Beyond Military Power:

The Foreign Policy Effects of Conventional Weapons Transfers

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In 2013, Turkey announced it would purchase a theater missile defense system from China. This unexpected weapons transfer led to a diplomatic crisis in the NATO alliance. Turkey is a NATO member and there are numerous top-tier missile producers within the alliance, including the US, France, Italy, Germany, and the UK.\(^1\) Turkey should have sought weapons from its alliance partners, as it had in years past. The NATO allies were puzzled by Turkey’s turn to China, as well as the weapon itself. The FT-2000 is not compatible with NATO’s existing arsenal, including the Patriot missiles that were deployed along Turkey’s border with Syria. The missile defense system has never been exported, though it is believed to be highly capable, and would not have negatively affected Turkey’s relative capabilities.\(^2\) Nonetheless, Turkey’s willingness to consider a non-NATO missile supplier was immediately condemned by the NATO allies.

Though Turkey ultimately reneged on the deal, its mere announcement affected foreign policy within NATO. Immediately following the deal, “the whole alliance [was] in conversation with Turkey” at a NATO summit.\(^3\) Turkey remained the focus of conversation at a subsequent G20 summit, showing that the announcement of this unexpected weapons transfer was enough to trigger a condensed period of high-level dialogue between Turkey and its NATO allies.\(^4\)

The NATO response to Turkey highlights that weapons’ origin is a salient point of information for states. It was significant to both Turkey and the NATO states that Turkey was pursuing Chinese missiles. For Turkey, the transfer was a way to express its discontent with its allies, and in particular with efforts by France and the US to recognize the Armenian genocide.\(^5\) China saw an

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opportunity to widen the gap between Turkey and its Western European allies, and would have benefited from securing a contract to export its missiles to the “West.” By announcing China – rather than a NATO state – as its new missile supplier, Turkey signaled a rift between it and the NATO allies, which led the allies to engage in dialogue with Turkey about its role in NATO.

This example shows the dual functions weapons play in international politics. They affect military capabilities but also send political signals that affect foreign policy. I argue that weapons transfers are a type of signal that occupy the middle ground between costly signals and cheap talk, and are an essential tool for producing and communicating political relationships. The signals sent through weapons transfers help explain why war does or does not occur, why states pursue cooperative or belligerent foreign policies at various times, and are used to establish hierarchies within alliances. Weapons transfers are implicated in the strengthening or undermining of broader political relationships, even when the balance of power is not changed.

This article makes two moves. First, I offer a typology of conventional weapons that allows scholars and policymakers to systematically talk about the range of weapons included in this large category. Second, I describe how conventional weapons transfers send signals about broader political relationships, and show how these signals incentivize different foreign policy behaviors.

The article proceeds in four parts. I begin by placing the article within existing literature on conventional weapons transfers. I next offer a typology of conventional weapons and show how different weapons send different signals. Third, I explain how the signals send by conventional weapons transfers lead to different foreign policy outcomes. I distinguish between aggression, cooperation, steadfastness, re-alignment, preemption, and compromise. Fourth, I use the theoretical development to examine US arms transfers to India and Pakistan during the Cold War.

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I show that conventional weapons transfers facilitated most, but not all, of the behaviors identified. I conclude by suggesting avenues for future research.

EXISTING LITERATURE

Existing literature on conventional weapons has, paradoxically, a scope that is too narrow and a specificity that is too broad. Most literature that examines the consequences of weapons transfers tends to focus on the relationship between transfers and conflict. Unsurprisingly, this literature remains mired in debate because scholars have not delved into the differences between types of conventional weapons. The type of fighting, and thus a state’s decisions about war, depend in large part on its arsenal. The continued treatment of conventional weapons is puzzling because 40 of 46 of the interstate wars in the twentieth century were conventional continental wars. In other words, there are numerous historical and contemporary examples of conventional weapons being used in conflict, providing evidence of the varied strategies that different weapons facilitate. This literature would likely find greater theoretical bite if it allowed for greater specificity in terms of what weapons were transferred.

Other strands of research examine weapons transfers based on economics. I suggest that this literature is too narrow in its scope. Weapons are not like other goods, since even the least effective weapon still has the power to hurt, and states often sell weapons at a discount to friends and allies. The US, for example, had a Military Assistance Program that provided weapons at free or

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significantly reduced rate to allies during the Cold War. In the contemporary period, states negotiate for co-production or technology transfer arrangements that reduce the net payment for the weapon. The focus on economic dynamics distracts from the real military and political work that weapons do.

Even when existing literature broadens the scope of analysis, it still lacks a coherent explanation of the political effects of arms transfers. Existing literature agrees that some weapons are more “symbolic” than others, but has not devised a system to determine which weapons are more symbolic, nor has it explained the effects of such weapons transfers. For example, linguistic politics approaches suggest the salient point of information is the name of the weapon, whereas others have argued the weapon itself is a symbol, and that supersonic aircraft are particularly notable because they are “expensive, visible, and get a great deal of attention in the policy-making process.” Other weapons thought to receive significant attention are submarines and main battle tanks. It’s not clear, though, why submarines, supersonic aircraft, and tanks are conceptually distinct from other types of weapons.

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12 Barry Buzan and Eric Herring, The Arms Dynamic in World Politics (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 180. However, states often re-name weapons when they purchase them, and not all weapons have word names. For example, Egypt renamed its German “Bestmann” trainer aircraft the “Gomhouria,” (“the republic”) and Sweden renamed its Finnish “XA-200” armored personnel carriers the “Patgb-202.”
13 Edward J. Laurance, The International Arms Trade (New York: Lexington Books, 1992), 38. These weapons may also signal a long-term relationship because of maintenance contracts and continued need for spare parts. These “lifetime costs” are an essential, but oft-overlooked, aspect of the weapons trade.
Nonetheless, there’s an ambiguous sense that weapons can be used as political signals. Arms can be part of a reciprocal agreement for some other good, or they can be a means of gaining influence in the receiving state.\textsuperscript{15} Additionally, arms can send signals ranging from “gestures of political support,” to friendship and trust, to signals of technological modernity.\textsuperscript{16} In sum, arms can do things, but there is no consensus about which arms or what things.

There is also a startling lack of attention to the decision not to sell arms, even though withholding arms can be an act of great political import. Freedman is a rare exception, accurately observing that, “though only limited political benefits can normally be expected from agreeing to sell arms, since this is seen in commercial terms, refusing to sell arms is a major political act. It appears as a calculated insult, reflecting on the stability, trust, and credit-worthiness, or technical competence of the would-be recipient.”\textsuperscript{17} However, other researchers have not pursued this line of thinking, perhaps because the usual databases focus on the arms transfers that come to fruition. Since withholding arms means a transfer does not appear in these databases, the act is usually ignored.

I address the issue of specificity by developing a typology of conventional weapons, and broaden the scope of analysis by considering the effects of weapons transfers on foreign policy.

**TYPES OF CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS AND SIGNALS**

To provide a coherent and systematic way to discuss conventional weapons, I develop a typology of conventional weapons using prestige and military utility. Prestige is a perceptually determined

dimension that draws on the weapon’s level of technological sophistication, firepower, and the number and type of states that make use of the weapon. Prestige is a heuristic used by a variety of actors to make inferences about the future relationship between the sending and receiving states.\textsuperscript{18} This heuristic suggests that higher prestige weapons signify a greater relationship to come; states woo one another with the flashiest, most attention-grabbing weapons. Different types of weapons reflect the weight of the relationship, and transfers will change in type and/or amount as the closeness between the states changes.\textsuperscript{19} Weapons are certainly valuable for their military functions, but the symbol of prestigious weapons is a way of distinguishing allies from non-allies, can be an invitation to a closer relationship, and is an expression of the sender’s perception of the receiver.\textsuperscript{20}

I observed the importance of perceptions in creating prestige during fieldwork at two international weapons shows. During an outdoor demonstration of a number of weapons, the literal “coolness” factor of an armored vehicle was enhanced through a hard rock soundtrack; the tempo of the music was used to manipulate the audience’s perceptions of the weapon on display.\textsuperscript{21} Weapons manufacturers produced brochures touting specific capabilities and tried to link weapons to known prestigious weapons. For example, Finnish arms company Patria said the integration of weapons systems in its Armored Modular Vehicle provides “the digital backbone for 21st century soldiers,” perhaps trying to portray this armored vehicle – usually not very technologically sophisticated – as at the technological cutting edge, like aircraft or “smart” weapons.


\textsuperscript{21} Fieldwork, Eurosatory Land and Air Exhibition, Paris, France, June 2016.
Military utility, on the other hand, captures how a weapon affects a state’s relative capabilities, and incorporates appraisals of versatility, efficacy, reliability, portability, or maintenance. For example, there are a number of medium-range or intercontinental missiles that – because of targeting issues – literally cannot hit the broad side of a barn. Compared to similar types of missiles these specific ones, such as the Chinese-made DF-3 missile, popular in the 1980s, are rather useless.\textsuperscript{22}

Even if a weapon meets a baseline level of military utility, different strategic environments, military skill level, or state infrastructure can reduce the utility of certain weapons for certain states. An extreme example of this is Singapore’s recent obsession with Cold War-era German tanks. As an island city-state, it is unclear how Singapore would make use of the tanks, but it purchased nearly 200 Leopard Tanks and even built an underground storage facility for them.\textsuperscript{23} Tanks don’t make much military sense for Singapore. Military utility thus assesses the relative scale of capabilities a state will gain from possessing the weapon.

Contrasting these two dimensions creates four different types of conventional weapons, as represented in Table 1, below.

\begin{table}
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\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Weapon Prestige} & \textbf{Military Utility} \\
\hline
\textbf{High} & \textbf{High} \\
 & Boom (Type I) \\
 & Bling (Type II) \\
\hline
\textbf{Low} & Backbone (Type III) \\
 & Blip (Type IV) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Weapon Typology}
\end{table}

Boom weapons are highly capable and prestigious weapons, such as the F-15 fighter jet, submarines (especially nuclear powered), and main battle tanks. By contrast, bling weapons are those that are prestigious, but militarily less useful, either because of inherent characteristics of the weapon or characteristics of the state receiving them, such as the DF-3. Backbone weapons are unsung heroes of military operations: they are essential for enabling most operations but rarely get credit. Included in this category are weapons such as the KC-46 Pegasus tanker plane, mundane vehicles like Jeeps, and transport and training aircraft and vehicles. Finally, blip weapons are those low in prestige and low in capabilities. This category includes ammunition, firearms, and small bombs. Though these weapons do have military use, they need to be used in large quantities, and usually in conjunction with other weapons, in order to be useful; the scope of their usefulness is much more limited compared to other weapons. Spare parts and engines are also included in this category.

This typology address the problems with scope and specificity identified in existing literature. First, it pushes back on the tendency to treat conventional weapons as an undifferentiated category. Second, and more importantly, the dimensions used to differentiate between conventional weapons reflect the dual roles that weapons play for states. Military utility describes the familiar effects of weapons on abilities to wage war or deter aggression. Prestige captures the previously nebulous symbolic dimension, and represents the way states use weapons to send political signals. On its own, however, the typology says nothing about which weapons send which signals, nor of the effects of these signals.

Foreign policy, war, and political relationships are all, at a minimum, dyadic concepts in international relations. States fight against, and develop policies with respect to, other states. It makes intuitive sense that the NATO allies would transfer very different weapons among
themselves than they would with, for example, China. I suggest that states’ broader networks of relations determine what signal is sent by what weapon. This relational perspective has long been recognized by policymakers. Take, for example, US Military Sales and Assistance Manuals, which all state: “The willingness of the U.S. Government to sell military equipment varies country by country in accordance with the military requirement, ability to maintain and use, compatibility with existing inventory, and impact on the preconceptions and the actions of the buyer's neighbors.”24 The manual understands that states do not act in a dyadic vacuum: the relationship between the sender and the receiver, and the receiver’s neighborhood must affect which weapons transfers are expected or unexpected.25

I generalize these relational patterns through the concept of strategic interest, which captures the extent to which states’ interests and ideologies align or conflict. This concept allows me to differentiate between weapons transfers that accord with existing ties and those that are more surprising. Strategic interest is a concept central to bargaining and deterrence theory, two bodies of literature that have addressed ways to send signals,26 and encompasses both instrumental reasons for alignment, such as common foe, natural resource or economic dependence, as well as diffuse or ideational reasons like shared worldview or cultural affinity.27 The degree of strategic interest shared between two states can often be determined by threat perceptions and national security narratives, whether the states identify the same foe(s) and the threat posed by them, or whether states have similar ideas about how the world should work. Expected arms are less likely

to send a signal; they reinforce ties between the sender and receiver, and generally have a readily-apparent balance of power logic to them: states transfer weapons to bolster the relative capabilities of their friends, and refrain from bolstering capabilities of their opponents or of their friends’ opponents.28

Depending on whether they are expected or unexpected, conventional weapons transfers will send one of three signals. Unexpected boom, expected boom, and unexpected bling transfers will send reassurance signals. The combination of high capabilities and prestige in boom weapons means states reserve these transfers for states that substantially share their interests. The high prestige of bling weapons makes them unexpected when they stand out against existing relations. Visible signs of commitment, these transfers are clear reassurance signals that represent the political relationship between the two states.

Expected bling, backbone, and blip weapons send reinforcement signals. Bling weapons are rarely expected – states only seek these weapons when they have questions about their political relationships. The bling weapon transfer clarifies that the status quo relationship remains. Backbone and blip transfers have minimal signaling effect because of their low prestige. They are often transferred on such a routine basis that they reinforce relations, but often in a taken-for-granted way. The interruption or non-transfer of these weapons can have greater signaling effect than their actual transfer.

Finally, two types of transfers signal a downgrade in the political relationship between the sender and the receiver. “Mismatched” transfers – where the state expects one type of weapon but is given a different type – lead to a reconsideration of the political relationship. In these cases, the state expected one type of weapon but received a different type. A state might expect to receive

28 Yarhi-Milo, Lanoszka, and Cooper, "To Arm or to Ally?" 92.
boom or bling weapons, but only receive backbone or blip weapons. Jordan, for example, expected to receive the F-104 jet, a bling weapon, from the US in 1967. Instead, it was sent a small number of backbone and blip weapons, including rifles and ammunition, leading King Hussein to reconsider what he thought was a close US-Jordanian relationship. Transfer denials also signal a downgrade in relationships. The sender can choose to prevent the receiver from requiring a weapon, or the receiver can rebuff offers from the sender. Either way, the refusal to transfer the weapon represents a rift between the sender and receiver, and signals a downgrade in their relationship. For example, in March 2015, Sweden decided not to negotiate a new defense agreement with Saudi Arabia, a move that signaled new tensions and disputes between the two states.²⁹

Figure 1, below, arranges weapons by the type of signal they send, where the left end of the scale represents weapons that send downgrade signals, the right end represents reassurance signals.

![Signal Diagram](image)

**FROM SIGNAL TO FOREIGN POLICY BEHAVIOR**

Signals sent through weapons transfers have both long- and short-term effects. In the short term, the signal affects the receiver’s foreign policy, and has implications for the likelihood of regional conflict. In the long-run, the signals produce and communicate status hierarchies, allowing states

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to compare themselves to others in a group. This can also have implications for the likelihood of conflict, though the chain of events is longer, and outcomes are multi-causal.

After receiving a signal, the foreign policy behavior a state exhibits depends on three factors, which can all be observed in advance of the transfer. The three factors are (1) whether the state is status quo or revisionist; (2) the availability of alternate alignment partners; and (3) whether the adversary’s relative power is increasing.

Status quo and revisionist states have different motivations and end goals. The same signal will thus have different foreign policy effects based on the receiving state’s orientation. I do not expect a status quo state to suddenly change its orientation based on a weapon signal, nor should a revisionist state suddenly become willing to tolerate the status quo.

The availability of an alternate partner determines whether a state is able to seek another patron, or if it decides it must go it alone. Feasible alternate partners should act as a brake on aggression: the desire to court and win an alternate partner should prevent the state from acting aggressively, lest it scare off potential new allies.

The third factor is whether the adversary is increasing in relative power compared to the receiving state. A state increasing in power is more threatening – to both status quo and revisionist states – than one whose power is not. Decreasing power, if it encourages preemption, will also affect foreign policy.

I distinguish between six foreign policy behaviors: cooperation, aggression, steadfastness, realignment, preemption and compromise. Though states may engage in different combinations of these behaviors, not all states will find these behaviors equally attractive. The behavior exhibited

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depends on the signal sent by the weapons transfer and the three factors mentioned above. Reassurance signals facilitate either cooperation or aggression, reinforcement signals result in steadfastness, and downgrade signals lead to re-alignment, preemption, or compromise. In general, the availability of alternate alignment partners is most salient when states receive a downgrade signal.

**Cooperation**

Cooperation results when status quo states receive reassurance signals. Status quo states receiving reassurance signals should exhibit a cooperative foreign policy with respect to the sender. These states are more confident in their ability to fend off changes to the status quo, and thus should act cooperatively to preserve their relationship with the sender. Cooperative states should be less likely to act independently from their allies and friends, because their primary priority is to preserve the political relationship that was signaled through the weapons transfer.

Though cooperation is generally a way for the receiving state to preserve the regional status quo, it can result in the state taking actions against its own interest, or compromising in order to maintain support.\(^\text{32}\) Out of a desire to preserve its political relationship, the receiver might take actions that the sender wants. For example, the US agreed in 1968 to provide F-4 Phantom jets to Israel, a move that “signaled an enhanced American commitment to Israel’s security.”\(^\text{33}\) Reassurance signal in hand, Israel exercised greater restraint in 1973 than it did in 1967. While some of this restraint was surely due to feelings of military superiority stemming from Israel’s military victory in June 1967, the restraint was also due to the reassurance signal sent by the Phantom transfer. Israel was more cooperative with the US, listening to calls for restraint, in stark

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 96.

contrast to June 1967, when Israel ignored warnings from both the US and the French.\textsuperscript{34} The desire to keep a political relationship in the long-run can thus force a state to coordinate its policies more closely than it would in the absence of this reassurance signal.

**Aggression**

Aggression results when revisionist states receive a reassurance signal. Following Bell, I consider aggression “the more belligerent pursuit of goals in preexisting disputes or in pursuit of previously articulated interests.”\textsuperscript{35} This aggression can take a wide range of forms. For example, a state might try to provoke its adversary into attacking, thus allowing the state to invoke mutual defense agreements.\textsuperscript{36} Alternately, the state might be more aggressive in negotiations, refusing to compromise and trying to extract greater concessions from its adversary. Regardless of form, this aggressive foreign policy stems from the reassurance signal.

It is also possible that the sender does not know just how aggressive the receiver will become, or to what ends it will apply this aggression. For that reason, this type of signal should be the least common: senders do not want to induce aggression and thus find themselves dragged into conflict, or be seen to have endorsed aggressive behavior. For example, in 2014 the Canadian government approved a US$15 billion deal with Saudi Arabia, for arms including advanced light armored vehicles.\textsuperscript{37} Many within Canada have interpreted this sale as Canadian endorsement of Saudi Arabia’s repressive human rights record, both within Saudi Arabia and in Yemen.\textsuperscript{38} Opposition members of Parliament have called for the government to rescind the deal, or see damage to

\textsuperscript{35} Bell, "Beyond Emboldenment: How Acquiring Nuclear Weapons Can Change Foreign Policy," 92-93.
\textsuperscript{36} Few, if any, partnerships commit a state to support aggression by another. This strategy of an assertive foreign policy designed to provoke would allow the state to invoke any mutual defense pacts.
\textsuperscript{37} Ramesh Thakur, "Canada’s Thorny Arms Deal," *The Japan Times*, 8 May 2016 2016.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.; Levon Sevunts, "Ottawa Scrambles to Investigate Reported Use of Canadian Arms in Saudi Crackdown." 1 August 2017.
Canada’s international reputation.\textsuperscript{39} Many opponents of the deal feel that it has signaled tacit support for the Saudi government, and has contributed to increased campaigns against civilians.\textsuperscript{40}

\textbf{Steadfastness}

Expected bling, backbone, and blip transfers reinforce existing relations, often in subtle ways. These weapons can be sought when there are questions about the relationship between sender and receiver, and can be useful for signaling that the relationship exists unchanged. These weapons increase a state’s steadfastness. Steadfastness is “a reduced inclination to back down in disputes or in response to coercion and an increased willingness to fight to defend the status quo.”\textsuperscript{41} As Bell notes, greater steadfastness will be most observable in states that are regularly challenged. Therefore, states that face a revisionist rival are more likely to be observed as steadfast. After a reinforcement signal, the status quo should prevail until a new transfer sends a different signal.

\textbf{Re-alignment}

Upon receiving a downgrade signal, status quo and revisionist states should seek an alternate partner. Fears that the sender no longer supports the state should drive this search. While pursuing re-alignment, status quo and revisionist states should be cautious in their foreign policy, since they would not want to scare away new potential partners.

Whether a feasible alternate partner exists depends on networked relations. States that are loosely incorporated into one clique or group of states should find it easier to seek an alternate partner than states that are more strongly incorporated. For example, Pakistan was loosely incorporated to the West – all of its ties ran through the United States. This made China a feasible partner, especially because of previous conflict between China and India. The shared rival (India)

\textsuperscript{41} Bell, "Beyond Emboldenment: How Acquiring Nuclear Weapons Can Change Foreign Policy," 98.
and flexibility in Pakistan’s relations presented China as a feasible alternate. Israel, on the other hand, was, by the 1960s, squarely incorporated into the Western bloc. It had received arms from the US, France, the UK, and West Germany, and was interested in joining the NATO alliance.42 These stronger ties made pursuing alignment with China and Russia a non-starter.

A feasible partner can also be found if multiple states produce the same type of weapons. Saudi Arabia in part turned to Canada because both Sweden and the United States had decided to suspend arms sales. Though in this case Saudi Arabia has not re-aligned – it remains a Western ally – the case shows that re-alignment can be affected by patterns of weapons production, and is not strictly due to polarity in the international system.

If realignment is possible, states will adjust their foreign policy in line with signals they receive from their new partner. Until additional signals are forthcoming, states will continue to exhibit a cautious foreign policy as they navigate re-alignment.

**Preemption**

Preemption results when a status quo state receives a downgrade signal, if it believes its adversary is increasing in relative power, and if the state has been unable to find an alternate partner. Under these conditions, preemption is a strategy of last resort to try to prevent changes to the status quo. Downgrade signals from the US to Israel in late 1966 and early 1967 contributed to the path to preemptive action in June 1967.43 However, status quo states are unlikely to pursue preemption if their adversary’s relative power is unchanged or decreasing.

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Revisionist states will pursue preemption if they are unable to find an alternate partner, regardless of their adversary’s relative power. For example, Pakistan arguably pursued preemption against India in Kashmir in 1965. Though this conflict had been building for a year and a half, Pakistan only acted after it became clear neither the US nor China was a feasible partner.

**Compromise**

On the other hand, a downgrade signal will cause a status quo state will pursue compromise if it is unable to find another partner, or if it is facing another status quo state but does not believe its adversary is increasing in power. In the first condition, the status quo state will seek a compromise that guarantees the least amount of change to the status quo but its weakened position will make it vulnerable to coercion from its adversary. In the second condition, the status quo state will try to compromise to preserve the status quo so that its adversary does not preemptively act against it. As described by Bell, actions indicating compromise include negotiated settlements of existing disputes, less belligerent rhetoric, and dedication of fewer, or of less offensively postured, forces.44

By contrast, a revisionist state will pursue compromise only if it feels it is *weaker* than its adversary. Even in the absence of an alternate partner, a revisionist state should not be willing to compromise and preserve the status quo unless it thinks the distribution of relative power puts it at significant disadvantage. US signals of downgrade – including, in this case, the removal of US troops – to West Germany in the late 1960s facilitated *ostpolitik* as a strategy of compromise. Though West Germany wanted to pursue reunification, the downgrade in its relationship with the US made pursuing relations with the East an attractive option. This strategy sought to normalize

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relations and ensure that West Germany did not become the target of either Soviet or East German aggression.\textsuperscript{45}

The table below summarizes the behavioral expectations that follow from conventional weapons transfers. I next apply this theory to US weapons transfers to India and Pakistan during the Cold War, and trace the effects of transfers to shifts in each state’s foreign policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signal type</th>
<th>Weapons</th>
<th>Foreign policy behaviors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reassurance</td>
<td>Unexpected boom,</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected boom,</td>
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<td>Downgrade</td>
<td>Mismatched</td>
<td>Re-alignment</td>
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<td>Denials</td>
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<td>Reinforcement</td>
<td>Expected bling</td>
<td>Steadfastness</td>
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*Table 3: Transfer signals and foreign policy outcomes*

**US TRANSFERS TO INDIA AND PAKISTAN, 1954-1965**

US arms transfers to India and Pakistan during the Cold War are useful for evaluating this theory. First, arms transfers to these countries are a hard case for a signaling argument.\textsuperscript{46} After gaining independence from the British Empire, India and Pakistan fought an almost immediate war over disputed territory in Jammu and Kashmir.\textsuperscript{47} Relations between the states took on the tenor of an enduring rivalry: each saw the other as its chief threat, and was preoccupied with gaining an


advantage over the other. Both had a vested interest in securing arms for non-signaling reasons. India and Pakistan should have actively sought capable and prestigious weapons, and have been skeptical of less capable weapons, even if they were prestigious. Specifically, backbone-type weapons that extend supply lines and move troops into the mountainous territory in Kashmir, as well as light tanks and subsonic jets that would enable fighting along the border regions would have been most important. Maintaining superior capabilities, according to existing literature, should have been primary guiding logic of acquisition. Evidence that signaling was either a motivation for sending weapons, or that signals sent by weapons affected foreign policy behavior, thus provides strong evidence for my theory.

Many of the weapons transfers analyzed below were negotiated simultaneously to others, or in quick succession. Further, negotiations with one state were often conducted concurrently with negotiations with others, making weapons transfers to one dependent on the actions of another. They are thus best thought of as streams of interaction: previous transfers affected (expectations of) future ones. The analysis that follows highlights important simultaneous or successive events that bear on the weapons transfers and the effects of the signals. After analyzing each series of transfers, I turn to alternate explanations to show that the signal from the weapon transfer, not something else, accounts for observed behaviors.

**America’s most allied ally: First Transfers to Pakistan**
Between 1950 and 1955, Pakistan signed two mutual defense assistance agreements with the US, and joined the regional defense organizations SEATO and the Baghdad Pact. These defense agreements were signed in large part because Pakistan portrayed its strategic use and its vulnerability in a way that appealed to the US. Pakistani leaders cultivated an image of a friendly South Asian state. Shortly after independence, Pakistani Prime Minister Noon said that the US should realize, “Pakistan is the Eastern bastion against communism as Turkey for Western nations.
It is in the interest therefore of the US to give military and economic support to Pakistan as well as to Turkey."\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Dawn}, a left-leaning and progressive newspaper, published an editorial in April 1952 and stating that Islam “shared with the democratic west the basic concept of liberty and freedom of conscience.”\textsuperscript{49} In an attempt to show that it was committed to the defense of the “free world,” Pakistan gave rhetorical support to the US intervention in Korea.\textsuperscript{50}

Pakistan’s actions resonated with the US State Department. It noted that Pakistan “provided a logical choice to incorporate pivotally in the security arrangements which were created to shore-up both regions against further communist aggression.”\textsuperscript{51} Pakistan was incorporated into US alliance and policy structures, leading President Mohammed Ayub Khan to call Pakistan America’s “most allied ally.”\textsuperscript{52}

As a result of these ties, Pakistan expected to receive highly capable and prestigious weapons from the United States. Between 1968 and 1958, Pakistan received 76 M-47 Patton tanks and 120 F-86 Sabre jets; both among the most capable available at the time. I expect these first conventional weapons transfers to reinforce the US-Pakistani ties that existed on paper. Pakistan should have felt more confident and secure in its regional position, and India should have objected to the transfers due to Pakistan’s increased capabilities as well as the now-evident political alliance between the US and Pakistan. The observed outcomes of the initial transfers largely accord to these expectations.

\textsuperscript{48} M. Srinivas Chary, \textit{The Eagle and the Peacock: Us Foreign Policy toward India since Independence} (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1995), 98.
\textsuperscript{49} Burke, \textit{Pakistan’s Foreign Policy}, 95.
\textsuperscript{50} Chary, \textit{The Eagle and the Peacock}, 94.
US officials portrayed the transfers as routine, and expected. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles summarized the transfer of F-86 Sabres in 1956:

The planes form part of the long-term program worked out between Pakistan and the United States on the basis of the military aid agreement. The undertaking to include modern jets in the program was reached in 1954 soon after the agreement was signed. It takes about eighteen months in ‘lead time’ to schedule, produce, and deliver this type of aircraft. As has been stated previously the purpose of the United States program of military aid to Pakistan is to help defend the Middle East and Southeast Asia against possible Communist aggression.53

US Ambassador Horace Hildreth similarly recommended explaining that the transfers “dated back to commitments made nearly two years ago.”54 The statements from Dulles and Hildreth both emphasize the substantial shared strategic interests between the US and Pakistan, and that such transfers are routine among close allies.

As expected, the Indian reaction focused on the balance of power and beliefs that Pakistan’s would become aggressive. One politician called the transfer “an act of hostility to India.”55 India further believed that this type of US support for Pakistan led Pakistan to adopt a confrontational approach with India.56 Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Ayub, “The whole psychological atmosphere between the two countries will change for the worse and every question that is pending between us will be affected by it.”57 The transfer affected US-Indian relations, too: India turned to the Soviet Union for arms,58 which was the first step in closer relations between those two states.59

53 Telegram State (Dulles) to Embassy Karachi and Embassy New Delhi, 7 June 1956, RG 59, Box 3875, Folder 790D.5MSP/1-1156, document 790D.5-MSP/6-756, USNA.
54 Telegram Karachi (Hildreth) to State, 13 April 1956, pp. 1-32, RG 59, Box 3875, Folder 790D.5MSP/1-1156, document 790D.5-MSP/4-1356, USNA.
58 Telegram London (Barbour) to Secretary of State, 19 January 1956, RG 59, Box 3875, Folder 790D.5MSP/1-1156, document 790D.5-MSP/1-1956, USNA; Telegram New Delhi (Bunker) to State, 22 August 1957, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-257, document 790D.5-MSP/8-2257, USNA.
In other areas, India let negotiations with the US over an air-transit agreement flounder inconclusively, and Nehru regularly attacked the US and US-sponsored defense pacts.\textsuperscript{60}

The F-86 transfer also affected Pakistan’s status within the US alliance hierarchy. As reported by the \textit{New York Times} in June 1956, the F-86 “would give Pakistan a modern jet air arm superior to that of almost any other Asian ally of the United States except Nationalist China.”\textsuperscript{61} Because only Taiwan had similar jets, observers interpreted this as driving home the commitment of the US, and as elevating Pakistan to the status of significant ally. The transfer indicated how the US saw Pakistan relative to other peer states. The F-86—a rare weapon in this part of the world—signaled the seriousness with which the US approached its relationship with Pakistan.

The initial transfers made Pakistan more confident in its relations with the US, elevated Pakistan to the status of key Asian ally, and represented the sincerity of US commitment to its allies. Thrilled that it had been raised to the status of important Asian ally – equivalent to Taiwan – through the F-86 transfer, Pakistan next requested the F-100 fighter jet as a test of just how important it was to the US. The F-100 was a new, Mach-capable plane with a significantly larger operational radius than the F-86.\textsuperscript{62} The capabilities and the prestige of the F-100 made this a very desirable weapon for Pakistan. Pakistani Ambassador Mohammed Ali said that Pakistan was aware that F-100 fighter squadrons were being given to the NATO allies, and as a key ally of the US, Pakistan wanted the same equipment.\textsuperscript{63}

The US denied this request because there were not enough planes to give to both NATO and Pakistan. If Pakistan wanted the plane, it would have to wait two years for production to increase.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 215.
\textsuperscript{61} Telegram State (Dulles) to Karachi, 25 June 1956, RG 59, Box 3875, Folder 790D.5MSP/1-1156, document 790D.5-MSP/6-2356, USNA.
\textsuperscript{62} Telegram State (Rusk) to Rawalpindi, 2 September 1963, RG 59, Box 3757, Folder DEF 19-3 Defense Affairs, USNA.
\textsuperscript{63} Memorandum of Conversation, “light bomber and fighter squadron for Pakistan,” 11 April 1958, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-258, document 790D.5-MSP/4-1158, USNA.
Pakistan was allowed to stand at the level as Taiwan, but it was not, in US eyes, substitutable for the core, Western European allies. This abrupt introduction into alliance hierarchy may have passed without incident, but cuts to the US foreign aid budget meant that the denial of the F-100 coincided with both reduced funding for other military equipment and the completion of the initial 1955 defense assistance agreement.

**Downgrade Signals and Threats of Re-Alignment**

The US budget cuts and the completion of defense agreements meant that transfers planned for 1959 and 1960 did not include the types of weapons Pakistan had come to expect. Pakistani leaders took this as a downgrade signal. Doubts about the strength of the US commitment increased once the Kennedy administration came to power and began hinting that India, not Pakistan, was a more natural partner for the US. After the Senate decision to cut future US military aid, the Pakistani Ambassador told US officials in Washington that his government “interpreted recent trends in American opinion with regard to military aid as indicating a loss of interest on the part of the United States in Pakistan.”

As my theory expects, Pakistan threatened to pursue re-alignment as the result of these downgrade signals. The entire rationale for the US alignment with Pakistan – strength against Communist aggression – was thrown into crisis when Pakistan threatened to seek arms from the Soviet Union if the US did not continue to treat Pakistan as a full ally and did not provide more military equipment. William Rountree, US Ambassador to Pakistan, warned that a lack of bling and boom weapons would provoke a major negative reaction in Pakistan.

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

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

66 Telegram Karachi (Rountree) to State, 19 September 1959, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/8-559, document 790D.5-MSP/9-1759, USNA.
The first downgrade signal was sent in February 1958 when the US said it would not give Pakistan bomber planes. Prime Minister Noon said this was evidence that the US had “gone back on its word.”67 This was, from Pakistan’s perspective, a marked change in its relationship with the US. The initial delivery of F-86 Sabres and M-47 Patton tanks seemed to foretell a growing relationship, built on the regular transfer of prestigious and capable weapons. Yet now, just a year later, the US seemed to be signaling a downgrade, a more distant relationship with Pakistan.

Pakistani officials thus threatened re-alignment – possibly with the Soviet Union – if the US did not resume weapons transfers. Writing from Karachi, US diplomat James Langley noted “Almost all [news]papers warned that military aid cut will undermine US prestige in area and enhance Communist prospects in area.”68 In an interview with France’s Le Monde, Ayub said that Pakistan would begin seeking aid from other countries.69

Faced with the possibility of the most allied ally turning to the Soviet Union, the US agreed to tentatively program in B-57 bombers for the 1960 fiscal year.70 To avoid a “major” Pakistani reaction, Rountree urged the US to schedule to transfer more tanks and more advanced weapons, like the F-104 Starfighter jet or Sidewinder missiles, for 1961.71

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

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67 Telegram Karachi (Langley) to State, 27 February 1958, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-258, document 790D.5-MSP/2-2758, USNA.
68 Telegram Karachi (Langley) to State, 17 July 1959, p. 2, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/1-259, document 790D.5-MSP/7-1459, USNA.
69 Foreign Service Despatch, Lahore (Corry) to State, 5 August 1959, p. 2, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/8-559, USNA.
70 Telegram State (Dillon) to Karachi, 10 September 1959, p. 2, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/8-559, document 790D.5-MSP/1059, USNA.
71 Telegram Karachi (Roundtree) to State, 19 September 1959, RG 59, Box 3876, Folder 790D.5-MSP/8-559, document 790D.5-MSP/9-1759, USNA.
Supersonic Bling and Alliance Reassurance
On the heels of the non-transfers caused by US budget cuts, as well as indications that the Kennedy administration was interested in pursuing relations with India, Pakistan requested the F-104 fighter jets; ten jets were delivered in 1962. This bling transfer was a test balloon for Pakistan. Based on the denial of the F-100 and the non-transfers due to budget cuts, Pakistan was not sure about its relationship with the US. The bling transfer was an unexpected, if welcome, surprise, serving to reassure Pakistan about its relationship with the US. My theory expects Pakistan to display a more cooperative foreign policy after this transfer. It should drop its threats to re-align, and should coordinate its policies with the US. Overall, the F-104 served as a symbol of Pakistan’s importance as a US ally, and of the continued political relationship between the two.

I expect India to recognize the signal of reassurance, and to revise its expectations about any gains to come from the Kennedy administration. More broadly, the F-104 transfer should be understood by regional observers that the US was committed to Pakistan. If any of these observers also had questions about the commitment of the US to their causes, or their own standing within the US alliance network, they should seek the F-104 as well.

All the states involved knew the F-104 was the ultimate bling weapon. This Mach-2 capable, sleek, shiny aircraft was taken as a symbol of a close future relationship—reinforcing common goals between sender and receiver. It was nicknamed the “missile with a man on it,” and set the world record for speed and altitude of a piloted aircraft. The plane proved so difficult to effectively incorporate into combat operations that it was more useful as a NASA chase plane than as a staple of the US Air Force.

These severe limitations were well-known. Under Secretary of State George Ball wrote, “the F-104 A/B, though superficially glamorous because of its Mach 2 speed, is purely a day fighter-

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interceptor with very limited bomb-carrying capacity; its range is so short that without effective intercept control (which [Pakistan] does not have), it has only limited intercept capability and considerably lesser capability to bomb Indian bases effectively. Benson Timmons, the Deputy Chief of Mission in New Delhi, referred to the planes as “shiny objects.” German pilots referred to the F-104 as the “Flying Coffin,” and “the Widow maker,” while Canadian pilots added the moniker “Aluminum Death Tube.”

Though Pakistan lacked the radar equipment and training to make the plane useful in military operations, and had no space program that could use the F-104 as a chase plane, it requested the F-104 seven times between 1959 and 1961. US advisors believed the Pakistani Air Force would not be able to “absorb the new technology,” a polite way of saying the US did not think Pakistan would be able to operate or effectively use the F-104.

The F-104 was a focal point during Ayub’s visit to Washington in July 1961. The primary goal of Ayub’s visit was to “allay Pakistan suspicion that we regard India as more important than Pakistan, and consequently intend to give India more favorable treatment.” Within the State Department, the F-104 was seen as a signal of “our continued willingness to support Pakistan.” Within Pakistan, normally pro-US military chiefs were worried that the US no longer desired a

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73 Telegram State (Ball) to New Delhi, 20 August 1963, p. 3, RG 59, Box 3761, Folder DEF Defense Affairs US-Pak 1/163, USNA.
74 Telegram New Delhi (Timmons) to State, 8 June 1963, RG 59, Box 3757, Folder DEF 19-3 US-India, USNA.
78 Dean Rusk, Memorandum for the President, “Next Steps on Military Aid to India and Pakistan,” 11 December 1963, RG 59, Box 3757, Folder DEF 19-3 Defense Affairs, USNA.
close relationship with Pakistan, and wanted the F-104 as proof that the US was still committed to that country.\textsuperscript{79}

Ayub left the meeting with Kennedy with a promise that the F-104 transfer would be expedited. The plane was not delivered fast enough for Ayub, who instructed his Finance Minister to again request the F-104 in November.\textsuperscript{80} Finance Minister Shoaib’s renewed request came on the heels of Ayub’s anxiety that the US was going to extend arms aid to India.\textsuperscript{81}

Pakistan received its first F-104s in 1962, and thus felt no need to hedge against US abandonment. Assured that the US would act in Pakistan’s interest, Pakistan remained willing to negotiate over Kashmir, but—in line with US desires—did not increase or otherwise change its pressure on India to negotiate, and it abandoned its threats to re-align with the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{82} The primary result of the transfer was to induce Pakistani cooperation.

As expected, India understood this signal and lowered its expectations about changes that would come from the Kennedy administration. Selig Harrison, part of a mission sent to India in 1965, observed that certain US weapons transfers to Pakistan had signaled “the special character of the relationship of the United States with Pakistan.”\textsuperscript{83} Indian Charge d’Affairs D.N. Chatterjee said that India felt inferior to Pakistan because of the F-104, even though India had been informed about Pakistan’s limitations that prevented full use of the plane.\textsuperscript{84} India believed that the US had

\textsuperscript{79} Airgram Karachi (McConaughy) to State, 28 May 1962, RG 59, Box 1304, Folder 611.90d/1-662, USNA.
\textsuperscript{80} Foreign Service Despatch, Karachi (Linebaugh) to State, 21 January 1961, RG 59, Box 2120, Folder 790d.5/1-1660, USNA.
\textsuperscript{81} L.D. Battle, Memorandum for McGeorge Bundy, 4 November 1961, RG 59, Box 1394, Folder 690d.91/1-1562, USNA.
\textsuperscript{82} McMahon, \textit{The Cold War on the Periphery}, 283.
\textsuperscript{84} Memorandum of Conversation, “Indo-Pakistan relations,” 28 July 1961, RG 59, Box 1393, Folder 690d.91/4-1560, USNA.
no desire to harm India, but saw the F-104 transfer as a way to “pacify an ally angry over unrequited love.”

Beyond reassuring Pakistan about US commitment, the F-104 became a relational good in the US alliance network. Just as the US feared, other states requested the jet as a symbol of US commitment to them, particularly if these states saw Pakistan as a peer. The US begged Pakistan not to make a big deal about the F-104 because of the belief that Iran would demand the plane as evidence of “equal treatment.” Saudi Arabia did demand the F-104, even though the US evaluated the Saudi Air Force as “not technically very advanced” and unable to handle the plane. Showing the durability of the F-104 as a political signal, the US used the plane to signal commitment to Taiwan in the 1970s, as the opening to China was taking place. Even though Taiwan had more advanced—and capable—planes than the F-104, and even though Taiwan never requested the plane, the F-104 remained a symbol of US commitment, and proved valuable in this situation as well. The F-104 reverberated throughout the network as a reinforcement symbol, demonstrating US commitment to the receiving country.

Alternate explanations

It is clear that neither the balance of power nor an economic perspective can explain the events of this period. As discussed in detail earlier in this section, there were no balance of power reasons for Pakistan to want the F-104, and thus no reasons why the F-104 should have affected Pakistan’s foreign policy orientation. Not only did the plane have dubious military potential, but supersonic aircraft are not useful in mountainous areas like Kashmir, where Pakistan would have wanted to

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85 Prem Bhatia, “Prospect and Retrospect: The Road to Hell,” Times of India, 1 August 1961, p. 8, Proquest Historical Newspapers ID (PQID): 750662790.
86 JM Wilson, Memorandum for the Under Secretary, 2 June 1960, pp. 1-2, RG 59 Box 2121, Folder 790d.5 MSP/6-260, USNA.
87 Memorandum of Conversation, “Meeting with Lockheed representatives,” 27 July 1964, p. 2, RG 59, Box 1655, folder DEF 12 Armaments India 1/1/64, USNA.
88 Airgram Taipei (McConaughy) to State, 9 February 1970, p. 7, RG 59, Box 2206, Folder Pol Chinat-US 5/26/70, USNA.
strike against Indian interests. Finally, even if Pakistan had been granted permission to buy the plane, its high cost would have placed it out of reach. The low tactical use, high economic cost, and repeated statements that the plane was a symbol support the interpretation that the plane was a signal of reinforcement, and contributed to Pakistan’s lack of interest in negotiations with India.

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

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

**Sino-Indian border war and military assistance to India**  
The first years of US relations with the subcontinent primarily confirmed ties between the US and Pakistan. Weapons transfers supported the United States’ broader agenda of shoring up Pakistan as a buffer against Communism. However, India’s defeat in the October-November 1962 border war with China was the beginning of change on the subcontinent. The US rushed arms aid—rifles, ammunition, and transport aircraft—to India during the war.  

Emergency aid was followed by the December 1962 Nassau Agreement, under which the US and UK agreed to give India an additional $120 million in military assistance. The US signed a further commitment in June 1963,

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agreeing to transfer communications and transport equipment – backbone weapons. US assistance to India caused issues in the US-Pakistani relationship, because divergent perceptions of threat and strategic interest led to different expectations about whether India should receive military aid from the United States.

Whereas India successfully narrated itself as yet another state threatened by Communist aggression, Pakistan believed the narrative was disingenuous. Indian President Nehru successfully framed his struggle with China in a way that appealed to the US and fit with broader strategic narratives, laying the groundwork for weapons transfers. On 27 October 1962, he said that the US should support India with military aid “not only because of their friendly relations with us, but also because our struggle is in the interests of world peace and is directed to the elimination of deceit, dissimulation and force in international relations.” Kennedy agreed that the war was “another instance of Communist aggression.”

Pakistan, on the other hand, was convinced that India was playing the part of a wolf in sheep’s clothing. General Musa, the Commander in Chief of the Pakistani Army, said that he thought a Chinese attack was a “bogey.” Foreign Minister Bhutto was similarly convinced that India would not be a sincere ally to the US.

While India expected backbone weapons to facilitate fighting against China, and perhaps even bling weapons, Pakistan expected the US to refrain from transferring weapons to its chief rival. What the US saw as arms transfers to bolster a humiliated India (and therefore the subcontinent) against a growing Chinese threat, Pakistan interpreted as a signal of US alignment with India at

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94 Telegram Karachi to State, 16 January 1963, RG 59, Box 1400, Folder 691.93/1-1563, USNA.
the expense of Pakistan. Pakistan understood the US arms transfers to India as a signal of change, and interpreted later denials of weapons to Pakistan as a downgrade signal. I expect Pakistan to again shift foreign policy and to more seriously pursued realignment, while India should cautiously explore expanded relations with the US. India should try to gauge US interest by requesting additional, more prestigious weapons. I further expect the Soviet Union to see US transfers to India as an indication that the US was trying to win India over to its side, and to take steps to prevent this by also offering India weapons.

The actual course of events accords with these expectations, with one notable exception. The Soviet Union did not transfer weapons to India in the wake of US transfers. It reneged on a previous deal to supply India with MiG planes. However, Soviet actions were designed to send a signal to China, its fellow Communist ally. The Soviet Union was wary of antagonizing a Sino-Soviet split by arming India and potentially enabling it to fight against China.95

**Backbone, not bling: Arms for India**

The initial airlift of US aid to India was completed on 12 November 1962. As reported in *The Hindu*, this arms assistance had an impact on more than military capabilities. The initial airlift “was more in the nature of a token of intent to develop an ongoing large-scale military supply relationship.” 96 This first transfer was tangible first evidence of new shared strategic interests between the US and India, and all parties involved understood the military support as a significant policy shift on the part of the US.97

India and external observers believed that receiving arms aid signaled a change in US-Indian relations. The Soviet Union, according to Ambassador Galbraith, thought there was a high

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96 Quoted in Brecher, "Non-Aligned under Stress," 616.
likelihood US military aid would lead to a military alliance between the US and India.\textsuperscript{98} Iraq, an ally of Pakistan, though that the transfers were a betrayal of Pakistan and urged Pakistan to leave CENTO since it was clear that the US had sided with India over Pakistan.\textsuperscript{99} Swedish Ambassador Gunnar Jarring said “he recognized that there was obviously some change by reason of the fact that India had accepted foreign military aid.”\textsuperscript{100} The \textit{Times of India}, reflecting government views, thought the occasion “might well prove to be a turning point in India’s history.”\textsuperscript{101}

The first transfers led India to cautiously pursue areas of shared interest with the US. Ambassador Galbraith observed a “fundamental change in attitude toward the West is in progress with US and Commonwealth countries as steadfast friends in contrast with Chinese Communist intruders and ambiguous Soviets.”\textsuperscript{102} Coordination deepened when India was incorporated into the MAP bureaucracy in early 1963, putting it on the same footing as US allies including West Germany and Pakistan. In order to gauge just how open the US was to closer ties, Indian Ambassador B.K. Nehru presented a letter urging prompt delivery of weapons, and included a “shopping list” of desired weapons.\textsuperscript{103}

India wanted prestigious weapons including the F-104 and main battle tanks, even though it knew the US relationship with Pakistan would make the transfer of supersonic aircraft and heavy tanks very difficult.\textsuperscript{104} The low military utility of these weapons reveals the signaling motivation behind India’s requests. The recent conflict with China had proven that supersonic jets were not

\textsuperscript{98} Galbraith, \textit{Ambassador’s Journal}, 387-88.
\textsuperscript{99} Airgram Baghdad (Lakeland) to State, 26 November 1962, RG 59, Box 1399, Folder 691.93/11-20-63, USNA.
\textsuperscript{100} Memorandum of Conversation “Indian-Chicom situation; Kashmir problem” 6 December 1962, p. 1, RG 59, Box 1399, Folder 691.93/12-162, USNA.
\textsuperscript{101} HR Vohra, “US Assistance is in the offing” \textit{Times of India}, 31 October 1962, p. 9, PQID: 346972520.
\textsuperscript{102} Galbraith, \textit{Ambassador’s Journal}, 458.; Telegram New Delhi (Galbraith) to State, 25 October 1962, RG 59, Box 1398, Folder 691.93/10-1562, USNA.
\textsuperscript{103} Telegram State (Rusk) to New Delhi, 5 March 1964, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 2, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library (LBJ).
effective in preventing mountain incursions, meaning even capable supersonic aircraft were not particularly useful.\textsuperscript{105} Further, many of the bridges in this area necessary to facilitate the movement of materiel in order to counter an attack were not strong enough to hold the types of tanks India wanted.\textsuperscript{106} Disputed territory in Kashmir is geographically similar, so these weapons would not have affected India’s military balance with Pakistan, either.

India never received the F-104 because the US did not want to alienate Pakistan by sending such a strong signal to India. The US did, however, help India build its own supersonic engine, showing that the symbol of the F-104, rather than supersonic capabilities, is what prevented the transfer from taking place. Though helping India develop its own engine-production capabilities would have freed it from reliance on others for this type of plane the project received negligible attention from Pakistani leaders and the Pakistani press. Pakistan cared more about rumors of India receiving an F-104 than it did about actual US assistance that increased Pakistan’s capabilities. Symbolic politics, not relative capabilities, was the guiding logic behind this event.

Ultimately, India received mixed signals from the US. The first set of transfers opened the door, but the US never walked through and committed to India. Due to these mixed signals, India’s foreign policy underwent minimal revision, and changes were primarily rhetorical.\textsuperscript{107} The lack of bling and boom weapons – and resulting reassurance signal – further meant that India was “aghast” at suggestions that it coordinate policies with the US by joining Western military alliances.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{105} Galbraith, \textit{Ambassador's Journal}, 388.
\textsuperscript{106} Galbraith, \textit{Ambassador's Journal}, 422; Telegram New Delhi (Bowles) to State, 8 March 1965 p. I:1, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 129 (1/2), Folder 2, LBJ.
\textsuperscript{107} Galbraith, \textit{Ambassador's Journal}, 437.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., 433.
Pakistan’s foreign policy after the 1962 war was driven by the signals sent by US arms transfers to India. Pakistan took concrete steps toward re-aligning with China, and pursued this strategy more vigorously after the US denied Pakistan weapons.

**Pakistan’s Re-alignment**

At first glance, Pakistan’s reactions to US arms aid to India seem quite unexpected. The backbone and blip weapons did not significantly change India’s capabilities. But Pakistan threw what can only be described as an international temper tantum, fearing that US weapons transfers to India were a harbinger of closer relations to come.

David Sneider, Counselor for Political Affairs at the Embassy in Karachi, wrote that “the US-Pakistan special relationship was clearly invalidated by US military aid to India.”\(^{109}\) He explained that “since late 1962, Pakistan has behaved virtually like a wounded bull, thrashing about and seeking to give vent to its disillusionment with the West,” and that its foreign policy actions were “reactive, based on its disenchantment with its alignment with the West.”\(^{110}\) From the Pakistani point of view, US arms aid to India implied a downgrade signal to Pakistan.

Pakistan’s disenchantment resulted in a multi-pronged re-alignment policy. One strand saw Pakistan oppose the US on issues of general foreign policy and intra-alliance politics. Sneider noted “increasingly divergent courses in key international issues as Communist China, Vietnam, and the Congo.”\(^{111}\) In stark contrast to the rhetoric of support Pakistan gave the US during the Korean War, in March 1965 Foreign Minister Bhutto deplored the use of poison gas in Vietnam, even though Pakistan had just a few months earlier gratefully received large quantities of riot control gas. Not coincidentally, this break coincided with arms deliveries to India. In 1963,

\(^{109}\) Airgram Karchi (Sneider) to State, 24 March 1965 “Pakistan’s disengagement: US policy alternatives,” pp. 8-9, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 4, LBJ.

\(^{110}\) Ibid., p. 7.

\(^{111}\) Ibid., p. 2.
Pakistan invited Indonesian President Sukarno for an official state visit, even though Pakistan’s fellow SEATO member Australia – who was providing troops to the US war effort in Vietnam – feared aggression from the Sukarno regime.\textsuperscript{112} Pakistan thus broke with SEATO by not offering rhetorical support for the US in Vietnam, and its invitation to Sukarno was a slap in the face to Australia. Ambassador McConaughy believed these general divergences were due to “Pak[istan’s] frustration with recent decision give India long term arms assistance.”\textsuperscript{113}

Pakistan also ramped up its calls for negotiations in Kashmir. It thought it could coerce the US into supporting Pakistan’s negotiating position, even though, in McConaughy’s words, Pakistan thought “that prospects for Kashmir settlement are diminished in direct ratio to extent Western military aid to India.”\textsuperscript{114} Gone was the cooperative Pakistan, willing to coordinate its policies with the US. Instead, Pakistan thought that a policy of agitation – pitting its revisionist aims against India’s status quo desires – would force the US to make up its mind about which country on the subcontinent would retain its support.\textsuperscript{115}

Pakistan also pursued re-alignment by threatening to leave the SEATO and CENTO alliances. Minister Bhutto suggested this would be a way to “strike home to the US her [Pakistan’s] resentment over present US policy toward India and exert real pressure on the US to reconsider and change this policy.”\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{113} Telegram Karachi (Cargo) to State, 27 June 1964, p.1, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 2, LBJ.
\textsuperscript{114} Telegram Karachi (McConaughy) to State, 18 January 1964, p. 1, RG 59, Box 2298, Folder POL 32-1 India-Pak 1/1/64, USNA.
\textsuperscript{115} Letter Komer to Bundy, 6 March 1964, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 4, LBJ.
\textsuperscript{116} CIA Intelligence Information Cable, 13 July 1964, “Pakistani consideration of withdrawal from CENTO and SEATO and President Ayub’s effort to develop confederation of Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan”, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 2, LBJ. Telegram Rawalpindi (McConaughy) to State, 20 September 1964, 1:2, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 1, LBJ.
The second strand of Pakistani re-alignment took the form of increased public and private criticism of the United States. Shortly after arms arrived in India in November 1962, Pakistanis observed a national day of protest.\textsuperscript{117} Subsequent demonstrations included protestors carrying signs that said “End all military pacts with United States and Britain,” and “A Donkey is more trustworthy than a Yankee.”\textsuperscript{118} Extra-parliamentary groups “including such extraneous bodies as the Pakistan Writers Guild,” passed resolutions condemning Western arms aid to India.\textsuperscript{119} The Pakistani general public was united to an extent rarely seen over the issue of US arms shipments to India.\textsuperscript{120}

At the elite level, statements emphasized betrayal, and increased in frequency as it became clear that India would be incorporated into the US military assistance bureaucracy. Secretary of State Dean Rusk noted that Pakistan’s statements and actions were “a reminder that Pakistan is not reconciled to United States military assistance to India…”\textsuperscript{121} An editorial in \textit{Dawn}, which had less than ten years previously extolled the virtues of alignment with the US, encouraged a “most careful reappraisal of our external policy and our position…”\textsuperscript{122} This theme of betrayal and loss of the moral high ground infused nearly all of Pakistan’s statements after November 1962. As noted in a July 1964 State Department briefing paper, “Pakistan saw its position as the nation most favored by the US on the subcontinent reduced by our decision to provide arms aid to India.”\textsuperscript{123} Despite

\textsuperscript{117} “Pakistani transgressions of US friendship” 16 July 1965, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 5, LBJ.
\textsuperscript{119} W. M. Dobell, “Ramifications of the China-Pakistan Border Treaty,” 293.
\textsuperscript{120} Airgram Embassy Murree (Spielman) to State, 14 November 1962, p. 1, RG 59, Box 1398, Folder 691.93/11-1462, USNA.
\textsuperscript{121} Dean Rusk, Memorandum for the President, 11 December 1963, Attachment: “Indo-Pakistan Relations,” p. 4, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 2, LBJ.
\textsuperscript{122} Telegram Karachi (Cargo) to State, 12 June 1964, RG 59, Box 1757, Folder DEF 19-3 Equipment & Supplies US-India 6/1/64, USNA.
\textsuperscript{123} Briefing Paper, “Pakistan Concerns about United States military assistance to India,” July 1964, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 2, LBJ.
repeated US assurances to the contrary, Pakistan believed US arms aid signaled shifting allegiances: arms spoke louder than words.

The final strand of Pakistan’s re-alignment was the most significant. Ayub thought that by drawing Pakistan closer to China, he would be able to pressure the US into foregoing deeper ties with India.\textsuperscript{124} Maxwell Taylor, the chief US military advisor for Pakistan, wrote that Ayub had “embark[ed] on a campaign of sharp criticism of US behavior coupled with moves to ‘normalize’ relations with Red China. Such moves appear useful to him both in neutralizing an unfriendly neighbor and goading the US to pay greater attention to his needs.”\textsuperscript{125} Finance Minister Muhammad Shoaib told Ambassador McConaughy that “not very expensive” arms aid from the US to Pakistan would be the most promising stop-gap means of checking Pak[istan’s] drift toward China.”\textsuperscript{126}

Closer relations with China took the form of a border agreement and a civil air agreement in 1963. Under Secretary of State Averell Harriman warned, “a commercial air link in itself might not appear on first hand to be of great consequence, but in the present context of world affairs, it eased Chicom communications problems and helped Chicoms present better image to world. Pakistan should be very careful in its dealings with Chicoms and not jeopardize its relations with the Western world.”\textsuperscript{127} It was significant that Pakistan signed cooperative treaties with China even as Pakistan remained a member of SEATO, which opposed China.

\textsuperscript{124} Telegram New Delhi (Bowles) to State, 6 February 1964, 2:1, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 1, LBJ.
\textsuperscript{125} Maxwell Taylor, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, “Next steps on military aid to India and Pakistan,” 23 December 1963, p. 4, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 3, LBJ.
\textsuperscript{126} Telegram Karachi (McConaughy) to State, 21 October 1964, p. 3, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 1, LBJ.
Pakistan gave the US one last chance to prevent alignment shifts when it requested additional F-104 fighter jets. Receiving the jets would have, in Pakistan’s mind, been evidence that its relationship with the United States had *not* changed. From the US point of view, however, to provide the F-104 would be to “reward” Ayub for his criticism of the US; the US believed its relationship with Pakistan *had* changed.\(^{128}\) Dean Rusk instead proposed a meeting between Johnson and Ayub “to demonstrate our awareness and appreciation of Pakistan’s security concerns and our continuing efforts to meet these concerns in every reasonable way.”\(^ {129}\)

Rusk and McConaughy wanted to offer Pakistan other weapons to reassure Pakistan without endorsing its recent “bad behavior.” Rusk wrote, “I believe it important that we be prepared to give Ayub a clear signal of our continued willingness to support Pakistan unless its conduct impairs our ability to do so.”\(^{130}\) He suggested offering Pakistan the F-5 or F-100 fighter jet, both capable planes, though much less prestigious than the F-104.\(^ {131}\) Eight years earlier Pakistan wanted the F-100 as proof of its status relative to NATO, but it found the 1964 offer lacking. Similarly, though the F-5 matched or exceeded the capabilities (on paper) of the F-104, it was used primarily by lesser US allies, such as Taiwan, South Korea, and Iran. The F-104, on the other hand, was still in production by Italy, France, and Germany—who had figured out how to make the F-104G version an actually effective military tool. Pakistan still saw the F-104 as *the* signal of commitment and reassurance, and thus rebuffed US offers of alternate fighter jets.

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\(^{128}\) Bundy and Komer, Memorandum for the President, 8 March 1964, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 150, Folder 7, LBJ.

\(^{129}\) Telegram Karachi (McConaughy) to State, 11 July 1964, p. 1, National Security File, Country File – Pakistan, Box 151 (1/2), Folder 2, LBJ.

\(^{130}\) Dean Rusk, Memorandum for the President, 11 December 1963 “Next Steps on Military Aid to India,” p. 2, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 2, LBJ.

\(^{131}\) Maxwell Taylor, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, “Next steps on military aid to India and Pakistan,” 23 December 1963, p. 4, National Security File, Country File – India, Box 128, Folder 3, LBJ.
Ironically, Pakistan’s efforts to frighten the US into abandoning its new ties with India had the opposite effect. The US saw its ally running into the arms of its opponent, and saw India, a neutral state, warming to closer ties with the West. Pakistan’s gamble failed, as the US found it increasingly difficult to remain allied with a state that was friendly to Communist China, and found India, the subcontinent’s democracy and a state that wanted to defend against China, a willing partner.

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

US transfers to India did not change the military balance. India remained preponderant over Pakistan for the entire period, with the numerical balance of forces ranging from 2.5:1 in 1952 to 11.5:1 from 1962-1965. Most of the increase in the later period was due to India’s increase in the number of divisions within its army, and is not attributable to US arms aid. More revealing than the numerical balance is India’s enduring belief that Pakistan’s armed forces were qualitatively better equipped. The many years of US arms aid were believed to have given Pakistan a qualitative edge. Pakistan, on the other hand, saw India as superior and an increasingly looming threat. There are three other reasons to suspect a balance of power mechanism was not the primary factor for Pakistan’s foreign policy shifts.

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133 Telegram State (Ball) to New Delhi, 4 August 1961, RG 59, Box 1394, Folder 690d.91/8-361, USNA; HR Vohra, “Tangible Gain for Ayub in US Visit: Increased Military Aid to Pakistan Assured,” 15 July 1961, p. 7, PQID: 346318420.

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First, the timing of Pakistan’s turn to China, and leaders’ linking of friendship with China to US arms to India is hard to ignore. Contemporary analysts attributed Pakistan’s growing closeness with China to US arms aid to India.\textsuperscript{134} Writing while Pakistani overtures to China were crystallizing, Dobell suggested, “it is plausible that many of the pro-Chinese utterances made by senior Pakistan officials were voiced more with the aim of forcing a re-assessment of the Aid India policy in Washington than for any effect they would have in Peking.”\textsuperscript{135} That is, Pakistan’s flirtations with China were understood as a direct response to the US arming India.

Second, Pakistan did not object to the US helping India develop its own supersonic engine; it only objected to rumors that India would receive the F-104. If the balance of power were at work, Pakistan should have cared much more about the supersonic engine than the F-104. The bling weapon would not have significantly helped India’s military balance in Kashmir, but being able to develop its own supersonic engine would have freed India from dependence on the US or USSR. India would less vulnerable to external leverage, and domestic production capability would have hardened India’s negotiating position in Kashmir.

Third, Pakistan passed on opportunities to increase its own military power by rebuffing US offers of the F-5 or F-100 fighter jet. The F-5, first offered in 1963, was determined to be “fully capable of handling Chinese bombers,” as well as MiGs (which were found in Indian and Chinese arsenals).\textsuperscript{136} Like the F-104, the F-5 and F-100 are Mach-capable planes.\textsuperscript{137} Pakistan refused these planes, insisting on the F-104. Why Pakistan would forgo capable and prestigious planes is deeply puzzling to the balance of power. Similarly, if the US were concerned about preventing an arms

\textsuperscript{135} Dobell, "Ramifications of the China-Pakistan Border Treaty," 293.
\textsuperscript{136} Telegram New Delhi (Bowles) to State, 6 June 1964, p. 3, RG 59, Box 2305, Folder POL 1 India-US 1/1/64, USNA.
\textsuperscript{137} Telegram State (Rusk) to Rawalpindi, 2 September 1963, RG 59, Box 3757, Folder DEF 19-3 Defense Affairs, USNA.

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race, it should have been more willing to provide the F-104, a rather ineffective weapon, than the F-5 or F-100. Again, the F-104 was associated with core Western allies, while the F-5 was a tool used by the weaker, peripheral allies. Pakistan wanted confirmation that it was equivalent to the European allies, not the “others,” and so rejected the F-5.

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

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

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139 HR Vohra, “Aid to India is Insignificant: Moscow Bid to placate Peking,” *Times of India*, 26 February 1963, p. 9, PQID: 501578678
CONCLUSION

The signals sent by conventional weapons transfers largely account for Pakistan’s foreign policy trajectory between 1954 and 1965. Reassured by the transfer of capable and prestigious weapons, Pakistan proved willing to coordinate its policies. Denied this reassurance signal, Pakistan tried to re-align with China to express its dissatisfaction with the US. This case demonstrates the importance of broadening the scope of analysis of conventional weapons transfers, while specifically distinguishing types of weapons and foreign policy behaviors. From this analysis flow two implications.

First, credible international signaling does not have to rely on costly mechanisms such as hands tying or sunk costs. The type of signaling described here occupies the middle ground between the extremes of costly action and cheap talk: signals can rely on social relations and symbolic goods. Weapons transfers are not so exceptional that they are rare signals in international politics, nor are they so commonplace as to lose signaling meaning. Future research can identify other contexts where actors use social relationships and symbols to send political signals; I would suggest this type of signaling is not confined to weapons transfers, nor is it unique to international security.

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

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alliance hierarchies. Weapons thus have long-term effects that go beyond increasing relative capabilities.

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

Finally, this article has cleared space for more nuanced theoretical and empirical work on the effects of conventional weapons transfers. For example, future scholarship can apply the weapons typology to the likelihood of conflict, and make inferences based on the type of weapon transferred. Similarly, future work should investigate similarities and differences between nuclear weapons acquisition and conventional weapons. Because many conventional weapons can also carry nuclear ordnance, the division between the two types of weapons can cause more theoretical problems than it solves. While this article has focused on conventional weapons, future research should analyze the relationship between nuclear development and conventional weapons transfers.