

TRANSFER OF ARMS AS DIPLOMATIC TOOL

BY

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Recent events in the Middle East and the South Atlantic have drawn attention to a vital feature of foreign policy: arms sales used as a diplomatic tool. Allegations that Israel violated her commitments to the United States by misusing weapons in Lebanon illustrate the dilemmas of arms transfers. The irony of American, French and even British-made weapons being used against the British forces in the Falklands leads us to wonder whether arms sales to Third World countries serve the cause of international stability. Further in Morocco, Indonesia and Central America, recipients of American arms are accused of committing human rights violations.

Can we hold the United States accountable if the arms it sells to the Third World are misused? Should we stop arms sales? Hardly. Given the fluidity of world events, arms transfers are among the most flexible and useful of our foreign policy tools.

The Reagan Administration views arms transfers and security assistance programs as instruments for assuring stability in potentially chaotic or violent areas. In congressional testimony, former Undersecretary of State James Buckley explained that arms transfers can be employed to promote peace, to confront growing military threats from the Soviet Union and to "reduce the economic and social degradation that breeds domestic violence and invites external intervention."

By creating at least the perception of power imbalances, inflexible and arbitrary restraints on arms transfers such as the Carter administration imposed often have encouraged regional instability. Experience shows that when the United States eliminated arms aid to governments in danger, power-hungry forces eagerly stepped in to fill the vacuum. Our abandonment of Vietnam immediately comes to mind as a tragedy too horrible to repeat.

To seek peace with justice is a moral imperative of the Western tradition. We may ask ourselves whether arms transfers contribute to our search, subtract from it or are morally neutral. In most cases a prudent arms transfer policy will be a positive force for advancing peace with justice. We must however, be willing to acknowledge what arms sales cannot do.

A judicious arms-transfer policy cannot guarantee the protection of human rights within recipient states. Although Congress has included human rights provisions in security assistance legislation, these standards, though admirable, are difficult to apply with consistency. Such standards are limited by our own perception of what they mean and how they can be enforced. "Civil rights and Liberties," precisely defined in our own society, are alien in others. Andrew J. Pierre of the Council on Foreign Relations correctly

points out "Curtailling arms transfers is not the best instrument, and should certainly not be the primary one, for promoting human rights."

Arms transfers cannot guarantee that American influence on recipient governments will be lasting or effective. Sometimes, we must admit, arms sales can be counterproductive -- as they were in Iran, where American arms may have contributed to the fall of the shah and now are being used in the war against Iraq. Experienced diplomats know that in dealing with sovereign nations, military and economic leverage must be employed cautiously in order to achieve desired political objectives. Heavy-handedness by the superpowers had led to some embarrassing episodes such as the expulsion of Soviet military advisers from Egypt.

Nevertheless, arms transfers offer some surprising advantages. If properly administered, arms sales create economic benefits for both buyer and seller. With U.S. sales reaching billions of dollars each year, they have a positive effect on our balance of payments. What generally is overlooked, however, is that to accommodate advanced weapons, Third World countries must often accelerate their economic development. Jet fighters require runways that also can handle commercial air traffic; advanced weapon systems necessitate the building of infrastructure and communications networks; educational standards must rise in order to meet the manpower needs of the military establishment. Skills acquired in the military later can be applied in civilian economic development.

Morally concerned critics frequently object to arms sales on the grounds that they contribute to economic imbalances, human rights violations and international violence. Clearly, though, all these objectives are overcome by a flexible, prudent arms transfer policy. Policymakers must translate abstract goals -- peace, security, freedom -- into more specific objectives so they can choose appropriate means to achieve them. Moral efficacy cannot be quantified any more than the achievement of purely political goals can be. Nonetheless, moral values resonate through every political decision that affects human life. Arms sales, one means to achieve peace and security throughout the world, are no exception.

CURRENT PUBLISHED WORKS OF INTEREST TO OUR READERS

U.S. Arms Sales Policy: Background and Issues.

This 87 page, 1982 study was prepared by a group of authors (Roger P. Labrie, John G. Hutchins, and Edwin W. A. Peura) of the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, D.C., 20036. Opening with a historical description of U.S. arms transfer policy since World War II, the work then discusses executive and legislative roles in the arms sales review process, and then focuses upon a variety of issues associated with arms sales. These issues are posed in terms of the case both for and against significantly curtailing such sales. The study provides a concise, objective examination of U.S. policy, and furnishes a valued addition to the growing literature on the subject of arms transfers.

International Arms Procurement: New Directions

This 1981 book provides eleven specialized articles dealing with the broad range of international procurement, and coproduction. Edited by Martin Edmunds and published by Pergammon Press (New York), the work offers a comprehensive examination of the political and economic impact of coproduction and collaborative procurement programs within NATO, and includes case studies of the Roland Short-Range Air Defense System, the NATO Main Battle Tank, and the Multi-role Combat Aircraft -- the Panavia Tornado.

Security Policies of Developing Countries

This book, edited by Edward A. Kolodziej and Robert A. Harkavy, (Lexington Books, Lexington, MA, 1982) examines the security policies of fourteen developing countries (Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Pakistan, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Egypt, Israel, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Nigeria, and South Africa). The country studies, prepared by academic specialists from around the world, tend to suggest that international geopolitical considerations (such as the East-West confrontation) and regional economic and political factors (such as resource competition, trade investment flows, and the role of multinational corporations) jointly contribute to the conflicts and security policies adopted by these countries.

Policy Papers and Special Reports

The following listing identifies selected official U.S. policy statements and special reports of interest to members of the security assistance community. Copies of these documents may be requested from the Office of Public Communications, Bureau of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Washington DC 20520.

<u>Document Identifier</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Title and Contents</u>
Current Policy No. 398	1 Jun 82	"Developing Lasting US-China Relations." An address by Walter J. Stoessel, Deputy Secretary of State, before the National Council on U.S.-China Trade, Washington, D.C.
Current Policy No. 399	8 Jun 82	"Promoting Democracy and Peace." An address by President Reagan before the British Parliament, London.
Current Policy No. 400	9 Jun 82	"Alliance Security and Arms Control" An Address by President Reagan before the Bundestag, Bonn, West Germany.
Current Policy No. 405	17 Jun 82	"Agenda for Peace." An Address by President Reagan before the second U.S. General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament, New York.
Current Policy No. 407	21 Jun 82	"U.S.-Latin American Relations." An address by Thomas O. Enders, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, before the Council of the Americas, Washington, D.C.