Hong, eds., *Image, Perception, and the Making of US-China Relations* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1998): 351.

permitted the United States to base troops on Taiwan's territory.[39] Concerned about Taiwan entrapping the United States in a conflict, Washington insisted on a secret provision stipulating that the United States would assist Taiwan only for its defense.[40] In 1954, the Eisenhower administration conditioned the transfer of F-84 fighter-bombers on Taiwan pledging restraint.[41] Moreover, the treaty did not explicitly oblige the United States to defend the offshore islands closer to the mainland, only suggesting that it would do so if the main islands of Formosa and Penghu were threatened. U.S. decisionmakers in private, however, made explicit commitments to Chiang to defend some of the offshore islands.[42] In late January 1955, Eisenhower supported legislation (the Formosa Resolution) that granted him the authority to intervene militarily on Taiwan's behalf should it be attacked.[43] Early that year, U.S. decisionmakers even intimated that the United States would use nuclear weapons to defend Taiwan against China.[44]

Although Washington and Taipei sometimes disagreed on strategy toward Beijing, even clashing over whether to use military force against the mainland, both viewed China as a significant threat. In 1956, during a visit to Taipei, President Eisenhower noted, "There is no way in which Asia can be free of communism until mainland China is free," and suggested that "it was time to work out the strategy for liberating Asia."[45] John Foster Dulles commented, "The Chinese Communists seem to be much more violent and fanatical, more addicted to the use of

[39] Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and Taiwan, available at http://www.taiwandocuments.org/mutual01.htm.
[40] Thomas J. Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith: Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy in Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011): 239.
[41] Christensen, *Worse than a Monolith*, 143. On U.S. fears of entrapment, see *ibid*., 142-143.
[42] Steven M. Goldstein, "The United States and the Republic of China, 1949-1978: Suspicious Allies," (Stanford, CA: Institute for International Studies, 2000): 7–9.
[43] Gordon H. Chang, "To the Nuclear Brink: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Quemoy-Matsu," *International Security*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1988): 104.
[44] Matthew Jones, *After Hiroshima: The United States, Race and Nuclear Weapons in Asia, 1945-1965* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 251-252.
[45] FRUS 1955-1957 3: 329.

force than the Russians are or have become."[46] Beijing's aggressive behavior required a response to reinforce Taiwan's security, which, Robert Accinelli notes, "was critically dependent on U.S. aid and backing."[47] The United States augmented Taiwan's defenses by providing defensive military assistance. In December 1956, U.S. policy toward Taiwan was crystallized in NSC (National Security Council Report) 5503, which stated that the United States should "not agree to [Taiwan's] offensive actions against mainland Communist China."[48] Instead, the United States provided defensive arms and stationing nuclear-capable Matador missiles on Taiwan.[49]

Notwithstanding the United States and Taiwan's highly compatible security interests, Chiang's rhetoric and actions suggested that he might embroil the United States in a war with China to facilitate the Nationalists' return to the mainland.[50] A 1957 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) warned that although in the next year "Chinese Nationalists are very unlikely to launch an invasion … the Nationalists might attempt within the period of this estimate to embroil the U.S. in major hostilities against the Chinese Communists."[51] And so, despite his desire to appear resolute against communist China, Eisenhower had to consider the possibility of entrapment. Accordingly, Eisenhower sought assurances that Chiang would renounce the use of force to unseat mainland communist leaders.[52] Rather than providing Taiwan with potentially offensive weapons when Chinese forces shelled the Quemoy and Matsu Islands during the 1958

[46] Assistant Secretary for East Asia Walter Robertson also warned that the Soviet Union, "though great and dangerous, is not as active as the Chinese Communist menace to Asia." Tucker, *The China Threat*, 176.
[47] Robert Accinelli, "A Thorn in the Side of Peace: The Eisenhower Administration and the 1958 Offshore Islands Crisis," in *Reexamining the Cold War: US-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973*, eds. Robert S. Ross and Changbin Jiang (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002): 109.
[48] FRUS 1955-1957 2: 30-34.
[49] On what these weapons signaled, see Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *The China Threat: Memories, Myths, and Realities in the 1950s* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012): 141.
[50] Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009): 14-15.
[51] FRUS 1955-1957 3: 515-518.
[52] Jones, *After Hiroshima*, 380.

Taiwan Strait crisis, the United States deployed its own forces. Eisenhower ordered a massive force to Taiwan, including F-100 and F-86 aircraft, the latter of which was equipped with air-to-air Sidewinder missiles so as to signal U.S. determination.[53]

Clarifications were needed, however, regarding whether "[t]he intent of NSC 5503 was to oppose the development of [Taiwan's] forces to conduct offensive operations against mainland Communist China."[54] To simplify this issue, Eisenhower directed, "We should provide Chiang Kai-shek with a limited capability in terms of amphibious equipment, but we should concentrate our assistance on the provision of defensive equipment."[55] In the following years, the United States would provide tactical fighter aircraft and smaller surface vessels, but no large-scale amphibious capabilities such as troop transports.[56] U.S. officials were concerned that amphibious transports, combined with long-range bombers, could provide the mobility Taiwan required to invade the mainland. According to the U.S. embassy in Taiwan, the "request for B-57's and landing craft" was "war material obviously of an offensive character. …Its aggressive nature is self-evident."[57] Later that year, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Averill Harriman asked the U.S. ambassador to Taiwan to "clearly state our unwillingness [to] provide these items."[58] Although scholars express concern about the distinguishability of offensive and defensive weapons, the primary documents indicate that policymakers dealing with military

[53] Tucker, *China Threat*, 145.
[54] FRUS 1955-1957 3: 593-599.
[55] *Ibid.*, 611-619.
[56] U.S. decisionmakers recognized that Taiwan could not launch military operations beyond minor but irritating incursions: "we know of no [Taiwanese] plans to mount any large-scale military or paramilitary operations now or in the near future, such operations are unlikely and beyond Taiwanese capabilities." See *ibid.,* 591. Still, even the remote possibility of an attack on the Chinese mainland was discussed. See *ibid.*, 91-92.
[57] FRUS 1961-1963 26: 294-295.
[58] *Ibid.*, 301-302.

assistance to Taiwan differentiated between those weapons that would provide Taiwan with an invasion capability and those that would not.[59]

Throughout the 1960s, the U.S. intelligence community assessed that China was stronger militarily than Taiwan, but leaders in Washington remained concerned that Chiang might attempt an attack on the mainland.[60] Divergence over preferred strategies and political goals gave rise to mutual distrust and suspicion. In 1962 and 1963, President John F. Kennedy restrained Chiang from launching attacks on China.[61] A 1964 National Policy Paper warned, Taiwan's "dependence on the U.S. for its very existence will continue, in the final analysis, to provide the principal basis for U.S. influence. We face, however, the problem of adjusting to the declining importance of two of the specific instruments—our economic and military aid programs—through which we have made our influence felt."[62] Indeed, from 1951 to 1966, the United States provided a large quantity of military assistance, amounting to more than $2.4 billion in value. Such sales helped bolster Taiwan's defensive capabilities, assure Taiwan of continued U.S. support, and deter Chinese military action across the strait, while providing the United States with additional influence over the Nationalist government.

Throughout the 1960s, "the United States and China both held extreme views of the other's strategic, long-term objectives and potential threat to their respective security," explains Robert Ross.[63] By the end of the Kennedy administration, U.S. leaders were contemplating

[59] Steven M. Goldstein, "The United States and the Republic of China, 1949-1978: Suspicious Allies," 14. Also see FRUS 1969-1976 17: 144.
[60] See, for example, FRUS 1955-1957 3: 611-619.
[61] See FRUS 1961-63 22: 204-5 and 392-5.
[62] FRUS 1964-1968 31: 86-94.
[63] Robert S. Ross, "Introduction," in *Reexamining the Cold War: US-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973*, eds. Robert S. Ross and Changbin Jiang (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002): 201.

military strikes against Chinese nuclear facilities.[64] Chinese leaders publicized their intention to eliminate Chiang's government, likely through military action.[65] In response, Secretary of State Dean Rusk reiterated that the U.S. commitment to Taiwan was "not open to negotiation."[66] This sense of Chinese threat was rooted not only in actual Chinese military and economic capabilities, but also in its "Maoist revolutionary propaganda and… popularity of the Maoist economic model in the Third World."[67] At the same time, however, new President Lyndon Johnson worried about reports that Chiang believed "now is the time for [Taiwan] to attack and overthrow the Chinese Communist regime on the Mainland."[68] In fact, Chiang's vice president had gone so far as to tell Johnson, "We have our aspirations" about regaining the mainland.[69] Thus, U.S. leaders sought to provide Taiwan an alliance, but not offensive arms, through the late 1960s.

DIVERGENT INTERESTS: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS AFTER RAPPROCHEMENT

The eruption of a Sino-Soviet border conflict worsened relations between Beijing and Moscow, convincing Nixon and Henry Kissinger that a conciliatory approach to China suited U.S. strategic interests.[70] Moreover, growing incompatibility in the security interests of the United States and Taiwan led U.S. leaders to end the alliance and to rely only on arms transfers.

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[64] William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson. "Whether to 'Strangle the Baby in the Cradle": The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960–64," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (2006): 54-99.

[65] U.S. leaders were apparently not aware that Chinese leaders had apparently scaled back their ambitions by the late 1950s. See "Discussion between N.S. Khrushchev and Mao Zedong," October 2, 1959, Wilson Center Digital Archive, http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112088.

[66] FRUS 1964-1968 30: 638.

[67] Ross, "Introduction," 12. Hal Brands, "Rethinking Nonproliferation: LBJ, the Gilpatric Committee, and US National Security Policy," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2006): 83-113; Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

[68] FRUS 1964-1968 30: 539.

[69] FRUS 1964-1968 30: 556-561. See also Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009): 532.

[70] FRUS 1969-1976 17: 40.

In the early 1970s, the United States assessed that the local balance of power was continuing to favor China. The Chinese had begun their nuclear program in 1955, carried out a nuclear test in 1964, and were building a deterrent force by the late 1960s.[71] Meanwhile, the Nixon Doctrine, which pushed U.S. allies to bear more of the conventional defense burden, meant that Taiwan would receive less support from the U.S. military. One report noted that "China could almost certainly take Taiwan in the absence of U.S. military intervention…[but] Peking would be constrained by the necessity of providing for defense needs elsewhere."[72] Recognizing Taiwan's insecurity, one internal U.S. memorandum cautioned that "a sudden drop in the U.S. military presence on Taiwan that exceeded reductions consonant with our withdrawals from Viet-Nam should probably not be taken."[73] In 1974, U.S. leaders commented, "[Taiwan] has thus shown increasing resignation to the inevitability of a growing [Chinese] military superiority."[74] Throughout this period, however, U.S. leaders continued to believe that China could not launch a successful invasion across the Taiwan Strait.

U.S. leaders worried, however, that perceptions of U.S. irresoluteness would inspire Chinese aggression.[75] Yet they also worried that Taipei might seek to spoil a U.S.-China agreement by initiating a conflict with the mainland. In a July 1971 discussion with Kissinger, Zhou Enlai warned that although "[i]t's not possible for them to send troops en masse…there are those among his troops who deliberately want to make adventures—deliberately to create trouble for him, and for you."[76] To address these concerns, Taiwan assured the United States that it

[71] "China," Nuclear Threat Initiative, http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/china/.
[72] NIE, "China's Military Policy and General Purpose Forces," July 20, 1972, NIE 13-3-72, 4. Emphasis added.
[73] FRUS 1969-1976 17: 330-331.
[74] FRUS 1973-1976 18: 545-558.
[75] *Ibid.*
[76] *Ibid.*, 433.

would not seek revisionist goals through military means in the near term. The vice premier told Nixon in April 1970, "[Taiwan] will not use armed force against the mainland, even on a small scale."[77] In 1972, under pressure once again from Kissinger and other U.S. officials, Chiang gave "categorical assurances that [Taiwan] would refrain from any actions of an offensive or provocative nature" around Nixon's visit to China.[78] Washington was adamant about these assurances, with the U.S. ambassador to Taiwan warning that actions by Taiwan or its sympathizers on the mainland "would put [Taiwan] in position to be plausibly blamed for untoward incident."[79]

Courting China while calibrating U.S. policy toward a militarily disadvantaged Taiwan proved a delicate balance. China's eight demands for improving relations with the United States included the statement that "[a]ll U.S. armed forces and military installations should be withdrawn from Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait area. …[The United States] must recognize [China] as the sole legal government representing China."[80] To reassure and to deter China simultaneously, Kissinger took several "symbolic steps." He explained to his Chinese interlocutors, "We have ended the Taiwan Strait Patrol, removed a squadron of air tankers from Taiwan, and reduced the size of our military advisory group by 20 percent. …We are prepared to begin reducing our other forces on Taiwan as our relations improve, so that the military questions need not be a principal obstacle between us."[81] Kissinger did not inform Zhou that the

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[77] *Ibid*., 198.
[78] FRUS 1969-1972 17: 636-637.
[79] *Ibid.*
[80] Jing Huang and Xiaoting Li, *Inseparable Separation: The Making of China's Taiwan Policy* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2010), 76.
[81] The Taiwan Strait Patrol was a group of U.S. Navy vessels based in Keeling, Taiwan, which patrolled the waters near China's Fujian province. Bruce A. Elleman, *High Seas Buffer: The Taiwan Patrol Force, 1950-1979* (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 2012). Quotes from Alan D. Romberg, *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations* (Washington, DC. Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003): 26-27.

United States would increase the amount of military assistance it provided Taiwan despite its troop withdrawals. Therefore, the United States could appear to be decreasing its military support while increasing Taiwan's defensive capabilities.

The United States continued to provide costly military systems to Taiwan during the 1970s. It did not transfer troop transports that would help Taiwan launch offensive amphibious operations against China, but U.S. leaders allowed Taiwan to purchase Hawk surface-to-air missiles and permitted the co-production of F-5E fighter aircraft. These systems were not as technologically advanced as Taiwan desired, but they conveyed a sustained U.S. commitment, even after rapprochement with China in 1972 (see table 2).

Table 2. Planned U.S. Military Assistance to Taiwan, 1972-1976

	Fiscal Years ($ million)				
	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
Foreign Military Sales credit	45	44	65	135	124
Military Assistance/Aid Program	11	10	5.8	5.8	.5
Enhance Plus grant (Vietnam-related)	–	18	28	–	–
Total	56	72	99	141	125

SOURCE: "Memorandum From Richard T. Kennedy of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," April 7, 1973, in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 18: 240.

Costly U.S. arms sales to Taiwan persisted even after the U.S. alliance commitment dissolved. Because Washington worried that "Peking would be bothered by an indefinite and formal U.S. military involvement with Taiwan," it sought to avoid "weapons which were clearly offensive in nature (e.g., strategic bombers, long-range missiles, or modern amphibious equipment)…sophisticated weapons (e.g., advanced aircraft or major missile production capabilities); the most advanced weapons in the U.S. inventory (e.g., F-15 aircraft, TV guided bombs, advanced ECM [electronic counter-measure] systems)…[or] rapid introduction of large quantities of weapons into Taipei's inventory."[82] U.S. officials still believed that they could differentiate between offensive and defensive weapons, and avoid transferring them. The United States wanted Taiwan to have "an Air Force designed primarily for air-to-air capability against fighters, bombers and airlift forces, and for countering a PRC naval attack; a navy capable of withstanding attacks by PRC submarine forces and missile-equipped surface craft and of countering PRC amphibious forces in coordination with the [Taiwan's] Air Force; a relatively small but mobile and well-equipped [Taiwan's] Army, including surface-to-air missiles for air defense, backed by a trained reserve force."[83] In suggesting how the United States could help develop Taiwan's forces, a 1974 U.S. government memo listed several criteria: "1) the impact on our objective of reducing the military component of Taiwan's security; 2) the effect on U.S.-PRC normalization; 3) the effect on Taiwan's confidence and stability; 4) the deterrent effect against a PRC use of force to resolve the Taiwan issue; 5) the effect on chances of [Sino-Taiwan] political accommodation; 6) [Taiwan's] economic and technological capabilities."[84]

[82] FRUS 1973-1976 18: 548-549.
[83] *Ibid*., 552.
[84] *Ibid.*, 554.

Public statements by U.S. officials now featured what Kissinger called "constructive ambiguity." The "One China" policy and the Republic of China's removal from the United Nations in 1971 were heavy political blows for Taiwan. These developments prompted concern that "[d]esperation engendered by the feeling that we were completely abandoning Taiwan in proceeding with normalization might provoke [Taiwan's] declaration of independence."[85] U.S. officials privately tried to reassure Taiwan's leaders of continued U.S. support, but it became clear by the late 1970s that the United States would normalize relations with China and end formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Responsibility for normalization fell to the Carter administration.[86] It wanted to provide enough arms for Taiwan to deter China and ensure peaceful cross-strait relations.[87] A 1976 NIE found that neither side could launch an offensive operation across the strait without incurring unacceptable costs. This situation of mutual deterrence was to hold until at least the early 1980s.[88] Nevertheless, Washington had to walk a fine line in balancing its regional interests.[89] A 1978 joint State and Defense Department memorandum on arms sales to Taiwan advised: "Taiwan's self-defense capability will continue to be linked to its ability to buy arms from the U.S. …There are some indications that Peking views our existing relationship to Taiwan as a deterrent to Taipei's looking elsewhere for support, or seeking unilaterally to alter the island's status. …We do not wish to so arm [Taiwan] that we do damage to our relations with [China] or that we encourage [Taiwan] to behave without

[85] FRUS 1977-1980 13: 115-116.

[86] On normalization, see William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li, *Normalization of US-China Relations: An International History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[87] FRUS 1977-1980 13: 116-118.

[88] NIE 13-76, November 11, 1976, 65-68. A later RAND report corroborates this view. See David A. Shlapak, David T. Orletsky, Toy I. Reid, Murray Scot Tanner, and Barry Wilson, "A Question of Balance: Political Context and Military Aspects of the China-Taiwan Dispute," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009): 22-23.

[89] To prevent Taiwan from undercutting U.S. policies, Brzezinski's advisor wrote in September 1977: "we should link weapons sales to progress on normalization… to indicate to Taipei that they will bear some costs in the event momentum on normalization is lost." FRUS 1977-1980 13: 231-238.

restraint toward [China]. In short, our arms sales must be carefully calibrated to maintain an adequate balance in the Strait."[90] Although China still faced significant challenges in mounting cross-strait operations, the local balance of power was shifting further in its favor. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance noted in 1977, "For a number of years, Peking will not be capable of taking the island by force except at a cost it would probably consider unacceptable both in military terms and in terms of China's international relations."[91] Nevertheless, "PRC military strength will increase over time," requiring a new approach to prevent cross-strait conflict.[92] Accordingly, U.S. decisionmakers believed that arms transfers to Taiwan could substitute for the alliance.[93] Carter himself noted, "For a long time—with arms purchases—Taiwan will be able to withstand any attack."[94] The Carter administration mistakenly believed, however, that China would not protest the United States' continued transfer of weapons to Taiwan. It had to disabuse Chinese leaders of the belief that normalization would cease all U.S. arms transfers to Taiwan.[95]

On December 15, 1978, Washington instructed the U.S. ambassador to Taiwan to tell Chiang that the United States and China "have agreed to establish diplomatic relations. …the United States will recognize the People's Republic of China as the government of China."[96] The same cable instructed the ambassador to reassure Chiang that in a year he would "be able to resume purchase of carefully selected defensive weapons."[97] Yet U.S. decisionmakers hesitated when they received Taiwan's request for fighter jets. They wanted to reassure China of bona fide

[90] *Ibid.*, 295-297.
[91] *Ibid.*, 77.
[92] *Ibid*.
[93] *Ibid.*, 94-95.
[94] *Ibid.*, 82 (fn. 5).
[95] *Ibid.*, 130-132; Romberg, *Rein In*, 88-89.
[96] FRUS 1977-1980 13: 650.
[97] *Ibid.*, 651.

U.S. intentions for rapprochement.[98] By this time U.S. officials had assessed that "China is now actively engaged in attempting to build a durable, world-wide anti-Soviet consensus."[99] Ultimately, the United States agreed to offer Taiwan the "limited range" F-5, but decided against more capable F-4s and F-16s.[100] This decision aligned with the NSC staff's suggestion to reinforce "our willingness to put Taiwan in a better position to defend itself while protecting the Administration against charges that it is abandoning Taipei. …We should, therefore, indicate at an early date our willingness to sell a Hawk missile battalion, a substantial number of additional F-5E aircraft, and, perhaps, the Harpoon missile system to [Taiwan]. This would provide reassurance to Taipei, ease the concerns of Taiwan's friends in the U.S., and send the right signal to Peking."[101] U.S. leaders believed such steps were reasonable because the arms were "defensive in character and could be applied to meet Taiwan's legitimate security needs without unduly damaging our relations with [China]."[102]

Whatever its intent, the Carter administration failed to anticipate the Congress's negative reaction regarding the lack of consultation on the termination of formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1979 and the end of the Mutual Defense Treaty in 1980. Members were also outraged because they perceived Carter's actions as abandoning an ally and damaging the United States' reputation. Indeed, shortly after China received diplomatic recognition from Washington, it invaded North Vietnam–an action that amplified the concerns expressed in Congress.[103] The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), which came into force on April 10, 1979, committed the United

[98] *Ibid.*, 116-118.
[99] *Ibid.*, 518.
[100] *Ibid.,* 577-582.
[101] *Ibid.*, 305.
[102] *Ibid*., 578.
[103] See *ibid.*, 857-869.

States to provide Taiwan with "arms of a defensive character…in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability…based solely upon their judgment of the needs of Taiwan."[104] The TRA also required that Washington maintain the capacity to "resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people of Taiwan."[105] Nevertheless, the TRA differed from an alliance because it did not commit the United States to defend Taiwan. Rather, "The President and the Congress shall determine, in accordance with constitutional processes, appropriate action by the United States in response to any such danger."[106] This weak commitment and the lack of official ties were compounded by how the TRA did not dictate which weapons would be sold to Taiwan, how often, or in what quantity. Its purpose instead was to reassure Taiwan of U.S. diplomatic support despite the termination of a formal defense pact. Yet its inherent ambiguities were intended to address three goals: to convey support for Taiwan, to support local deterrence and defense, and to continue normalization with China.[107]

U.S. leaders still faced a dilemma after the TRA came into force. China cautioned in the spring of 1979 that "[i]f things which will bring severe harm to this political basis are allowed to happen again and again, it will bring harm to our bilateral relations."[108] In a memorandum to President Carter, Secretary of State Vance noted: "We have a dual problem in determining our position on the resumption of arms sales to Taiwan. On the one hand, our action should be taken in such a way as to reassure Congress and Taiwan that we continue to have an interest in Taiwan's legitimate defense requirements. On the other hand, we wish to avoid provoking the

[104] Taiwan Relations Act, http://www.ait.org.tw/en/taiwan-relations-act.html.
[105] *Ibid.*
[106] See Section 3 of the Taiwan Relations Act. Ibid.
[107] Romberg, *Rein In*, 108-110.
[108] FRUS 1977-1980 13: 872.

PRC to react in a manner harmful to our developing bilateral relationship."[109] Nevertheless, Vance warned: "Taiwan views our arms sales commitment as the keystone of their security policy and will be anxious for reconfirmation of our pledges early in the new year."[110] Indeed, on November 8, 1979, Taiwan placed a request for "high-performance fighter aircraft…with most other requests focused on air and sea defense weapons."[111] U.S. officials now reconsidered selling F-4s to Taiwan, noting that "F-4 sale would dramatize that the U.S. is not 'abandoning' Taiwan…both with Congress and on Taiwan, an F-4 sale is probably the most popular step we can take."[112] Responding to Taiwan's demands, however, Vance reasoned in December 1979 that an upgrade in the U.S. military commitment to Taiwan was unlikely. To him, there was "no reason at this point to change our position of denying sales to Taiwan of F-4, F-16 or F-18 aircraft, all of which have offensive capability as well as violate the arms transfer policy."[113]

Ronald Reagan's administration also struggled to balance arms sales to Taiwan against normalization concessions to China. During his presidential campaign, Reagan expressed concern about Chinese intentions and the effects of normalization on Taiwan. Reagan's election elicited hope in Taipei that Washington would upgrade its military commitment by supplying Taiwan with newer fighter aircraft. Threatened by Reagan's stance toward normalization, China demanded in 1981 that the United States commit not only to denying Taiwan advanced fighters, but also to ending all arms sales. Ultimately, the Reagan administration rejected the sale, explaining that continuing provision of the aging, short-range F-5Es was adequate for Taiwan's

[109] *Ibid.*, 1022.
[110] *Ibid.*
[111] *Ibid.*, 335.
[112] See Carter Library document NLC-133-995-3-7, 12.
[113] *Ibid.*, 1021-1025.

defense needs.[114] Beijing was adamant that U.S. arms sales to Taiwan should cease, arguing that even a supply of defensive military capabilities could have negative effects on U.S.-China relations. Yet China eventually yielded to a "phase-down" instead of a "phase-out" of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, without an explicit U.S. commitment to end them. The Third Joint Communiqué of August 18, 1982, embodied this compromise. The communiqué acknowledged that "the United States Government states that it does not seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, that its arms sales to Taiwan will not exceed, either in qualitative or in 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 gradually to reduce its sale of arms to Taiwan, leading, over a period of time, to a final resolution."[115]

Despite U.S. concessions to China, Reagan took several actions to demonstrate his intention to support Taiwan's security. Many documents from the Reagan years remain classified, but available primary documents and secondary sources indicate that Reagan wished to redirect U.S. policy toward Taiwan. First, he authorized Taiwan to release his "six assurances," which included commitments that the United States would not alter the terms of the TRA, that the administration would not consult the Chinese government in advance on arms sales to Taiwan, and that the United States would not pressure Taiwan to negotiate with China. Former U.S. Ambassador to China James Lilley suggests these efforts "were designed to be a sign to Taiwan that it was not going to be abandoned by the Reagan administration. …The assurances cushioned the anxiety and uneasiness of the Taiwan leadership."[116] Reagan also provided an even more

[114] Warren I. Cohen, *America's Response to China: A History of Sino-American Relations, 5th ed.(*New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010): 227-228.
[115] Joint Communiqué on Arms Sales to Taiwan, http://www.taiwandocuments.org/communique03.htm.
[116] James Lilley and Jeffrey Lilley, *China Hands: Nine Decades of Adventure, Espionage, and Diplomacy in Asia*

forceful private assurance to Taiwan's leadership that the United States was committed "to the security and well-being of its people" by promising to provide it with "sufficient arms to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability."[117] An additional step apparently intended to ensure the long-term viability of U.S. Taiwan policy was Reagan's issuance of a classified presidential directive that incorporated his interpretation of the communiqués. The directive noted that "the U.S. willingness to reduce its arms sales to Taiwan is conditioned absolutely upon the continued commitment of China to the peaceful solution of the Taiwan-PRC differences. …It is essential that the quantity and quality of the arms provided Taiwan be conditioned entirely on the threat posed by the PRC."[118]

None of these commitments were as binding as the Mutual Defense Treaty had been. They left significant room for interpretation of Taiwan's future defense needs. Reagan merely promised that Washington would "continue to monitor carefully Beijing's military production and deployment, and to analyze all indicators of Beijing's intentions toward Taiwan. If any of those factors change, that will of course affect our judgment of Taiwan's defense needs."[119] Still, the combination of U.S. public and private pledges of reassurance, together with extension of the F-5E co-production line and a substantial arms sales package, tempered Taiwan's reaction to the 1982 Joint Communiqué without rupturing U.S. relations with China. Reagan's policies effectively sought to substitute the hand-tying commitment the United States had with Taiwan

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(New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2004): 247.

[117] *Ibid*., 139.

[118] James Lilley and Jeffrey Lilley, *China Hands*, 248.

[119] *Ibid.* Reagan also wrote a secret memo stating that any willingness to reduce arms transfers to Taiwan (as implied by the 1982 communiqué) should be conditioned on China's commitment to the peaceful resolution of those countries' differences. Tucker, *Strait Talk*, 152.

pre-normalization with one that gave the United States more flexibility. This policy reassured Taiwan while the United States courted China.

SUMMARY AND ALTERNATIVE ARGUMENTS

The Taiwan case confirms our theory. When U.S. leaders assessed that communist China posed a significant security threat to U.S. interests, they entered into a formal defense pact with Taiwan and supplied it with costly arms to preserve its deterrent capabilities. But when the Sino-Soviet split made normalization with China possible, U.S. leaders' perception of the threat from China changed. Friendlier relations with the Chinese government decreased the U.S. perception of the military threat from China to U.S. forces in East Asia. Moreover, China's ability to threaten U.S. forces decreased as the withdrawal from Vietnam made Taiwan less vital as a forward staging area for U.S. forces deploying to Southeast Asia. The commonality of security interests between the United States and Taiwan subsequently decreased.

Table 3: Summary of predictions and evidence for Taiwan

	values of independent variables	predicted value of dependent variable	observed value of dependent variable
1954-72	U.S. assessment: highly compatible security interests; unfavorable Taiwanese capabilities vis-à-vis China	provision of both costly arms and defense pact	provision of both costly arms and defense pact
1972-82	U.S. assessment: somewhat compatible security interests; unfavorable Taiwanese capabilities vis-à-vis China	provision of costly arms without unconditional defense pact	provision of costly arms without unconditional defense pact (from 1979 onward)

As our theory predicts, the United States engaged China and rescinded its alliance with Taiwan despite the worsening military balance between China and Taiwan. However, the United States still continued to provide Taiwan with substantial military assistance to maintain the status quo

across the strait. Consistent with our theory, the United States used a sunk cost signal by providing a large, steady, and (with the TRA) institutionalized flow of weapons to Taiwan. The provision of arms remained limited to defensive weapons, especially when U.S. leaders worried that Taiwan's military was planning or preparing for an offensive against the mainland.

This case should be 'easy' for competing theories, but our research finds little evidence that U.S. decisionmakers were motivated primarily by other factors, such as domestic politics, commercial interests, or efforts to gain leverage over Taiwan. Regarding domestic politics, the documents reveal that U.S. decisionmakers were keenly aware of the domestic constraints on Taiwan policy. As a White House memo noted in 1978, "There is no domestic constituency actively pushing for or even interested in normalization, but there is such a constituency vigorously opposing it. Thus, there is no political plus in normalization; there is only minus."[120] Despite this domestic political opposition, the United States still abrogated the defense pact with Taiwan. We do not suggest that U.S. domestic politics played no role in Washington's relations with Taiwan. Indeed, domestic politics prompted the creation of the TRA: had it not been for Congress, U.S. defensive weapons sales might not have been institutionalized. Nevertheless, as Carter's national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski observed at the time, "Until the mid-1960s, the Taiwan Lobby was thought to have great political clout. Then, in the late sixties and even more after Nixon's 1972 visit, the Lobby fell into disarray."[121] The Taiwan lobby's inability to maintain the alliance is evidence that it was a secondary concern for policymakers. As Brzezinski noted in 1977, "The Taiwan Lobby does not constitute a major obstacle to

[120] FRUS 1977-1980 13: 376.
[121] FRUS 1977-1980 13: 122.

normalization."[122] In short, the strategic interest in normalization with China was greater than the domestic political power of the Taiwan lobby. Similarly, government reports regarding the advantages and disadvantages of providing arms to Taiwan seldom mention either commercial interests or influence-seeking. Both motivations could have been considerations for policymakers, but the lack of discussion about them in interagency meetings forces us to question their importance. U.S. leaders understood that Taiwan had few other sources of support, so it was unlikely to abandon the United States. Moreover, leverage-seeking does not explain why the United States chose to end its official relationship with Taiwan in the 1970s. Therefore, although domestic politics, commercial interests, and leverage-seeking may have driven some U.S. decisions on Taiwan, the evidence suggests that strategic considerations primarily motivated U.S. policymakers.

U.S. COMMITMENTS TO ISRAEL

Few doubt today the close U.S.-Israel alignment. Yet, during the first half of the Cold War, this relationship was uncertain and contingent. Though the United States had limited diplomatic relations with Israel in the 1950s, the Eisenhower administration eventually regarded Israel as a "potential strategic asset." Nevertheless, both it and the Kennedy administration provided only minimal defensive arms and extended no alliance commitment (the bottom-right cell in table 1).[123] Late in the Johnson administration and through the Nixon administration, the United States transitioned toward using costly arms transfers to improve and to maintain Israel's deterrence

[122] *Ibid.*
[123] Abraham Ben-Zvi, *Decade of Transition: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Origin of the American-Israeli Alliance* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1998): 69.

capabilities in the absence of an alliance (the bottom-left cell). U.S. leaders' commitment decisions hinged on assessments of the local military balance.

FAVORABLE BALANCE: U.S.-ISRAEL SECURITY RELATIONS BEFORE 1968

On May 12, 1963, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion wrote to President Kennedy asking a public bilateral security pact or "all the equivalent kinds of armament with which the armed forces of Egypt and the other Arab states are equipped" in return for Israel forgoing a nuclear weapons capability.[124] The letter came four days after Kennedy remarked at a press conference that the United States "support[s] the security of both Israel and her neighbors."[125] Ben-Gurion's letter prompted debate within the Kennedy administration over whether to extend an alliance to Israel. In considering this request, Kennedy though that an explicit security guarantee could make Arab states more conciliatory and reduce uncertainty over U.S. intentions in the region.[126]

The evidence shows that the two factors highlighted in our theory drove the U.S. decision ultimately to reject Israel's request for a hand-tying commitment. First, Washington assessed that Israel was capable of deterring its adversaries. Kennedy's final reply noted that the United States had carried out an assessment of its own ability to "deter or halt swiftly any aggression against Israel" and found that "existing informal arrangements" were sufficient.[127] The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that "there is little or no advantage to the U.S. in going beyond the type of public assurances contained in the President's May 8th statement."[128]

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[124] FRUS 1961-1963 18: 528-529. Israel subsequently pressured U.S. leaders to receive such assurances. See *ibid*, 535-538.
[125] *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy*, 1963, 373.
[126] FRUS 1961-1963 18: 545.
[127] *Ibid.*, 721.
[128] *Ibid.*, 684.

A second, more fundamental, factor that limited U.S. commitments to Israel was the incompatibility of their security interests. Both Israel and the United States did not want Arab states to strengthen their ties with the Soviet Union.[129] Nevertheless, the United States saw Arab nationalism as a potential bulwark against communism, whereas Israel saw it as a threat to its own security.[130] The administration was thus reluctant to make a formal and public commitment to Israel for fear of damaging diplomatic relations with its Arab neighbors. As Kennedy wrote, "Our policies and programs in regard to the Arab states have resulted in improved relationships which permit us to talk frankly and realistically to them and enable us to exert some leverage on their actions."[131] The Kennedy administration was optimistic about working with Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser on regional arms control and other issues. It saw a need to prevent the Middle East from being divided into the two superpower camps. Indeed, losing Egypt to the Soviet Union would diminish U.S. influence in the Arab word.[132]

Kennedy therefore rejected a defense pact with Israel, but did offer the Israelis a one-time, non-costly transfer of defensive Hawks missiles. Justifying the sale was a Defense Department memorandum that identified Israel as "vulnerable to [Egyptian] air attack…increasingly so with the arrival of additional Soviet TU-16's."[133] For Kennedy, the arms transfers were intended to maintain the local balance of power and deter Arab attacks. In a memorandum articulating his thinking, the president asked, "Could we get away with arms aid or joint planning in lieu of a

[129] As one internal State Department memorandum reported, "new United States arrangements with Israel could result in comparable Soviet-Arab ties, bringing the Soviets back in, probably in a more permanent and damaging fashion." Quoted in Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends: Alliance Restraint in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008): 90.
[130] See FRUS 1961-1963 18: d.321.
[131] *Ibid.*, 721.
[132] *Ibid.*, 556-557. Kennedy was also concerned that Egypt might be contemplating a preventive war against Israel's nuclear program, and that defense pact with Israel might entrap the U.S. *Ibid,.* 659.
[133] FRUS 1961-1963 18: 8-9.

guarantee? If we argue Israel doesn't really need any tighter assurances than it has already there may be other ways to prove we mean to protect her. Hawk set a precedent."[134] This provision of arms aside, the administration made clear that the United States did not want to become 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."[135] The reasoning used by the Kennedy administration thus accords with our theoretical predictions, placing U.S.-Israeli security cooperation circa 1963 in the bottom-right cell of table 1.

The Johnson administration similarly saw Israeli and U.S. security interests as not compatible enough to justify a commitment that could undermine broader U.S. interests in the region. Johnson began wrestling with the patron's dilemma when in November 1963, Israel requested surface-to-surface missiles, tanks, and some naval vessels. These weapons would have granted Israel the capacity to strike Egyptian artillery locations and launch penetration raids into Egyptian territory. U.S. officials were skeptical as to whether Israel needed these weapons. One NIE early that year had concluded that "Israel will probably retain its overall military superiority vis-à-vis the Arab states for the next several years. As long as the present balance of forces remains substantially unchanged, we believe that neither side is likely to initiate major hostilities."[136] McGeorge Bundy, special assistant to Johnson, argued that Israel's request was financially "wasteful" and "unnecessary" from a strategic perspective.[137] The Joint Chiefs of

[134] *Ibid.*, 652. The documents are ambiguous as to whether Kennedy linked the Hawk sale to an Israeli renunciation of nuclear weapons or an initiative to resolve the Palestinian refugee problem. For conflicting accounts, see Douglas Little, "The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and Israel, 1957-68," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 25, no. 4 (1993): 568-569; Abraham Ben-Zvi, *Decade of Transition.*
[135] Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1985): 108.
[136] NIE 30-63 quoted in FRUS 1964-1968 18: d.139.
[137] FRUS 1964-1968 18: 11-12. Bundy later notified the Israeli government that the tank order would cost about 7.5% of its total budget. *Ibid*, 71.

Staff concurred, claiming that a "significant increase in Israeli Army units does not appear to be justified by the existing strength [*sic*] relationship between the Israeli and Arab Armies."[138] Meeting this request would also antagonize Arab governments, especially because U.S. officials worried that the "good relations [the United States] has built up with the Arabs are increasingly in jeopardy" due to their tensions with Israel.[139]In January 1964, the Departments of State and Defense affirmed the need to consider both Israeli and Arab interests since "the key to a constructive Near Eastern policy is maintaining a balance in our relationships with the Arabs and Israel."[140] The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff noted that U.S. arms policy could proceed "without positively identifying the United States with either of the sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict."[141]

Johnson nevertheless sought to reassure Israel by maintaining non-costly arms transfers. Indeed, the United States recognized Israel's need for new tanks to preserve the local balance of power. A memorandum circulated by the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that "there is a military need for Israel to modernize its tank force because the bulk of its tank inventory is obsolescent."[142] However, other U.S. government officials asserted that the "U.S. wishes to avoid significant area arms imbalance [*sic*] in either direction; if Israel attained clear military superiority a dangerous escalation would surely ensue."[143] Moreover, the United States had to consider the likely reaction of the Arab world, as "tanks from [the] U.S. would strengthen U.S. commitment to Israel in Arab eyes."[144] In a meeting with the Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, Deputy Special Counsel Myer Feldman explained that "an important factor in these considerations was how the

[138] *Ibid*, 25.
[139] *Ibid.*, 46.
[140] See FRUS 1964-1968 18: 17.
[141] *Ibid.*, 24.
[142] *Ibid.*, 67.
[143] *Ibid.*, 84-85.
[144] *Ibid.*

U.S. could best maintain and expand its influence in the Arab world."[145] Still, Washington did not want to leave Israel empty-handed. It sympathized with Israel's need for tanks. The U.S. government thus actively encouraged third-parties such as West Germany to supply tanks instead.[146] Arms transfers done in this indirect manner enhanced Israeli security without compromising U.S. relations with the Arab states.[147]

On June 5, 1967, war broke out between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Israel conquered the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria, thereby reinforcing U.S. views that Israel faced a friendly military balance. Acting Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach informed Johnson that "the military balance is in Israel's favor and should remain so for at least a year."[148] U.S. military observers agreed, pointing to Israel's air superiority and its success in destroying Arab "morale, motivation, and confidence"–intangibles that "cannot be recovered quickly."[149] Supporting this characterization is a secret NSC memo produced during Jimmy Carter's presidency that details the evolution in U.S. arms sales to Israel: "Up to the Six-Day War in 1967, the U.S. objective was to sell limited quantities of selected defensive weapons to Israel, such as the Hawk antiaircraft missile system."[150] That said, in the wake of this war, U.S. decisionmakers still saw Israel and U.S. security interests as only somewhat compatible. As our theory predicts, given the limited convergence of U.S.-Israeli security interests, and Israel's ability to continue deterring its

[145] *Ibid.*, 131.
[146] *Ibid.*, 113-114.
[147] *Ibid.*, 112-113. Third-party supplying of tanks to Israel would prove unreliable. Pressure on the United States to supply tanks directly to Israel subsequently mounted when the United States was negotiating an arms transfer to Jordan, a state that Israel saw as hostile. To make this transfer palatable to Israel, the United States placed conditions on its sale of tanks to Jordan. It also agreed to provide Israel with tanks and, should no other supplier was forthcoming, small numbers of fighter jets. *Ibid*, 556-557 and 473-474.
[148] FRUS 1964-1968 20: 29.
[149] *Ibid*, 39; See also *ibid,* 88 and 92.
[150] "The US-Israeli Military Relationship," undated, Jimmy Carter Library (JCL).

regional adversaries, U.S. leaders were reluctant to become Israel's major arms supplier, eschewing commitments to supply costly arms in the future, thereby placing the overall relations in the bottom-right cell of table 1.

SHAKY BALANCE: U.S.-ISRAELI SECURITY RELATIONS 1968-73

The defeat of Arab states in the Six Day War prompted the Soviet Union to become significantly more involved on their behalf. As a January 1968 NIE concluded, "Since the June War in 1967, the Soviet military presence has grown in the area: roughly 5,000 Soviet military advisers are now stationed in several area countries; the Soviet naval squadron in the Mediterranean has been strengthened, and is supported by air and port facilities in Egypt."[151] Johnson "express[ed] his deep concern over the odds working against Israel. He knew the Israeli people were superior in ability to their neighbors, but he feared they might not be superior to the Soviets. The President recalled how the Soviets had poured arms into the Arab countries after the war. He said he was not sure what Soviet intentions were."[152] Rusk observed several months later that "the influence of the Soviet Union in such key countries as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq continues to grow at the expense of our and other Western interests."[153] Yet Rostow explained that "the 'overriding consideration' must be our avoiding a polarization of the Middle East in which a small Israel, backed by a U.S. with an ambiguous commitment, faces the Arabs, led by extremists and backed by a determined USSR."[154]

[151] FRUS 1969-1976 12: 415.
[152] *Ibid*, 150.
[153] These statements suggest that U.S. decision-makers saw Israel as security-seeking rather than revisionist. FRUS 1964-1968 20: 356.
[154] *Ibid*, 71-73.

Against this backdrop, in early 1968 Israel requested new aircraft from the United States, including F-4 Phantoms.[155] The F-4 was among the most advanced in service and its firepower, speed, and adaptability would augment Israel's offensive capabilities. The Skyhawk, another aircraft that Israeli desired but found less appealing, was lighter, slower, and cheaper. Worried about the Arab reaction, the Johnson administration was reluctant to authorize the F-4 request. Rostow opined that "More than just seeking a specific number of aircraft, Eshkol may be looking for a firmer commitment to Israel's security. He must understand that security guarantees and treaties are out, but he may seek a guaranteed source of arms."[156] Still, he noted, "It's hard to know how much the Israelis are pushing the Soviet threat merely to justify their case for more arms."[157] Indeed, the Joint Chiefs of Staff assessed that the "Israeli Air Force can cope for the next 18 months with any potential threat they face." Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara noted that "Israel can prevail over any potential Arab enemy" and expressed concern that acting on the plane request could invite "further Russian support" for the Arab states.[158] Rusk asserted the need for Israel to court international opinion, particularly in the United Nations.[159] Accordingly, Johnson pledged only "to keep Israel's military defense capability under active and sympathetic examination and review in the light of all relevant factors."[160] He thus delayed making a decision on the Phantoms.

The Johnson administration did not see an immediate Israeli need for the Phantoms, but it did envision that such a need could develop in the future given reports of increased Soviet

[155] *Ibid*, 141.
[156] FRUS 1964-1968 20: 70.
[157] *Ibid*., 71.
[158] Both quotes from FRUS 1964-1968 20: 92-94.
[159] *Ibid.*, 94.
[160] Quoted in Pollock, *Politics,* 34.

involvement in the region.[161] Despite mounting domestic political pressure in 1968 for the Johnson administration to approve Israel's aircraft requests, the president was unyielding. He argued with congressional leaders, "We don't want to be in a position of just being arms merchants and starting an arms race with the Russians there."[162] Soviet aircraft deliveries to Egypt and congressional pressure to maintain a U.S. commitment to Israel's security, however, led Johnson to reassess his earlier decision.[163] Indeed, we should not overstate the importance of domestic politics. As David Pollock writes, "domestic political considerations had a greater effect on the timing than on the substance of [the Phantom decision]."[164] Nevertheless, Johnson used the opportunity to extract Israeli promises to exercise "nuclear restraint."[165] Israel reaffirmed "that it will not be the first power in the Middle East to introduce nuclear weapons and agrees not to use any aircraft supplied by the United States as a nuclear weapons carrier."[166] This quid pro quo notwithstanding, this sale of offensive airplanes made the United States the main supplier of arms to Israel, reflecting a shift in U.S. leaders' assessments of Israel's ability to deter its enemies.

When Nixon became president in 1969, Egypt had already begun its so-called War of Attrition against Israel. Preoccupied with other major foreign policy issues, Nixon delegated the Arab-Israeli conflict to the State Department, which claimed that the United States should adopt an impartial policy toward the Middle East to curb growing Soviet influence. The rationale for

[161] FRUS 1964-1968: 75-79 and 96-97.
[162] *Ibid.*, 487.
[163] *Ibid.*, 548-550.
[164] Pollock, *Politics*, 38.
[165] *Ibid*, 584-585. Because Israel chose not to clarify its nuclear weapons capability, it still depended largely on conventional military power to deter adversaries. Indeed, Israel's nuclear weapons were useless against the sort of aggression that characterized the War of Attrition. The frequent allusions to Israel's conventional military power in the documentary record demonstrate that U.S. decision-makers understood this aspect of Israel's strategic situation.
[166] FRUS 1964-1968 20: 661-662.

refusing a defense pact remained, as one NSC paper averred that "We should avoid any open-ended and uncontrollable commitment [a security guarantee] because it would subordinate the United States to Israeli concepts of defense and security, and because it would polarize the area between us and the USSR …Apart from a specific guarantee …we could give Israel a firm commitment to provide it the military equipment we believe needed to maintain a reasonable balance in the area."[167]

And indeed in 1969 Israel requested an additional 100 A-4 Skyhawks and 25 F-4 Phantoms, creating a dilemma for U.S. decision-makers once again.[168] After all, "the sale of sophisticated equipment [carried] the implied obligation to continue supply."[169] U.S. decisionmakers feared that a negative response would "not only risk a vehement political and propaganda reaction but could foster a go-it-alone psychology in Israel, encourage an even harder line toward the Arabs and diminish further our already limited influence there." Nevertheless, "Any decision which added to Israel's already demonstrably superior military strength would produce seriously adverse reactions in the Arab world." A positive decision would also provoke greater Soviet military involvement in the Middle East, but a negative decision could imply a "success for Soviet diplomacy."[170]

Mindful of these considerations, the Nixon administration postponed its decision on the Phantoms, concluding that "detailed analysis has identified no military need for the additional aircraft Israel has requested for the time being. If as a result of actions by others, in particular the

[167] FRUS 1969-1976 23: 33.
[168] See Memorandum from Richard Helms for Nixon, September 24, 1969 and The Situation in the Middle East – Summary, September 24, 1969, Richard M. Nixon Library (RMNL).
[169] FRUS 1969-1976 23: 156.
[170] "Responses to Israel's Arms and Economic Assistance Requests," undated, RMNL. See also FRUS 1969-76 23: 159 and 161.

Soviet Union or France, or as a result of unusual losses, Israel's clear cut air superiority is threatened, we would be in a position to move quickly to maintain Israel's margin of safety."[171] This line of reasoning appeared in many memoranda and documents circulating among U.S. decisionmakers from December 1969 to March 1970. These reports reiterated the view that the local military balance of power continued to favor Israel, notwithstanding the Israeli government's insistence to the contrary.[172] Indeed, calculations of the balance of power were directly linked to assessments about arms transfers. For example, one report concluded, "Given the analysis of the present military balance above, it seems fair to conclude that the U.S. obligation to contribute to Israel's chances of survival could be fulfilled without any commitment right now to increase further Israel's aircraft inventory." The authors of these reports also recognized the need to restrain Israel and warned that further arms sales would only embolden it and create risks for the United States to be dragged into the Arab-Israeli conflict. The "unqualified judgment" of all members of the NSC Working Group on the Middle East was that a decision to accept in full Israel's arms requests would "'blow the place apart.'"[173]

During this time, U.S. decisionmakers began to see that a strong Israel could help manage the Soviet Union, now becoming a shared adversary of both Israel and the United States. As Nixon bluntly asked, "Why should it not be our policy to let Israel scare them a little bit more?"[174] Indeed, although the United States did not see Arab countries as adversaries the way Israel did, growing Soviet involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict began to exert greater

[171] U.S. Department of State Telegram 29464, RMNL.
[172] See Memorandum to Henry A. Kissinger from Ambassador Charles W. Yost, May 18, 1970, RMNL; "The US Response to Israel's Aircraft Needs – An Assessment," March 26, 1970, RMNL; and Memorandum for the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, April 6, 1970, RMNL.
[173] Quotes drawn from FRUS 1969-1976 23: 304-305. For other reports, see Memorandum by David E. Mark (INR), undated, RMNL; and Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger from Harold H. Saunders, March 16, 1970, RMNL.
[174] *Ibid.,* 246.

influence on U.S. diplomacy towards Israel.[175] At one meeting, Nixon reasoned, "Assume for the sake of discussion that there is no domestic political pressure and that there is no moral question of continuing support involved, would the U.S. foreign policy interests be served by dumping Israel?…Looking at this from the Soviet viewpoint, if we save the UAR's [United Arab Republic's] bacon, the Soviets would gain by our act. In my view, Soviet-U.S. relations are the overriding concern. Therefore, the overriding question is: Who gains?"[176] On another occasion, Nixon stated to Rabin: "I told you before to give it to them [the Egyptians and Russians] and to hit them as hard as you can. Every time I hear that you go at them, penetrate into their territory, I am delighted. As far as they are concerned, go ahead and hit them. The trouble is the rest of the Arabs. I very strongly believe that you are right, they are testing both you and us and we have to enable you to deter them."[177] Although U.S. and Israeli threat perceptions began to converge, the Nixon administration's desire to maintain positive relations with the Arab world and to maintain the balance of power prevented additional U.S. arms transfers.

Beginning in April 1970, U.S. intelligence began to indicate that growing Soviet involvement in the region would soon shift the balance of power against Israel. As part of the War of Attrition, the Soviets had given surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) to Egypt, 10,000 Soviet advisers and deployed Soviet combat pilots to fly over the Egyptian mainland. The United States had to rethink its initial reluctance to offer Israel arms. As Soviet involvement in the fighting deepened, Israel requested electronic counter-measures from the United States.[178] Designed to neutralize Soviet SAMs in Egypt, the electronic counter-measures would have provided "Israel

[175] *Ibid.*, 393.
[176] *Ibid.*, 254.
[177] *Ibid.*, 393.
[178] Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, July 4, 1970, RMNL.

the ability to mount deep raids against Soviet manned targets in Egypt."[179] Moreover, Israel sought drones and RF-4Cs, which were Phantoms repurposed to engage in reconnaissance missions.[180] The Nixon administration agreed to give an anti-missile package and thus "compensate Israel for the military advantage gained by [Egypt] and Soviets [*sic*] as a result of the improvements in their dispositions west of the Suez Canal."[181] When Egypt violated a cease-fire agreement, Nixon promised Israel additional military equipment as a "riposte to ceasefire violations."[182] He expressed his keenness to "offset the military advantages gained by [Egypt]."[183] Indeed, U.S. decisionmakers linked the necessity of giving these arms to the changing balance of power in the region. As Secretary of Defense William Rogers wrote to Nixon:

> Your decision…to hold in abeyance Israel's request for additional aircraft was based on the judgment that Israel's qualitative superiority compensated amply for its numerical inferiority in planes. The direct Soviet involvement in an operational role has injected a new qualitative capacity and a reinforced quantitative capacity on the UAR side. In short, the intelligence evaluations indicate that the weight of the Soviet presence has already reduced the material and psychological advantages previously enjoyed by the Israelis. Fundamentally, the Arab-Israeli military balance now depends on Soviet actions and decisions which have already created a situation in which Israel's air superiority could be rapidly neutralized.[184]

[179] *Ibid.*
[180] Memorandum of Conversation, July 29, 1970, RMNL.
[181] Memorandum for the President, undated, RMNL.
[182] Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, September 12, 1970, RMNL.
[183] FRUS 1969-1976 23: 552.
[184] *Ibid.*, 416

Still, some U.S. decision-makers criticized the provision of arms transfers to Israel. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, for example, argued that the United States should not provide Israel with a "deep penetration raid capability."[185] By contrast, Kissinger reasoned that providing offensive weapons of the sort described above had a pacifying effect because "the provision of more security to Israel to enable her to cope with the Egyptians would be the factor most likely to deter Israeli thoughts of attack."[186] These disagreements notwithstanding, U.S. decisionmakers consistently drew on their assessments of the current and projected local balance of power to determine whether Israel had sufficient deterrent capabilities and, by extension, whether Israel required new arms.

Kissinger's memos to Nixon indicate that Kissinger believed that it was unproductive to restrict arms sales to Israel to pursue better relations with the Soviet Union and its clients.[187] Concerned about direct Soviet involvement and impressed with Israel's performance during the Jordan crisis, in which Israel supported the United States and the Hashemite monarchy against the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Kizzinger told Nixon that Israel's interests were more compatible with U.S. interests than previously believed. Arguing that the State Department policy had "backfired," Kissinger believed that Israel's military superiority should be restored with a supply of additional arms and reassurances.[188] In a December 1970 memorandum written for Nixon, Kissinger noted "the progress the Soviet Union has recently made toward establishing hegemony in the [Middle East]," and observed that "the Soviets have…substantially increased

[185] Memorandum for the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, August 29, 1970, RMNL.
[186] Memorandum to the President, September 29, 1970, RMNL. Kissinger and other U.S. government officials echoed these views elsewhere: FRUS 1969-1976 23: 346-347 and 560.
[187] FRUS 1969-1976 23: 330-331. For policy papers on how to handle these developments, see *ibid.*, 370-376 and 383-386.
[188] Kissinger and the State Department vehemently disagreed on U.S. policy towards Israel. See David A. Korn, "US-Soviet Negotiations of 1969 and the Rogers Plan," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 44, no. 1 (1990): 43.

their military presence in the region."[189] Consequently, Nixon approved an arms package worth $90 million to Israel based on Kissinger's assessment. The transfer was costly in its scope, nature, and promise for more institutionalized arms transfers, comprising anti-tank weapons and reconnaissance aircraft, among other items. Still, Israel wanted more, including a guaranteed supply of high-performance aircraft (54 F-4As and 120 A-4s) and "long-term agreements that would prevent the periodic supply disruptions and quarrels that had marked the previous two years."[190]

With Nasser's death in September 1970 and the ascendancy of Anwar el-Sadat to the Egyptian presidency, the Nixon administration sensed an opportunity to break the stalemate in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Yet Israel proved obstinate despite Sadat's overtures to the United States. Nixon lamented, "We cannot be in a position where we [continue to provide aid] and Israel says we won't talk. …That's what it gets down to."[191] At an NSC meeting, Nixon emphasized that "we will go all way the way with Israel in maintaining the balance of power in its favor. …[The Israelis] assume that the U.S. will see them through regardless of what they do. This is not true."[192] In May 1971, Nixon wrote to Secretary of State Rogers that "it is essential that no more aid programs for Israel be approved until they agree to some kind of interim action on the Suez or some other issue."[193] Even when Sadat signed a new treaty with the Soviet Union that same month, Nixon and Rogers left U.S. policy unchanged, arguing that a defense pact with

[189] Memorandum for the President from Kissinger, December 1970, RMNL.
[190] Quandt, *Peace Process*, 87. Pollock alleges that the White House was decoupling military transfers from concessions. See Pollock *Politics*, 121 and 128-129.
[191] Nixon quoted in Craig A. Daigle, "The Russians Are Going: Sadat, Nixon, and the Soviet Presence in Egypt, 1970-1971," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2004): 14.
[192] FRUS 1969-1976 23: 761-762.
[193] *Ibid.*, 8

Israel would have "all sorts of problems."[194] Nixon withheld additional military aid transfers to Israel throughout much of 1971.[195] This policy irked Kissinger, who argued that the military balance of power was tilting against Israel so that it needed a steady flow of arms.[196]

In November 1971, the U.S. government conducted a major assessment of the balance of power in the region. It noted that although Israel had maintained its qualitative advantage, two developments threatened Israel's position. First, "the shift in the balance that has taken place as a result of the Soviet-installed defense capability mainly affects Israel's pre-emptive strike capability…[which] is important to Israel because it deprives Israel of the ability to impose a short war."[197] Second, the "continuing buildup in the USSR's own position in Egypt," since it "improve[d] Soviet capability against the U.S. and even, in an extreme situation, against Israel."[198] As Kissinger concluded, "Everyone here admits that that Israel will need more planes over a 1-3 year span to continue normal modernization and upgrading of its air force. The main question is when those planes will be provided and in what political context."[199] In November 1971, Washington agreed to provide a new costly transfer of arms to Israel that would allow Israel to maintain its superiority for the years to come.[200]

The steady growth in U.S. military assistance to Israel continued in the next two years. Some opportunities to break the impasse between Israel and its Arab neighbors seemed possible.

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[194] FRUS 1969-1976 23: 692.
[195] *Ibid.*, 10-11.
[196] *Ibid.*, 11. Kissinger also notes the continuing U.S. efforts to court Egypt. Henry A. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (New York, NY: Little Brown & Co, 1982): 204-206.
[197] Quotes from FRUS 1969-1976 23: 950-951.
[198] *Ibid.*
[199] *Ibid.*
[200] Pollock argues that this package might have been linked to Israel's agreement to "proximity talks" on an interim Suez accord. Pollock, *Politics*, 126.

Sadat expelled Soviet military advisers from Egypt in 1972. Still, the Soviet Union continued to make large arms transfers to other Arab clients such as Syria.[201] More importantly, the peace overtures that Sadat made toward Israel at this time went nowhere. Israel was not ready to surrender the Sinai Peninsula and, skeptical of the overtures, Kissinger dismissed Sadat's last major attempt for peace in February 1973 as "far-reaching but one-sided."[202] The following month, Israel made another major request for fighter jets. Nixon was initially ambivalent but soon supported Kissinger's position. Kissinger maintained that the military balance was tilting against Israel, adding that "only if the Arabs saw the Soviet arms did not hold the promise of a military solution would they turn to diplomacy in a serious way."[203] This policy developed despite Secretary of Defense Elliott Richardson's assertions that Israel still enjoyed a geostrategic advantage, thereby justifying a more evenhanded U.S. approach to the region.[204] In the end, the Nixon administration made the promised Phantom and Skyhawk deliveries, fulfilling Israel's requirements for the next four years.[205]

Notwithstanding U.S. efforts to augment Israel's deterrent capabilities, Egypt and Syria coordinated a surprise attack on Israel in October 1973. This war sparked a fierce debate within the Nixon administration and the U.S. Congress over whether to supply significant military aid. But with heavy Israeli losses, mounting domestic pressure, a massive Soviet resupply effort, and Sadat's rejection of a ceasefire, this debate became moot. Nixon sought a congressional

[201] FRUS 1969-1976 25: 195-198.
[202] Uri Bar-Joseph, "Last Chance to Avoid War: Sadat's Peace Initiative of February 1973 and its Failure," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 41, no. 3 (2006): 549.
[203] *Ibid*.; Quandt, *Peace Process*, 93.
[204] Memorandum for the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, February 27, 1973, RMNL.
[205] Memorandum from Kissinger to the President, May 17,1973, RMNL.

appropriation for a massive $2.2 billion airlift to help Israel prevail in the war.[206] The 1973 war provided an opportunity for the United States to strengthen Arab relations, especially with Egypt, and take a leading role in postwar negotiations—a task made all the more urgent because of the Arab oil embargo. Still, Israel remained desperate for a long-term U.S. arms commitment, forcing Washington into a dilemma about how to reassure both sides.

SUMMARY AND ALTERNATIVE ARGUMENTS

During the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations, U.S. decisionmakers used two primary indicators to determine whether to offer Israel an alliance commitment or costly arms: the extent to which Israel and the United States had compatible security interests, and whether the current and projected military balance suggested that Israel could deter and defeat its adversaries. Because United States never truly shared Israel's sense of threat, it was concerned that an alliance commitment would jeopardize its broader regional interests, particularly its desire for stronger ties with Arab states. U.S. assessments of Israel's relative military capabilities varied during this time period. Much debate took place over Israel's projected military capabilities and its ability to maintain qualitative superiority over Arab neighbors in the absence of costly arms transfers and in the presence of a growingly assertive Soviet patron. Those who argued that Israel's military superiority could not be sustained without significant U.S. assistance, such as Kissinger, often suggested more costly transfers. Those who believed in Israel's ability to maintain superiority even without significant assistance argued against continuous and unconditional support. The magnitude of U.S. arms transfers increased after 1968 in response to growing Soviet involvement in the region and the anticipated effect it would have on the balance

[206] For a discussion of emergency aid, see FRUS 1969-1976 25: 804.

of power in the region. The objective of U.S. assistance during the remainder of the 1970s was "to sustain Israeli military superiority," according to a secret NSC memo.[207]

Table 4: Summary of predictions and evidence for Israel

	values of independent variables	predicted value of dependent variable	observed value of dependent variable
1961-68	U.S. assessment: somewhat compatible security interests; favorable Israeli capabilities vis-à-vis Arab neighbors	provision of neither costly arms nor defense pact	provision of minimal costly arms, without defense pact
1969-73	U.S. assessment: somewhat compatible security interests; unfavorable Israeli capabilities vis-à-vis Arab neighbors	provision of costly arms without unconditional defense pact	provision of costly arms without unconditional defense pact

		patron's assessment of client's relative current and projected military capability vis-à-vis adversary	
		unfavorable	favorable
patron's assessment of compatibility of security interests	highly compatible	provision of both costly arms and defense pact	provision of defense pact without costly arms
	somewhat compatible	provision of costly arms without unconditional defense pact	provision of neither costly arms nor defense pact

Critics may assert that domestic politics shaped U.S. commitments to Israel, yet the evidence in support of this alternative explanation is weak during the period we examine. The pattern of arms transfers during the Johnson administration represents a most-likely case for domestic political explanations. The Democratic Party captured most of the Jewish vote in the 1960s, and pro-Israel

[207] "The US-Israeli Military Relationship, undated, JCL.

members of Congress pressed the administration to meet Israeli demands.[208] Nevertheless, domestic pressures did not convince Johnson to offer Israel a formal defense pact, a nuclear security guarantee, or even a long-term arms commitment. Moreover, rarely did U.S. decisionmakers allude to U.S. domestic politics in their arms transfer reasoning. Some transactions—such as the Phantoms in 1968—do offer admittedly mixed evidence for our theory. Nevertheless, the domestic factor should not be overstated. Johnson hesitated, and his delay reflected several strategic considerations: first, the Soviets were increasing their support to Egypt; and second, Israel offered an important concession by renewing its pledge not to introduce nuclear weapons into the region. During the Nixon years, notwithstanding high domestic support for Israel, U.S. policies still exhibited significant fluctuations. Moreover, throughout this period decisionmakers privately discussing geostrategic factors, specifically the evolving local military balance of power, in their deliberations over whether to transfer arms to the Jewish state.[209]

We do not find significant evidence favoring other alternative arguments. The commercial logic for arms transfers is not supported by the documentary evidence, nor is the rationale that U.S. decisionmakers wished to recoup production costs by selling additional aircraft to Israel. Discussions involving the production line sometimes appear in the documentary record, but only because U.S. decisionmakers were unsure whether they could fulfill Israeli requests within a particular time frame. Occasionally, Israel's requests for advanced aircraft required U.S. inventory, thereby adversely affecting U.S. capabilities.

[208] Memorandum for the President, January 6, 1966, LBJL.
[209] For similar conclusions, see David Rodman, *Arms Transfers to Israel: The Strategic Logic Behind American Military Assistance* (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2007); and Pollack, *Politics*, p. 295.

Finally, the documents reveal that U.S. decisionmakers often discussed using arms to get leverage with Israel.[210] That these discussions took place does not validate this alternative argument because U.S. decisionmakers recognized the difficulties associated with using arms for such purposes. On the one hand, they feared that withholding aid would make Israel anxious and aggressive while emboldening the Soviet Union and its Middle Eastern clients. On the other hand, they worried that giving military aid to Israel would antagonize Arab countries and invite further Soviet involvement. Moreover, a failed effort to influence Israel's policies risked damaging the United States' regional reputation. U.S. decisionmakers wrestled with these issues with little resolution.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that great powers follow a clear strategic logic when deciding whether to ally with or give arms to client states. In contrast to previous studies, which claim that such decisions are shaped by domestic politics or commercial factors, we find that great powers signal reassurance while avoiding entrapment by relying on different bundles of security goods. Patrons assess the degree of shared threat and the local balances of capabilities in determining whether to support their clients with arms, alliance commitments, or both. This strategic logic helps to explain how great powers manage the "patron's dilemma." A wealth of primary documents provides strong empirical support for our theory in the cases of U.S. security commitments to Taiwan and Israel.

[210] See, e.g., FRUS 1969-1976 23: 405-406; 423; and 439-440.

Table 5: Summary of argument

		U.S. assessment of client's relative current and projected military capability vis-à-vis adversary	
		unfavorable	favorable
U.S. assessment of commonality of security interests	highly compatible	Taiwan (1953-1972) receives both costly arms and a defense pact	
	somewhat compatible	Israel (1968-1972) and Taiwan (1979-1982) receive costly arms without a defense pact	Israel (1961-1968) receives neither costly arms nor a defense pact

Our argument provides numerous avenues for future research. First, our findings could be tested by applying our theory to additional patron-client relationships. Although our findings do not support the notion that domestic political considerations guided U.S. commitment choices, we readily acknowledge the potential influence of these factors. Future work could further theorize and test which types of foreign and security policies are most likely to be driven by domestic political or commercial logics rather than strategic considerations.[211] Indeed, McManus and Yarhi-Milo show that while strategic concerns primarily influence which countries receive U.S.

[211] Our analysis shows that commercial considerations at times effected the timing of arms transfers. Nevertheless, we imagine that commercial motivations for transferring arms could become prominent when the security risks associated with providing weapons are small.

signals of support, the regime type of the recipient has great influence on whether the signal is sent in public, such as an alliance or formal presidential visits, or in private, such as with arms sales and military aid. This difference in signaling strategies toward democratic versus autocratic states can be attributed to concerns over domestic backlash.[212]

Second, further research could explore the strategic logic of a more comprehensive set of tools that patrons could use to manage security relations with their clients. We have shown that patrons use arms transfers and alliances to convey different forms of commitment. Yet it is possible that other tools should also be considered. Forward deployments of military assets, joint military exercises, and military basing are just some of the security tools that patrons could use as either complements or substitutes in supporting clients.

Third, future work should evaluate the preferences and perceptions of client states and adversaries regarding arms transfers and alliances. In this article, we focus exclusively on the patron's decisions, but what about those of the client or the client's adversary? How do clients interpret the receipt of these security goods? Do potential aggressors perceive arms-only partnerships as signaling a weaker commitment than formal alliances? These are important questions that require further theorizing and empirical testing.

Fourth, scholars should examine how patrons' provision of arms and alliances affect crisis initiation or nuclear proliferation. Because Israel developed nuclear weapons and Taiwan had a nuclear program, it appears *prima facie that* conventional military arms did not eliminate their nuclear interests. Thus, in addition to delineating the range of policy tools at the disposal of patrons, researchers should examine their effects on extended deterrence.

[212] Roseanne W. McManus and Keren Yarhi-Milo, "The Logic of 'Backstage' Signaling: Domestic Politics, Regime Type, and Major Power-Protégé Relations," working paper (2016).

Our research has important practical implications for U.S. policy towards allies and partners in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Many states are facing growing challenges as China becomes increasingly assertive, Russia coerces its neighbors, and Iran pursues nuclear capabilities. The United States and its allies and partners must consider how to mitigate these risks collectively. Our research sheds light on the dilemmas U.S. decisionmakers are facing, and the types of commitments that they are likely to provide different states. Consider East Asia, where China's rapid military modernization and increasingly assertive behavior will likely fuel the perception that the United States and many regional states have common security interests. We expect increased cooperation under existing alliances, such as that with Japan and the Philippines, and suggest that additional alignments are possible. For example, if domestic political opposition can be overcome, Vietnam could become a major security partner of the United States. With Vietnam in an unfavorable military position relative to China, arms transfers are possible, especially now that U.S. sales of lethal weapons to Vietnam are no longer banned. Accordingly, in June 2015, U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced a new "Southeast Asia Maritime Security Initiative" devoting $425 million to "capacity-building efforts" over the next five years.[213] Assistant Secretary of Defense David Shear commented, "We're looking at maritime security shortfalls among our partners and we will be ready to discuss with them what it is they need and how they expect to use it."[214] If China's behavior continues to push the United States and Vietnam closer, we suggest that it is even possible that an extended U.S. deterrent commitment could emerge. In short, facing an increasingly capable and assertive

[213] Ashton Carter, "A Regional Security Architecture Where Everyone Rises," Speech delivered in Singapore, May 30, 2015, http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1945.
[214] Aaron Mehta, "Carter Announces $425M In Pacific Partnership Funding," *DefenseNews*, May 30, 2015, http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/05/30/carter-announces-425m-in-pacific-partnership-funding/28206541/.

China, states in East Asia could receive increased arms transfers and in some cases expanded alliance commitments from the United States.

Russian activities in Eastern Europe pose a somewhat different challenge. Ukraine is far weaker than Russia, so our theory suggests that the United States is likely to provide arms to Ukraine. Indeed, in 2015, U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey recommended, "I think we should absolutely consider lethal aid and it ought to be in the context of NATO allies."[215] A group of former senior U.S. officials, including NATO military commanders and officials, agreed: "The West needs to bolster deterrence in Ukraine. …That requires providing direct military assistance—in far larger amounts than provided to date and including lethal defensive arms."[216] Accordingly, the United States has provided military assistance to Ukraine, although most of this support has been categorized as non-lethal given NATO's unwillingness to provide lethal arms. The lack of debate about incorporating Ukraine into NATO is also instructive. Our theory suggests that the withholding of NATO membership from Ukraine was the result of either the United States or Europe not viewing Russia as a common security concern. Indeed, in 2008, France and Germany blocked Ukraine's membership, despite U.S. support. Thus, Washington has pursued other options, including joint military exercises, greater consultations, and military assistance.

Lastly, in the Middle East, U.S. partners are facing a rare but not unprecedented situation. The United States shares concerns about Iran's nuclear program with Israel, Saudi Arabia, and

[215] David Stout, "Top U.S. General Says Washington Should Consider Arming Ukraine," *Time Magazine*, March 4, 2014, http://time.com/3731247/us-arm-ukraine-russia-general-martin-dempsey-putin/.
[216] Ivo Daalder, Michele Flournoy, John Herbst, Jan Lodal, Steven Pifer, James Stavridis, Strobe Talbott and Charles Wald, "Preserving Ukraine's Independence, Resisting Russian Aggression: What the United States and NATO Must Do," *Atlantic Council*, 2015, http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/UkraineReport_February2015_FINAL.pdf.

the United Arab Emirates, among others. The 2015 negotiation and implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, however, might indicate a possible shift in U.S. perceptions about the commonality of security interests with Iran, and consequently, Iran's regional adversaries. If such a transformation continues, then it would make a defense pact between the United States and Israel or Saudi Arabia less likely, but could lead the United States to provide Israel, Saudi Arabia, and others with even more defensive arms if U.S. policymakers assess that Iran's military capabilities are growing vis-à-vis its neighbors.