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Many view the coming of the twenty-first century as “a critical turning point in history” wherein Western democracies have “an opportunity to shape the political nature of our world” (Diamond 1992, 27). Along these lines, the United States has endorsed the promotion of liberal democracy as a cornerstone of its foreign policy. Thus, the Bush administration called for a “new world order” characterized by freedom and justice, and the Clinton administration sought to enlarge the global democratic community. To what extent are the instruments of U.S. foreign policy used in a manner consistent with proliberation rhetoric? I address this question by examining the degree to which U.S. practices on arms exports mirror its professed concern with human rights and democracy.

If this rhetoric is sincere, the conditions of human rights and democracy in recipient countries should be related to patterns of U.S. arms transfers abroad. This intent is embodied in legislation such as the proposed “Code of Conduct” that would constrain the export of U.S. arms to those countries that, among other things, respect human rights and have a democratic form of government. Such efforts are based on the belief that the U.S. has a responsibility to protect human rights, promote democracy, and take the lead in reducing regional arms races throughout the world. They are also linked to the premise that since democracies do not go to war with each other (Onal et al. 1996; Maoz and Russett 1993), exporting arms only to democracies reduces the likelihood of the “boomerang effect.” Furthermore, as U.S. funds are used to subsidize many arms sales through foreign aid and off-set agreements (Neuman 1985), policymakers find it harder publicly to justify such arrangements when the recipient abuses human rights or is nondemocratic.

Critics contend that these goals are disregarded in practice. In the post-Cold War period, the United States “has subverted human rights to commercial concerns” (Wheat 1995, 16; see also Hartung 1995). In a period

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1 This occurs when U.S. troops face an enemy that possesses arms of U.S. origin.


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marked by defense conversion, arms transfers are viewed by policymakers and arms manufacturers “as a means of preserving American jobs and keeping the U.S. defense industrial base from eroding too quickly” (Blanton and Kegley 1997, 38). Indeed, a 1995 presidential declaration states that the financial health of U.S. weapons manufacturers justifies weapon sales abroad. Thus, the U.S. government’s professed goals—the promotion of human rights, democracy, and global peace—and the U.S. position as the largest exporter of conventional weaponry may be in conflict.\(^2\)

**Relevant Empirical Research**

Little empirical research deals explicitly with the linkage between U.S. arms exports and human rights conditions, but the literature on U.S. military aid offers relevant insights. Most studies show that human rights is not of primary importance in determining the allocation of aid. For instance, Schultz concluded that in the mid-1970s, “United States aid tended to flow disproportionately to the hemisphere’s relatively egregious violators of fundamental human rights” (1981, 157; see also Carleton and Stohl 1985). In a multivariate analysis, Cingranelli and Pasquarrello (1985) challenged the conclusion that human rights were unimportant. Conceptualizing foreign aid allocation in terms of a two-stage decision-making process, they uncovered a weak positive relationship between human rights and U.S. military aid at an initial gatekeeping stage. Yet, in a replication, McCormick and Mitchell (1988) found a negative relationship between military aid and respect for human rights. Leovic (1988) depicted a similar picture under both the Carter and Reagan administrations.\(^3\)

Using an improved measure of human rights and increasingly sophisticated research designs, more recent studies indicate that human rights conditions do have an impact on aid allocation. Poe (1991), for example, showed that human rights conditions are important determinants of which countries receive military aid. Similarly, Blanton (1994) found a negative relationship between human rights abuse and the allocation of U.S. military aid to Latin American countries; and Poe and Meernik (1995) concluded that human rights were influential in the choice of which countries to receive aid.

As with human rights, there is a lack of consensus regarding the relationship between democracy and U.S. foreign policy.\(^4\) Many contend that the promotion of democracy is an essential objective of U.S. foreign policy (Allison and Beschel 1992; Diamond 1992); others, that self-interest is the most important consideration (Harper 1997). Despite the considerable debate over the merits of promoting democracy, there has been very little empirical analysis of whether the instruments of U.S. foreign policy, such as arms exports, are actually used to promote democracy. In a study of presidential choices between “proliberalization” and “nonliberalization” policies, Peceny (1995, 398) concluded, “the present era is likely to involve consistent U.S. support for democracy during [military] interventions.” Blanton and Kegley (1997) found that in 1993, policymakers approved arms transfers to 62 percent of the world’s democracies, as opposed to 33 percent of the nondemocracies. Focusing on U.S. foreign aid, Meernik, Krueger, and Poe (1998) found democratic regimes more likely to receive aid and larger amounts of it.\(^5\)

Few of these studies of human rights and democracy directly address U.S. arms export practices. Nevertheless, they provide useful insights about the determinants and decision-making process behind U.S. foreign policy. Drawing on this work, I suggest that the manner in which U.S. policymakers approve the export of arms involves a two-stage decision-making process. The first stage is a “gatekeeping” stage in which policymakers make a decision about whether a country is eligible to receive any U.S. arms at all. This is followed by a second stage in which policymakers determine the amount of arms to be transferred.

Thus, the first stage determines with whom the U.S. will associate; the second stage addresses how close that association will be. As Gowa argues in her study of international trade, a country “cannot be indifferent to the potential power of either its allies or adversaries” (Gowa 1993, 38). Trade produces “security externalities” as it increases the productive might, and indirectly the military capacity, of the recipient. This theory is particularly pertinent to arms transfers, which directly bolster the coercive power of recipients. As such, the exporter may seek

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\(^2\) In 1994, the U.S. exported $14.5 billion of arms. The Pentagon predicts that this dominance will continue, with the U.S. controlling 50–60 percent of the global arms market through the year 2000 (Hartung 1995).

\(^3\) There was no relationship between human rights and military aid under Carter and a slight negative one under Reagan.

\(^4\) Scholars make a distinction between human rights and democracy and do not always see the two as complimentary. Yet policymakers often link them together. As former Secretary of State Warren Christopher asserted, “democracies, not dictatorships, offer the best means to defend human rights” (Quoted in “Democracy and US Aid” 1993, 903).

\(^5\) In the Meernik, Krueger, and Poe (1998) study, the dependent variable is total bilateral foreign aid and no distinction is made between military and economic assistance.
to constrain the transfer of arms to those identified as friends and shun those perceived as enemies. Yet friendships do not always last, and today’s friend may be tomorrow’s foe. Accordingly, security concerns dictate that countries limit arms exports to others in which “they believe in the credibility and durability of their mutual commitment” (Morrow et al. 1998, 652).

Liberal democracies possess these qualities as the normative and structural characteristics of democracies greatly enhance their ability to make international commitments (Gaubatz 1996; Maoz and Russett 1993). Thus, successful passage through the “gatekeeping” stage probably requires that a country meet a certain level of acceptability in terms of democratic governance and respect for human rights. In other words, democracy and human rights are “threshold” phenomena (Starr 1997, chapter 7) and are important considerations at the first stage of the decision-making process. At the second stage of the process, however, either all eligible countries are liberal democracies or a country-specific decision has been made to waive such concerns. The threshold for democracy and human rights is satisfied, and therefore such concerns are likely of no further importance in determining the amount of arms to export.

Organizing the Inquiry

To assess the role of human rights and democracy in accounting for the transfer of U.S. arms to developing countries, I construct a two-stage model.6 Focusing on the years 1990 through 1994, I analyze the ninety-two developing countries for which complete data is available.7 The year 1990 represents the beginning of the post-Cold War period and marks a transition in both U.S. foreign policy and the international arms-trade system (see Grimmett 1994); 1994 is the latest with complete data. In order to approximate the information available to policy-makers at the time they make decisions about arms transfer agreements, I lag each of the independent variables one year (see Meernik, Krueger, and Poe 1998).8

The Dependent Variable: Arms Exports

Arms transfer data (U.S. Department of Defense’s Security Assistance Agency, DSAA 1995) measure U.S. foreign military sales (FMS) agreements to developing countries in terms of the “total dollar value of defense articles and defense services purchased . . . by a foreign government or international organization in any fiscal year” (DSAA 1995, iv).9 The use of FMS agreements is important.10 First, although arms transfers were once conducted through grant programs, since 1974 FMS has been used extensively by the U.S. government to transfer arms.11 Second, in accord with Section 29 of the Arms Export Control Act, FMS data for the years 1981 and later do not include foreign military construction sales agreements and deliveries. Since this study focuses on arms exports, as opposed to military assistance and sales writ large, it is desirable to use data that make such a distinction as well. Third, the DSAA data provide the value of arms transfer agreements separately from the value of items actually delivered. Although the use of agreements instead of deliveries may exaggerate the extent of arms transfers between countries (Louscher and Salomone 1987), my focus here is on the commitments, or intentions, of the supplier as the output of a decision-making process. Intervening variables that may account for a difference between arms transfer agreements and arms deliveries occur after the approval and allocational decision.

Human Rights

I conceive human rights repression as the violation of personal integrity rights. Such human rights abuse includes acts of torture, murder, abduction, and imprisonment of

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6 “Developing” countries are those identified as such in the UN Human Development Report (UNDP 1994, 225).
7 There is possibly some distortion due to the absence of countries from the data set, but this is not likely detrimental to the conclusions of this analysis as the omitted countries are generally small and militarily insignificant (ACDA 1994). Excluded are Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Bahrain, Belize, Bhutan, Brunei, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Comoros, Djibouti, Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, Fiji, Gabon, Grenada, Kiribati, Maldives, Mauritius, Montserrat, Mongolia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Western Samoa.
8 Thus data for the independent variables are for 1989 through 1993.
9 Data are measured in thousands of dollars.
10 SIPRI and the ACDA’s WMEAT provide data on the amount of arms exported and imported by a given country, but unlike the DSAA, neither provides a breakdown as to the portion of arms that a country receives specifically from the U.S.
11 Commercial sales are a component of the U.S. arms trade. However, in this study commercial arms exports are excluded because “data maintained on U.S. commercial sales agreements and deliveries are significantly incomplete and are less precise than those for the U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program . . . There are no commercial agreement data comparable to that for the FMS program maintained on an annual basis” (Grimmett 1994, 15).
individuals for their political beliefs and is usually com-
mittred by governments in an effort to induce compliance. 
Although broader conceptualizations incorporate politi-
cal, social, and economic rights, this limited one allows 
an operational distinction to be made between human rights 
and democracy and likely reflects the view that a U.S. 
policymaker brings to an assessment of human rights 
conditions (Blanton 1994).

Since violations are often concealed from the inter-
national community, human rights data do not reflect 
the full extent of abuse. Thus, there are concerns regard-
ing the validity and reliability of data (McCamant 1981). 
By using data from multiple sources, the risk of bias can 
be reduced. To this end, I use standards-based data 
generated by content analysis of both the Amnesty Interna-
tional and State Department reports. 12 The values of the 
scales for each of these data sources range from one to 
five, indicating great respect for human rights to com-
plete disregard of them. To avoid multicollinearity, the 
scales were combined to form a single index of human 
rights abuse. 13

Democracy

To take into account the institutional dimension of 
democratic rule (Vanhanen 1990; Huntington 1984) as 
well as a regime's recognition of political liberties (Bollen 
1993), I use the Polity III data set and the Freedom 
House index of political rights. The former focuses on 
the authority structures of polities (Jaggers and Gurr 
1995), the latter, democratic political liberties. 14 To mini-
mize multicollinearity, I rescaled the data from each in-
dex and then averaged the two scores to create a six-point 
democracy index ranging from a low of 0 to a high of 5.

Control Variables

Several other variables are likely to influence the export 
of arms to developing countries.

External Conflict When a country is involved in external 
conflict, its demand for weapons may increase (Pearson 
1988). In turn, the U.S. may selectively export arms so as 
to influence the outcome of an international conflict— 
exporting arms to the countries it supports and banning 
them from those it opposes. Thus, external conflict likely 
influences U.S. arms transfer decisions, though the exact 
direction of the relationship is uncertain. The external 
conflict variable indicates the number of months in a 
year in which a potential recipient was involved in either 
an international war or intervened into a civil war in an-
other country. 15

Internal War When faced with internal threats, a govern-
ment may import arms to suppress domestic dissent 
(Blanton 1999; Pearson 1988). If the U.S. seeks to prevent 
the toppling of the regime in power, internal war may 
spur greater transfers of U.S. arms. Alternatively, the U.S. 
may be reluctant to support a regime if there is uncer-
tainty about its claim of domestic support. 16 Though the 
precise direction of the relationship is uncertain, it is 
likely that a potential recipient's involvement in an inter-

cnlar war affects U.S. arms transfer decisions.

Trade U.S. foreign policy increasingly emphasizes the ex-
ansion of free markets and the bolstering of economic 
prosperity. In making decisions regarding the transfer of 
arms abroad, U.S. policymakers may be influenced by 
trade ties with the potential recipient. Furthermore, 
countries with vigorous international trade are more fi-
nancially able to purchase arms (Pearson 1989). To assess 
U.S. economic interests, I use a trade indicator that addi-
tively combines U.S. commercial exports and imports 
with a country. 17

GNP per Capita If profit is a motivation behind the ex-
port of arms (Hartung 1995; Blanton and Kegley 1997), 
then countries in the developing world with greater eco-
nomic resources are likely to be favored as trade part-
ners—for weapons and otherwise. To take this into ac-
count, I include GNP per capita in the model. 18

12 These data come from Mark Gibney and Steven Poe. For a dis-
ussion of the data collection, see Gibney and Dalton (1996).
13 They were combined by averaging the two scores. For cases 
where data were missing for one of the sources but not the other, I 
used the available data as the score in the index (see Poe and Tate 
1994).
14 The important political freedoms of speech and press are in-
cluded in the civil rights index. Yet in order to maintain the con-
ceptual distinction between democracy and human rights, only the 
political rights index is used.
15 Data for 1989–1992 are from the Correlates of War Project 
(Singer and Small 1994). However, as COW data are not available 
beyond 1992, data for 1993 were drawn from Wallensteen and 
Sollenberg (1997) following the 1000 battle-related death criteria. 
Because the date of initiation and termination of conflict is not 
provided by Wallensteen and Sollenberg, for 1993 the variable was 
coded 0 for the absence of conflict and 12 for its presence.
16 COW data for 1989–1992 reflects the number of months in a 
year in which a country experienced civil war on its own territory 
(Singer and Small 1994). For 1993, the indicator was drawn from 
Wallensteen and Sollenberg (1997) and was coded 0 for the ab-
sence of civil war and 12 for its occurrence.
17 Obtained from the IMF's Direction of Trade Statistics, data are 
measured in millions of U.S. dollars.
18 Obtained from the ACDA's World Military Expenditures and 
Arms Transfers, data are measured in one-dollar units.
Population As a proxy for size, there is likely a positive relationship between a recipient’s population and U.S. arms transfers. This is due to the U.S. desire to access those countries where a large external market for U.S. goods can be developed. Larger countries may also need more arms than do smaller ones.\(^{19}\)

Presence of U.S. Troops The U.S. may transfer arms to countries where U.S. troops are stationed so as to build and train the native military forces, maintain a regime friendly to the U.S., or reward countries for allowing the presence of U.S. military forces. I identify developing countries where there are at least 100 U.S. military personnel stationed on a long-term basis (see Meernik, Krueger, and Poe 1998).\(^{20}\)

Middle East Due to strategic interests, the bulk of American arms exports go to countries in the Middle East. Between 1992 and 1994, the region received over $17 billion in U.S. arms, comprising 45 percent of total U.S. arms exports (ACDA, 1995). Indeed, countries in the region that pass through the gatekeeping stage likely receive a large amount of arms. However, the Middle East is a contentious area of the world, and the United States aligns itself with select countries in the region. Therefore, while it is anticipated that regional membership affects U.S. arms transfer decisions, the exact role it plays at the initial stage of the decision-making process is unclear.\(^{21}\)

Method of Estimation

In this study, potential arms recipients are included in the second stage of the decision-making process only if they successfully pass through the gatekeeping stage. Thus, selection bias is an important issue as certain observations are systematically included in the second-stage subsample by a preceding selection process. Because these observations comprise a nonrandom sample, least-squares estimation of the uncensored observations may produce biased and inconsistent estimates in the second equation. As a result, the effect of error disturbances may lead an analyst mistakenly to attribute causal effects to the independent variables (Meernik, Krueger, and Poe 1998; Berk 1983).

A two-stage Heckman technique produces consistent estimates (Heckman 1979). In the first stage, maximum likelihood estimation generates the selection equation.\(^{22}\) It also produces the reciprocal of the Mills ratio, known as the nonselection hazard rate.\(^{23}\) In the second stage, which is estimated by OLS regression, the hazard rate is added as a variable. It provides consistent estimates for the second stage outcome equation by normalizing the mean of the errors to zero.\(^{24}\)

Here I apply the Heckman technique to panel data, and thus serial correlation and heteroskedasticity are potential problems.\(^{25}\) For the first stage, a likelihood-ratio test with a chi-square of 5.23 indicates that the observations are temporally independent. Similarly, a Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.03 indicates that serial correlation is not a problem at the second stage. Based on Cook-Weisberg and Breusch and Pagan Lagrangian multiplier tests, I conclude that heteroskedasticity is a problem at both stages of the model.\(^{26}\) To control for heteroskedasticity, I use the Huber/White “sandwich” estimator.

Results

The results of the Heckman model appear in Table 1. A model chi-square of 28.71 rejects the null hypothesis that all coefficients in the model are 0. Both a Wald test of independent equations and the significant coefficient for the hazard rate (lambda) indicate that selection bias exists and that use of the Heckman model is justified. Hence, an underlying process exists that links the decisions of the first and second stage.

\(^{22}\) \textit{STATA} 6.0 was used to estimate the maximum likelihood version of the Heckman model.

\(^{23}\) The hazard rate represents “the instantaneous probability of being excluded from the sample conditional upon being in the pool at risk” (Berk 1983, 391).

\(^{24}\) The Heckman model also allows the error terms for the two equations to be correlated.

\(^{25}\) Having shown that generalized least squares consistently underestimates standard errors and thus inflates estimates of statistical significance, Beck and Katz (1995) recommend OLS with additional techniques to control for heteroskedasticity and serial correlation.

\(^{26}\) Beck and Katz (1995) have called for the use of panel corrected standard errors in time-series cross-section analysis. However, their work has focused on a continuous dependent variable and relatively numerous years. Only five years are assessed in my study, and though a continuous dependent variable is examined in the second stage, the first stage involves a binary dependent variable. Given that little is known about the properties of standard errors when a Heckman model is applied to panel data, it is prudent to use the better known Huber/White standard error estimator.
TABLE 1  Heckman Model—The Determinants of U.S. Arms Exports
Gatekeeping Stage—The Selection Equation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Probit Coefficients</th>
<th>Robust Standard Errors</th>
<th>t-statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights Abuse</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-2.41**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>4.96**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Conflict</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-1.76*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal War</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Troops</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>8.47***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>3.45***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>0.00002</td>
<td>0.000005</td>
<td>3.69***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNP per capita</td>
<td>0.00002</td>
<td>0.00002</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>-0.0003</td>
<td>0.0003</td>
<td>-0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>-1.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amount of Arms Transferred — The Outcome Equation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Regression Coefficients</th>
<th>Robust Standard Errors</th>
<th>t-statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights Abuse</td>
<td>-145661.20</td>
<td>96755.33</td>
<td>-1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>113105.10</td>
<td>30229.48</td>
<td>3.74**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Conflict</td>
<td>-41019.30</td>
<td>28224.84</td>
<td>-1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal War</td>
<td>-11744.97</td>
<td>11337.48</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Troops</td>
<td>932653.30</td>
<td>309053.90</td>
<td>3.02**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>515526.40</td>
<td>280505.50</td>
<td>1.84*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>16.89</td>
<td>7.38</td>
<td>2.29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNP per capita</td>
<td>22.41</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>1.79*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>-332.95</td>
<td>361.86</td>
<td>-0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-338191.50</td>
<td>186158.70</td>
<td>-1.82*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazard Rate (Lambda)</td>
<td>986996.90</td>
<td>284835.80</td>
<td>3.47**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selection Equation,  
Outcome Equation,  
Heckman Model Chi-Square = 28.71**
Wald Test of Independent Equations, Chi-Square = 36292.99**

Note:
* indicates statistical significance for a two-tailed test at the .10 level.
** indicates statistical significance for a two-tailed test at the .05 level.

In the gatekeeping stage, several variables play a significant role in the decision to allow the export of U.S. arms. Of particular interest here are human rights conditions and democracy. Human rights abuse is negatively related to U.S. arms exports. Thus, countries with better human rights conditions are more likely to be recipients of U.S. arms; countries with worse human rights conditions tend not to be approved for arms exports. Democracy is positively related to the export of U.S. arms. Therefore, the U.S. is more likely to export arms to democracies than nondemocracies.

Holding the other variables in the model constant at their mean, a country with a good human rights score of 1 has a 22 percent greater probability of receiving U.S. arms than a country that has a poor human rights score of 5. Similarly, a country with the highest possible democracy score (5) has a 22 percent greater probability of passing through the gatekeeping stage than a country with the lowest democracy score (0). The impact of human rights and democracy is even more pronounced for countries that have good scores for both human rights and democracy. A country that has a human rights abuse score of 1 and a democracy score of 5 has a 43 percent greater probability of receiving arms than one with a human rights score of 5 and a democracy score of 0.

Several of the control variables are also significantly related to arms exports at the gatekeeping stage. The likelihood of receiving arms increases for those countries in

27 The results of a Klein test suggested the possibility of multicollinearity between the human rights index and internal war. However, alternatively dropping the two variables, as well as adding an interaction term, caused minimal changes in the model. Thus, while the two variables are correlated (.55), they have separate effects on the dependent variable.
which the U.S. stations its troops as well as those countries that are in the Middle East. Countries that are otherwise engaged in external conflict, however, are less likely to pass through the gatekeeping stage. As evidenced by the significance of trade, the U.S. is more likely to export arms to countries that it considers to be viable trade partners.

The outcome equation, the second stage of the model, includes those countries that pass through the gatekeeping stage and actually receive arms. As shown in Table 1, human rights fall short of statistical significance. Thus, once a country has been approved as a potential recipient, human rights are not given further consideration in determining the amount of arms to be transferred. Democracy, however, continues to be significant. Thus among the countries that receive U.S. arms, those that are least democratic tend to receive smaller amounts of arms.

The control variables account for some of the variance in the amount of arms exported to recipients. A country is likely to receive more arms if American troops are stationed there. American policymakers presumably seek to supplement the commitment of U.S. troops by enhancing the indigenous military forces, maintaining a regime friendly to the U.S., and rewarding countries that allow the presence of the U.S. military. The Middle East variable is also significant, indicating that Middle Eastern countries that pass the gatekeeping stage tend to receive larger amounts of U.S. arms. Indeed, recipients such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Kuwait are among the United States' biggest customers. Additionally, significant trade and GNP per capita variables indicate that countries that are viable trade partners are likely to receive more arms. It would appear that the opportunity to address economic concerns, such as protecting the financial health of U.S. weapons manufactures and the preservation of American jobs, plays a role in arms transfer decisions.

**Summary and Implications**

Using a two-stage design, I have examined U.S. arms exports in an effort to ascertain whether human rights and democracy are meaningful variables in arms transfer decisions. At the gatekeeping stage, both conditions are important. When holding constant the other factors in the model, a state that abuses human rights is less likely to receive U.S. arms than one with good human rights conditions. Likewise, there is a greater probability that countries with higher levels of democracy will pass through the gatekeeping stage than are those that are nondemocratic. Thus, at this stage, human rights and democracy come into play. The findings therefore reveal that the United States government has a preference for cultivating relationships with those countries that respect human rights and abide by the rules and institutions associated with democratic governance. These concerns are supplemented by a tendency to export arms to countries that engage in trade with the U.S., host American troops, and are in the Middle East. Countries that are otherwise engaged in external conflict, however, are not as likely to pass through the gatekeeping stage.

At the second stage, human rights are not a significant consideration. In other words, after the gatekeeping decision is made, human rights are given no further weight in determining the amount of arms to be exported to a country. This suggests that in meeting a certain level of respect for human rights, countries pass a "threshold" of acceptability. Democracy, however, continues to be a significant variable. Even after a country meets the threshold of acceptability, those that are more democratic tend to receive more arms. Other variables that influence the amount of U.S. arms exports are the presence of U.S. troops, trade ties, and whether a country is in the Middle East.

My findings shed light on the reality behind U.S. foreign policy rhetoric. At the close of the 20th century, the United States has paid considerable lip service to the promotion of liberal democratic values. As the results indicate, there is some congruence between rhetoric and reality, as human rights and democracy play a role in deciding to whom the U.S. exports arms. Together, these respective findings suggest a synthesis of sorts with regard to the reconciliation of potentially diverse policy goals. The U.S. is exporting large quantities of arms, but they are being exported in a manner that favors those countries that are democratic and respect human rights.

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28 Between 1990 and 1994, the period of the Persian Gulf conflict, the U.S. exported arms to thirteen of the eighteen Middle Eastern countries included in the data set.

29 This finding is similar to those of studies of U.S. military assistance (Cingranelli and Pasquarello 1985; Poe 1991; Poe and Meernik 1995) which contend that human rights conditions are primarily important in the gatekeeping stage of allocation decisions.

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**References**


