Richard Perkins and Eric Neumayer

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The organized hypocrisy of ethical foreign policy: Human rights, democracy and Western arms sales

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Richard Perkins* and Eric Neumayer**

* Corresponding author. Department of Geography and Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, UK and Plymouth International Studies Centre (PISC), University of Plymouth, Tel: +44 (0)20 7955 7605, Fax: +44 (0)20 7955 7412, r.m.perkins@lse.ac.uk

*** *** Department of Geography and Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, UK and Centre for the Study of Civil War, International Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), e.neumayer@lse.ac.uk

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, Western political leaders have scripted a more ethical foreign policy, wherein far greater weight is given to protecting the rights and freedoms of extra-territorial citizens. Using the example of arms exports to developing countries, the present paper exposes the organized hypocrisy underlying countries' self-declared ethical turn. We show that the major Western arms supplying states – France, Germany, the UK and the US – have generally not exercised export controls so as to discriminate against human rights abusing or autocratic countries during the post-Cold War period. Rather, we uncover ongoing territorial egoism, in that arms have been exported to countries which serve supplying states' domestic economic and security interests.

Keywords: Arms; human rights; democracy; ethical; foreign policy; geopolitics

Introduction

A defining feature of geopolitics over the past two decades has been the extent to which Western political leaders have placed ethical and moral considerations at the heart of their foreign policy discourse (Chandler 2003; Dodds 2005; Slater and Bell 2002). In practice, this has meant different things in different countries, and the centrality ascribed to ethical concerns has waxed and waned across and within political administrations. Yet it has invariably included a heightened commitment to promote human rights and, to a greater or lesser extent, discursive endorsement for the principle of protecting or advancing democracy in extra-territorial spaces (Gaskarth 2006; Manzo 2003; Perkins and Neumayer 2008; Webber 2001).

For geographers, Western powers' self-declared ethical foreign policy is of particular interest. Assertions about the need to consider the rights, freedoms and well-being of distant strangers script a geographic imaginary of a universal moral space where everyone, everywhere is governed by the same moral rules, and a stretching of state responsibility to protect beyond the national territory (Dodds 2005; Flint and Falah 2004). Public declarations by Western elites to pursue a value-based foreign policy signal a more cosmopolitan, post-sovereign geopolitical order whereby international politics is increasingly guided by shared principles and norms, and state power is deployed in order to tackle non-territorial challenges of global justice (Beck 2006; Behr 2008; Rosenau 1990). Accompanying these discursive scripts has been a reworking of notions of the national interest. Acting to protect extra-territorial citizens is not only the "right thing" to

do, but according to recent public statements, also the "self-interested" one (Cook 2002; Hancock 2007; Sparke 2007).

A central question is whether this scalar construction of state morality, responsibility and geopolitical interests – laced with utopian visions of a world society built upon universal values, shared rules and mutual gains – amounts to anything more than empty rhetoric. Certainly, liberal visions of an ethically-motivated, post-sovereign state identity sit rather uncomfortably with (neo-)realist accounts, which portray states as selfish actors, primarily concerned with the defence of national interests of economy and security. One area where these disparate models of state action are likely to come to the fore is arms transfers. As part of their ethical commitments, many Western governments have pledged to consider human rights and (to a lesser extent) democratic conditions in deciding whether to sanction weapons exports from their territories. Yet implementing these obligations to protect universal rights at the international level might plausibly conflict with self-help, materialist national interests of economy and security. Have states reformed and rescaled their national interests and normative concerns such that they are willing to privilege the interests of distant strangers over conventional commercial and security imperatives?

In order to address this question, we examine whether the West's four major arms exporting countries – France, Germany, the UK and the US – have discriminated against human rights abusing and autocratic states, in the sense of (a) refusing to export weapons altogether or (b) restricting the amount of exports such that they receive a lower relative share of their overall weapons transfers. Building on theories of organized hypocrisy, we suggest that they are unlikely to have done so, with actual arms control practices

decoupled from ethical commitments (Brunsson 1989; Krasner 1999). Supporting our argument, we find very little evidence that Western countries have systematically discriminated against states with poor levels of human rights or democratic freedoms. Rather, we uncover ongoing territorial egoism, in that arms have been exported to countries which serve supplying states' domestic economic and security interests.

Organized Hypocrisy

Our central argument in the present paper is that Western countries' value-based arms control policy and practice is best understood in terms of organized hypocrisy – that is, inconsistent talk and action, arising from contradictory interests, obligations and incentives (Brunsson 1989; Krasner 1999; Lipson 2007). Although the concept can be traced to sociological notions of "decoupling" (Meyer and Rowan 1977), it is Krasner's (1999) conceptualisation of organized hypocrisy that is most instructive in relation to questions about foreign policy. After March and Olson (1979), Krasner identifies two logics which govern actors' behaviour: logics of consequences, which conceives 'political action and outcomes, including institutions, as the product of rational calculating behaviour designed to maximise a given set of unexplained preferences' (i.e. instrumental, materialist), and logics of appropriateness, which 'understand political action as a product of rules, roles and identities' (i.e. normative, ideational) (Krasner 2001, p.175-176). For Krasner, logics of consequences frequently take precedence over logics of appropriateness in world politics, giving rise to organized hypocrisy. Countries'

rulers ‘rhetorically embrace’ international norms, rules and roles, but responding to domestic materialist imperatives, act in ways that contradict normative commitments.

Underlying organized hypocrisy, Krasner argues, is a number of features of the international system. Most fundamentally, perhaps, is its anarchical nature. Inter-state competition for wealth, power and influence means that the compulsion for domestic governments to defer to domestic consequential logics is strong. Conversely, norms at the international level are characteristically weakly institutionalised, often ambiguous and vulnerable to defiance by powerful states.

Not all scholars subscribe to the view that logics of consequences, on the one hand, and logics of appropriateness, on the other, can be treated as two entirely separate causal systems (Fearon and Wendt 2002; March and Olsen 1998). According to one line of argument, therefore, many actions equated with materialist motives involve a normative dimension. Hence, defending the economic or security interests of a territorially-bounded electorate may be the self-interested course of action, but it can also be interpreted as part-and-parcel of domestic politicians’ normative obligations. Another related line of argument maintains that normative concerns are themselves constitutive of interests and that norm compliance may be governed by calculative expectations of consequences.

We are partly sympathetic to these arguments and, in line with several recent contributions, would submit that materialist interests and moral obligations are ‘not mutually exclusive and are interconnected in several ways’ (Herrmann and Shannon 2001, pg.622). Hence particular choices, actions and representations may be guided by both sets of logics (March and Olsen 1998). We nevertheless believe that logics of

consequences and appropriateness remain useful analytic concepts, especially in situations involving trade-offs between domestic economic and security interests, on the one hand, and non-territorial normative obligations which prescribe right and wrong, on the other.

Arming the Third World

Arms transfers are another area where states might be expected to encounter competing interests, obligations and incentives. Arms are big business. As an indication: the total value of the global arms trade over the period 1992-2004 is estimated at roughly US$269 billion (1990 prices), of which roughly US$185 billion comprised sales to developing countries (SIPRI 2007). According to nearly all measures, the US is by far the largest supplier of arms to developing countries, accounting for close to 40% of transfers between 1992-2004. The other "big" four are Russia, France, Germany and the UK. The latter three countries were together responsible for almost 20% of arms transfers over the same period, while Russia accounted for approximately 30.5%.

Although a handful of countries dominate the transfer statistics, globalization of the defence industry over recent decades means that a growing share of the components, sub-modules and modules that go into making many weapons systems are manufactured in a number of different economies (Garcia-Alonso and Levine 2007; Lovering 1994). Still, control, co-ordination and final assembly activities continue to be managed largely by firms headquartered in the traditional arms supplying countries, such that government

export controls in these territories exert a potentially decisive influence over the destination of finished weapons.[1]

There is nothing especially new in Western arms control. According to Krause and Latham (1998), the concept has its roots in the early Cold War period, underpinned by strategic motives to reduce the risks of an escalating East-West conflict. Later on, during the 1970s and 1980s, humanitarian principles began to assume a growing role in Western arms policy (Cooper 2000). As an example, President Carter introduced a new set of US export guidelines in 1997, which included a clause to "promote and advance respect for human rights in recipient countries" (Klare 1998, pg.86).

Still, humanitarian concerns occupied a comparatively marginal position prior to the 1990s, with restrictions garnering only limited political traction in practice (Krause and Latham 1998). With the end of the Cold War, however, Western governments have sought to reinvigorate their support for a more ethically-grounded arms control regime. Indeed, consistent with their rearticulated rhetorical support, Western arms exporting countries have adopted new or revised arms control policies prohibiting or discouraging arms exports to regimes which infringe particular principles, particularly on human rights. In the US, Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 34 issued in 1995 affirmed the country's moral commitments by stating that, "The United States will act unilaterally to restrain the flow of arms…where the transfer of weapons raises issues involving human rights" (The White House 1995). The UK government also adopted revised criteria for

[1] All cross-border arms transfers – together with dual-use components which could potentially be used to manufacture weapons – from Western arms exporting countries require government export licences.

arms export licenses in the 1990s, with Britain's foreign secretary boldly announcing, "Labour will not permit the sale of arms to regimes that might use them for internal repression or international aggression" (Cook 1997). France and Germany have similarly incorporated policy principles which call for an evaluation of human rights conditions in recipient countries in deciding whether to sanction exports (Yanik 2006).

Accompanying these domestic initiatives during the post-Cold War period have been a set of new multilateral agreements and codes governing arms transfers. The first of these, the European Council's *Declaration on Non-Proliferation and Arms Exports*, was issued in 1991. It was soon followed by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) *Criteria on Conventional Arms Transfers* (1993) and the European Union's (EU) *Code of Conduct on Arms Exports* (1998)[2]. Common to the above are a set of principles which participants are expected to take into account when sanctioning arms exports. Amongst others, all three agreements/codes mention respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, consideration of the internal situation (i.e. existing tension and armed conflict) and the legitimate defence and security needs of the recipient. Although none of the existing multilateral agreements are legally binding, they nevertheless provide a set of common guidelines, and confer clear responsibilities on participants.

The Paradox of Ethical Commitments

[2] France, Germany and the UK have been party to all three codes, whereas the US was a signatory to OSCE agreement.

Western countries' value-based arms control initiatives would appear to script a geopolitics of hope (Sparke 2007) – a more cosmopolitan geopolitical order in which sovereign states act in the defence of non-territorial principles. Together with more general public statements about ethics in foreign policy, such initiatives can be seen as a product of emerging norms of human rights and democracy at the international level, which have ascribed new rules, roles and obligations to sovereign states (Dodds 2005, Schmitz 2004; Solomon 2006). Amongst others, these norms script states' rulers as guardians of extra-territorial human rights and democratic freedoms, and create duties and expectations for these actors to act in ways consistent with safeguarding or promoting liberal democratic principles beyond national borders.

Yet acting according to these logics of appropriateness – by limiting arms exports to human rights abusing and/or autocratic regimes – might well clash with consequential logics in two possible ways. First, it is likely to be inconsistent with the commercial interests of defence firms located in the national territory, as well as individuals employed by these companies. Although analysts have questioned the net benefits derived by national economies from arms exports (Chalmers et al 2001; Dunne and Freeman 2003; Hartung 1999), weapons manufacture may nevertheless be a significant employer in certain regions, and a symbolically important source of export revenue. Indeed, perceptions matter, and vested interests have been instrumental in sustaining the image that arms exports are central to ongoing national prosperity. By undermining the economic fortunes of domestic arms vendors, as well as the job security of workers employed in these firms, enforcing ethically-motivated restrictions will inevitably run counter to powerful vested interests. Included here are the interests of political

representatives in jurisdictions where defence firms have a significant presence or who receive support from arms manufacturers.

Another way in which logics might clash is rooted in geopolitics. Arms play a (potentially) important role in maintaining alliances, with Western countries historically restricting sales to unfriendly states, and preferentially supplying friendly, client or geostrategically important regimes (Agnew and Corbridge 1995; Sislin 1994).[3] As stressed by classical and neo-realists, military (and to a lesser extent) other alliances are important for states' domestic security, and therefore a central aspect of countries' national self-interests that are extra-territorial in nature (Flint and Falah 2004; Ó Tuathail 1992). The imperatives of military security, on the one hand, and compliance with norms governing the defence of human rights and democratic freedoms, on the other, may collide where allies are characterised by human rights abuses or limited democratic freedoms.

We believe that political leaders are likely to have "managed" these conflicting pressures, forces and logics by resorting to organized hypocrisy. Territory and the correlative activity of defending the state space – together with promoting the interests of its bounded community – remain at the heart of the current geopolitical order (Dodds 2005). Although this system is far from a straightforward struggle of "all against all", growing global competition between arms manufacturers and ongoing (real, perceived or constructed) security threats to the national territory, mean that the incentive to defer to consequential, materialist interests in the case of arms is likely to remain strong. Indeed,

[3] Note, the supply of weapons to certain states is known to have had some unintended consequences, such as heightened terrorism against the supplying state's own citizens (Neumayer and Plümper 2009).

to the extent that Western political rulers depend on the support of a territorially-bounded electorate whose interests in domestic economy frequently take precedence over other considerations, we expect domestic politicians to privilege commercial concerns (Abrahamsen and Williams 2001; Flint 2004). Going further, it could be argued that normative obligations felt by domestic political leaders to defend the economic and security interests of their own citizens may trump normative rules prescribing the defence of extra-territorial others.

There will likely be exceptions: where human rights abuses in potential recipient states are especially acute, or where leaders show blatant disregard for democratic principles, state rulers may respond to normative obligations regarding humanitarianism and democratic freedoms by enforcing export restrictions. International outrage, increased domestic pressure and heightened concerns about reputation might transform the protection of extra-territorial individuals' rights from a matter of largely normative action (i.e. "what is the appropriate thing for me to do"), to one that incorporates a greater element of self-interested, materialist concerns (i.e. "what is in my self-interests?"). Yet we believe that such instances are likely to be rare. For the most part, governments will seek to meet normative expectations to protect distant strangers through symbolic politics, i.e. talking about their values, making public pledges to consider human rights and democratic conditions, and endorsing non-binding principles. Actual behaviour is likely to be largely decoupled from these commitments. Accordingly, we expect Western powers will generally be no more likely to transfer weapons to Third World countries with good human rights and democratic records as bad ones, nor discriminate in terms of the volume of sales.

Instead, to the extent that states privilege or discriminate in sanctioning their arms exports, we expect four relational/extra-territorial factors which contribute to serving the national interest to be important. The first is geopolitical ties, including military alliances, but also colonial linkages. On the supply-side, these boundary-spanning relationships are likely to increase the willingness of arms exporters to supply weapons, and possibly supply them at reduced or zero prices. Likewise, on the demand-side, importing countries might be more willing to purchase weapons from their allies and/or former colonial masters, with whom they often (but not always, in the latter case) share friendly or cooperative relations.

Another geopolitical factor is domestic security. Arms transfers potentially give rise to a negative security externality on the exporting country, with the risk that one's arms exports are ever used to threaten one's own security greater for countries which are geographically proximate (Garcia-Alonso and Levine 2007). We therefore logically expect that, with the exception of participants involved in regional security-cum-defence communities, countries to be more reluctant to sell weapons to geographically proximate countries. A third relational correlate is economic. Owing to their role in supporting the domestic prosperity of its citizens, and the importance of maintaining good diplomatic relations, we suspect that more economically significant trading partners stand a greater chance of being granted weapons. Fourth, and along similar lines, it follows that countries might be more inclined to purchase arms from states which import a larger share of their domestic goods and services (Hyde-Price 2000).

Cross-country Variations

An important question is whether we should expect differences between individual Western states. While relatively little comparative work has been undertaken in this field, the literature nevertheless points to two factors which might influence the extent to which states are willing to sacrifice domestic economy and security concerns in the name of promoting human rights or democratic freedoms in extra-territorial spaces. One is power. According to Krasner (2001, p.176), "stronger states can pick and choose from amongst those norms that best suit their material interests, or ignore norms altogether". Similar observations have been made in relation to the ability of the world's hegemon (i.e. the US) to resist external normative pressure or to impose its own rules (Flint 2004). Applied to the present case, it could well be that more powerful states are better-placed to privilege their domestic economic and security interests by exporting weapons to regimes with poor records of human rights and democratic freedoms, and therefore engage in organized hypocrisy.

A second factor is domestic institutions. According to an influential body of (new) institutionalist work in political science, countries are characterised by nationally-idiosyncratic institutional traditions, which directly or indirectly shape policy choices (North 1980). Amongst these institutional factors, countries might plausibly differ in the extent to which norms of defending human rights and democratic freedoms in foreign spaces are domestically institutionalised, and therefore the degree to which they enter logics of governments' action.

At the broadest level, scholars have drawn from elements of the above to strike a contrast between the foreign policy of the EU and the US. Hence, founded on universal

normative principles such as peace, consolidation of democracy and fundamental human freedoms, it is suggested that the EU's external policy is frequently guided by notions of the "right thing to do" (Manners 2002; Toje 2008). Included here are the defence or promotion of human rights and democratic principles in extra-territorial spaces – activities consistent with the Union's post-modern vision of sovereignty and its assumed status as a "civilian" or "normative" power. Conversely, a combination of norms of exceptionalism, a Westphalian conception of sovereign autonomy, and "hard power" means that US foreign policy has tended to be more unilateralist, strategically instrumental and self-serving (Kagan 2004; Smith 2004).

Although useful, such binary contrasts between the EU and the US run the risk of producing exaggerated caricatures, and failing to capture important aspects of countries' foreign policy identity, interests and behaviour. The US may well be characterised by unilateral exceptionalism, but the country is also unique in the degree to which democratic ideals enter foreign policy discourse, a trait that Moss (1995) ascribes to America's historic foundation upon liberal ideals. Correspondingly, the US has assumed a lead role in spreading democracy worldwide, a moral cause frequently invoked by policy-makers as constitutive of the national interest (Barkan 2004; Chandler 2003; Sparke 2007).

We can also identify variations amongst European states. For Hyde-Price (2000, p.39), "German identity has been reconstructed in opposition to the excessive nationalism of the past and the militarisation of German patriotism that it involved." Accordingly, domestic interests have been defined around Western values, with human rights and democracy occupying a prominent position in foreign policy discourse (Erb 2003, p.221).

The British and French, partly as a function of their history as colonial powers, have sought to maintain a more independent, geostrategically-oriented foreign policy. For sure, both countries have incorporated notions of human rights protection (and, to a lesser extent, democratic freedoms) into their conceptions of the national interest, and have been frontrunners in promoting human rights internationally (Wong 2006). Yet the general opinion is that commercial and geostrategic imperatives have continued to command significant influence over foreign policy decisions and have frequently trumped moral considerations (Carmona 1998; Chandler 2003; Power 2000).

Previous Work

Notwithstanding the possibility that states may behave differently, we nevertheless remain sceptical towards Western powers' ethical turn, and their willingness to implement self-declared commitments by restricting the sale of arms to countries that violate human rights and democratic norms. Previous work mostly endorses our scepticism. A number of case-studies have therefore documented the transfer of weapons from Western states to countries with dubious human rights and democratic practices – for example, the British export of Hawk jets to Indonesia (Amnesty International 2006; Cooper 2006; Gaskarth 2006). Other studies have made use of descriptive statistics to demonstrate more systematic patterns of neglect of ethical principles. Berrigan et al (2005), for instance, reports that 13 of the top 25 recipients of US arms transfers in 2003 were defined as "undemocratic" by the country's State Department. Similarly, Yanik (2006) reports that over the period 1999-2003, France, Germany, the UK and the US

respectively exported weapons to 12, 5, 9 and 32 countries defined as "undemocratic" or "partially democratic" by Freedom House[4]. Dunne and Freeman (2003) report that 19.1% of UK arms exports – by value for the year 2001 – went to "highly sensitive" countries, which include those with an 'undemocratic regime with a grave and consistent pattern of human rights abuses' (pg.14).

While the above studies paint a rather dismal account of recent practice, a more positive picture emerges from Blanton's (2000, 2005) statistical work. Departing from previous studies, the author makes use of a two-stage decision-making econometric model to estimate the influence of human rights and democracy on US arms exports. The first focuses on the qualification decision, i.e. whether a country is eligible to receive arms, and for the sub-set of countries that qualify, the second stage examines the allocation decision, i.e. the volume of arms to transfer. For samples covering the post-Cold War period, Blanton finds that human rights abusing countries are less likely to qualify (stage one) for US transfers, while more democratic countries also have a greater propensity to receive arms. She also finds that democracies exhibit a greater probability of receiving a larger amount of arms, although human rights do not seem to matter in this second stage.

Yet does this mean that other contributions to the literature have generated a misleading impression of Western countries' arms transfer practices? Any answer to this question, of course, is complicated by the fact that different studies use very different evaluative criteria. Focusing on a small number of high-profile examples, many case-

[4] Freedom House is a US non-profit organization which compiles data on the state of freedom and democracy in countries around the world, see: www.freedomhouse.org.

study contributions have adopted a largely absolutist conception: the export of weapons to any country with dubious human rights or democratic credentials is taken as evidence that countries have ignored their ethical commitments. Studies based on an analysis of descriptive statistics, meanwhile, have interpreted neglect on the basis that Western states have exported weapons to a significant number of countries in violation of self-declared ethical principles. Blanton relaxes these criteria. For her, the issue is not whether countries export weapons to human right abusing or autocratic regimes, but whether they are less likely to export weapons or export a lower share their of overall weapons to these countries.

We are sympathetic to Blanton's approach, not least because it acknowledges that ethical behaviour may be just as much evidenced by what countries do (i.e. discriminate against certain countries in sanctioning weapons exports), as what they do not. We are also sympathetic to Blanton's large-sample, econometric approach. It allows the influence of human rights and democracy to be isolated, namely, by controlling for other determinants which might plausibly shape the destination of arms transfers. Amongst the latter are various interest-related factors which provide useful clues as to underlying motivations. An econometric approach also allows a large number of recipient countries and years to be examined, and therefore to determine whether arms transfer patterns hold across multiple cases.

Accepting a less restrictive conception of ethically-motivated behaviour, the real question becomes whether Blanton's findings are exceptional. It could well be that her results are simply the result of country selection, data source or statistical specification. Our goal in the present paper is therefore to undertake a new econometric analysis of

arms transfers. Our approach differs from Blanton's in a number of important ways. First, and perhaps most fundamentally, we examine a larger sample of arms exporting countries. As well as the US, we examine transfers from France, Germany and the UK. Our reason for selecting these four countries is that they not only accounted for roughly 60% of total arms transfers to developing countries between 1992-2004, but also for the vast bulk of the West's arms transfers to the Third World during this period.

Second, we use a different dependent variable, which has both advantages and disadvantages compared to Blanton's.[5] The major advantage of our dependent variable is that it is based on a volume measure of cross-border arms transfers (i.e. the amount of physical equipment transferred multiplied by trend indicator dollar values). Conversely, Blanton uses a dependent variable that captures the dollar value of arms agreements (i.e. licensed memorandums of sale between arms sellers and arms purchasers). Compared to our measure, the US Department of Defence's foreign military sales (FMS) measure used by Blanton potentially underestimates true levels of cross-border arms flows, owing to the fact that national governments sometimes provide arms to recipients free of charge or sell them at a heavily discounted price. On the downside, while Blanton's dependent variable records both small and large weapons, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) data used for our dependent variable only captures the latter. Even if we were to use the FMS data for the US, a basic lack of comparable bilateral data on small arms transfers in the case of Germany, France and the UK means that we could not make like-for-like comparison between the four countries.

[5] We do not wish to enter a prolonged debate here on the relative merits of these measures, although we return to discrepancies between the two in discussing our results later in the paper.

Method

The Estimation Model

Similar to Blanton, our estimation approach distinguishes between two decision-making stages, qualification and allocation. This is warranted for both substantive reasons (arms exporters are likely to first screen out countries to whom they do not export at all before deciding on how much to export to those deemed eligible) and statistical reasons (a large share of zero values violates the assumptions according to which ordinary least squares produces unbiased and efficient results). At the qualification stage, a dummy variable is used as our dependent variable – set to one if a country receives arms from the exporting state under investigation, and to zero if a country receives no arms. In the allocation stage, the variable to be explained is the share of the exporter's total arms transfers that a specific developing country receives.[6] Underlying our use of share (as opposed to the absolute level) is the fact that we are primarily interested in whether there are systematic differences in the geographic pattern of an individual Western country's arms allocation decisions across developing countries, rather than why certain exporters transfer more arms overall than others.

A two-staged estimation strategy allows us to test whether human rights and democracy are used as criteria to systematically screen out certain countries from

[6] In order to better conform to the requirements of OLS, we take the natural log of the allocated arms transfer share variable.

receiving arms altogether, or merely as criteria for limiting the amount of arms transferred. The latter could arise where a government wishes to restrict exports of particular weapons (e.g. tanks). For estimating the first stage, we use a so-called logit estimator, which is standard practice where the dependent variable is a dummy variable. For the second stage, we apply ordinary least squares (OLS). Standard errors are clustered on recipient countries in both cases.[7] If the error terms of the two stages were correlated with one other, then it would be preferable to estimate them jointly, rather than independently. In this case, the use of a so-called Heckman (1979) sample selection model, which estimates both stages jointly, would be warranted. Yet tests suggest that the two stages can be treated as independent. We therefore report results for the separate logit and OLS models below.[8]

The Dependent Variables

Data on arms transfers were provided to us directly by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Our sample covers the period 1992-2004. We select 1992 as our start date because this marks the beginning of a new wave of major ethically-motivated arms transfer initiatives by leading Western arms exporters.

[7] This accounts for the fact that observations from the same potential recipient country over time are not independent from each other. In practical terms, clustering ensures that standard errors are not under-estimated.

[8] Note, our results are fully robust to using the Heckman model.

Ongoing globalization of the defence industry has greatly complicated the collection of arms transfer statistics. As Brauer (2007, p.975) observes, "a sale originating in any one state may still be *credited* to that state but *production* is as likely to take place in a variety of locations around the globe". Nevertheless, to the extent that SIPRI's data are based on reports of licensed transfers from particular countries, the fact that production is more geographically fragmented than the statistics report does not pose a particular problem for the purposes of the present study.

SIPRI's data cover major conventional arms transfers – namely, aircrafts, armored vehicles, artillery, radar systems, missiles, ships and engines for military aircrafts, ships and armored vehicles – owing to the absence of reliable statistics on cross-border flows of small arms and light weapons. While much of the conflict literature has focused on small weapons, it is worth noting that conventional weapons have also been widely used by governments/combatants to commit human rights abuses, or for autocratic regimes to maintain their grip on power (Amnesty International 2006; Goldring 2006). The non-inclusion of small weapons will mean, however, that we miss some arms exports.

SIPRI attempts to measure the volume of major arms transfers and values these by trend indicators of unit production costs, rather than the actual price paid (Smith and Tasiran 2005). This suits us because the SIPRI measure is closer to the real value of the arms exports, whereas the purchase price may well reflect other factors, including political considerations. There is some measurement error of course in the dependent variable (Smith and Tasiran 2005), but since there is no reason why this measurement error should be systematically correlated with out explanatory variables, we see no major reason for concern.

The Explanatory Variables

Arms transfers in any one year are likely to lag licensing decisions by governments, such that they will logically be influenced by conditions in preceding years. We therefore lag all of the explanatory variables by two years.[9] Our explanatory variables of central interest are the extent to which developing countries (a) respect human rights and (b) have a democratic political system. For human rights, we use a measure provided by Gibney (2007), who employs information from US State Department and Amnesty International reports on human rights conditions. Gibney's measure runs from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating a state of affairs in which the rule of law prevails, people are not imprisoned for their political views, torture is rare or exceptional and political murders are extraordinarily rare, and 5 representing widespread political imprisonment, torture, disappearances and political murders. Democracy is captured by Marshall et al's (2006) widely-used *polity2* indicator. The measure is derived from expert judgments on aspects of institutionalized democracy and autocracy within a country. *Polity2* runs from -10 to 10, with -10 representing a totally authoritarian political system, and 10 representing full democracy. Inevitably, with their emphasis on civil and political aspects, our measures adopt a largely "Western" conception of what constitutes human rights and democracy (Dodds 2005)[10]. Yet we do not believe this to be especially problematic in the present

[9] Our results are robust to using a one-year lag or no lag at all.

[10] To take one example: in debates over human rights, China's political leadership has frequently placed far greater store on social and economic rights than civil and political ones.

context where our concern is whether Western powers abide by their own standards of human rights and democracy.

We run two sets of regressions: one where human rights and democracy variables are continuous, and another where they are dummies capturing the most autocratic (polity2<=-7) and human rights violating (pts>=4) countries. Although our predominant focus is on the former, we are nevertheless interested in whether our results hold when considering the "worst offenders", countries (e.g. Saudi Arabia) which have figured heavily in debates about the practical implementation of countries' ethical foreign policy commitments (Jenkins 2007).

We also include additional explanatory variables that attempt to capture national economic and geopolitical interests of Western arms exporters. Beginning with the former, our model includes the value of bilateral trade as a share of the supplier's gross domestic product (GDP), with data taken from Gleditsch (2002) and World Bank (2006). We also include a dummy variable that is set to one if a developing country is allied to the arms exporter (data from Leeds (2005)). If states were indeed to act in ways consistent with their domestic security interests, we should logically expect them to transfer more arms to countries with which they share a military alliance. We additionally include a dummy variable for former colonies in the case of European exporters. As documented in the literature, ex-colonizers often exhibit ongoing interests in Third World states that were once part of their empire, such that an instrumental, materialist foreign policy might increase the willingness of relevant governments to sanction arms exports (Power 2000; Slater and Bell 2002; Wong 2006). As an additional geopolitical, interest-

based variable, we include the absolute distance between the capital cities of the exporter and developing country, using data from Bennett and Stam (2005).

Finally, with a view to isolating the effects of supply and demand-side factors, we include control variables which capture the demand for arms imports. Although modeling arms demand is notoriously difficult, we attempt to approximate it by using three variables previously identified in the literature (Brauer 2007; Smith and Tasiran 2005). The first is a variable which measures – on a 0-3 scale – the intensity of armed conflict in (potential) recipient countries, be it an international conflict or, more likely, a civil war (data from Gleditsch et al (2002)). A country engaged in armed conflict should plausibly exhibit a higher demand for arms. Second, based on the observation that richer countries can better afford to pay for expensive weaponry than poorer ones, we use per capita GDP (using data from World Bank 2006) as a proxy for ability to pay. Third, we include a measure of the domestic military capacity of (potential) developing-country recipients, as well as its squared term to allow for a non-linear effect of capacity on demand for arms imports. This follows the common argument in the arms transfer literature that countries with very limited military capacity have low demand for arms imports because they have no use for them, whereas countries with very high military capacity have low demand for arms imports because they have enough capacity to produce arms domestically, such that it is the countries with medium military capacity that should have the highest demand. We employ the Correlates of War project's Composite Index of National Capacity (CINC) score, which is a composite measure of military expenditures, population size and energy consumption.[11]

[11] Data from http://correlatesofwar.org/.

Results

Table 1 details our statistical results for the complete sample of developing countries. For each sender, we report two sets of coefficients, corresponding to the selection and allocation stages, respectively. We begin with our main explanatory variables. At the selection stage, coefficients for our human rights variable are statistically insignificant in all cases, suggesting that human rights conditions have made no difference to whether (or not) developing countries have received weapons from any of the major Western arms supplying states. Identical results are obtained at the allocation stage for the three European states. However, in the case of the US, a positive and statistically significant coefficient suggests that human abusing states have actually received a greater share of the country's arms overall transfers.

<<INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE>>

At the selection stage, results for democracy are similar to human rights, in that estimated coefficients for our measure of democratic polity are statistically insignificant for all four exporters. Results for stage two, concerned with allocation shares, are more variable. As in the first stage, we find that the US has failed to discriminate amongst countries according to whether they are more or less democratic, at least in terms of the volume of weapons transferred. For France and the UK, the results are even more striking: a negative and statistically significant coefficient indicates that more autocratic

countries have actually received a greater share of French and British weapons. Yet we find precisely the opposite for Germany: our estimated coefficient in the second stage is positive and statistically significant.

What other factors are systematically correlated with arms transfers from the four Western arms exporting countries? Three (largely, supply-side) attributes appear to have been influential, although some geographic variability is apparent. One is the presence of a military alliance. As indicated by positive and statistically significant coefficients, allies of Germany, the UK and the US are more likely to have qualified for arms transfers from these countries. With the exception of Germany, however, a similar positive relationship does not carry through to the allocation stage. Another correlate is spatial proximity. Our estimations suggest that the French, British and Americans have been more willing to supply weapons to countries which are further away. A similar relationship exists for the US in the second stage, but for none of the other countries, where the distance coefficient is statistically insignificant. A third factor is bilateral trade as a share of the exporting country's GDP. In the first stage, a positive and statistically significant relationship exists in the case of France, the UK and the US. In the second stage, only Germany and the US have statistically significant coefficients, both of which are positive as expected.

With respect to our control variables, as anticipated, we estimate a positive and statistically significant coefficient for GDP per capita at the qualification stage for all four countries. At the allocation stage, GDP per capita is only statistically significant in the case of the US and France, again with a positive sign. Also conforming to expectations, we find that military capacity is positively and statistically significantly correlated with arms transfers from all four countries, both at qualification and allocation

stages. In line with the literature, increasing military capacity first raises the likelihood of arms imports and then, after a threshold has been reached, decreases it.[12] The same is true for volume: countries of medium military capacity import more arms than either countries of low or countries of high military capacity.

Conflict-intensity in the recipient state is largely insignificant. The only exceptions are France and the US at the second stage. Previous studies have generally interpreted similar findings as evidence that countries have failed to live-up to their ethical pledges. However, in the absence of data on whether these conflicts involved the "legitimate" use of force, we simply note here that our results do not contradict the basic tenet of organized hypocrisy.

We now turn to our secondary estimations, where the continuous version of our variables of main interest are replaced with dummy variables, capturing the most human rights violating and autocratic countries. We briefly summarize findings without reporting them in a regression table. Only two basic results change. First, our human rights coefficient for US transfers becomes positive and statistically significant at the qualification stage, mirroring identical findings at the allocation stage. Second, the coefficient for democracy becomes insignificant for Germany in the second stage estimation, whereas it was previously positive and statistically significant. Similarly, the importance of economic and geopolitical considerations hardly changes. For our military alliance variable at the first stage, the coefficient moves from statistical insignificance to

[12] Further military capacity increases will then eventually have a negative effect on arms imports, but the estimated coefficients and the distribution of the military capacity variable suggest that this is only relevant for developing countries at the very top end of military capacity.

become positive and statistically significant in the case of France, while for Germany, the positive and statistically significant coefficient is rendered statistically insignificant. All of the other variables of substantive interest remain basically unchanged.

Accepting these cross-country differences, our findings nevertheless broadly contradict results from the only other large-sample, econometric work, which has investigated the links between US arms transfers and liberal democratic principles (Blanton 2005, 2000). Why the discrepancy? One possible answer is data. As noted earlier, Blanton's dataset for US transfers features both large and small arms, whereas ours' is restricted to the former. It could be that the US government has been more willing to enforce export restrictions in the case of small arms. Similarly, arms sales agreements may fail to capture important post-contract dynamics. Considerable discrepancies exist in the statistics between the value of arms agreements and actual deliveries which, if not randomly distributed across countries, would bias the estimation results.

Another possible explanation is the specification of Blanton's estimation models. Missing from her models is military capacity which, according to previous work, is an important determinant of arms transfers (Smith and Tasiran 2005). Also missing are variables for military alliances, trade and distance. The point here is that the omission of these variables – and, by implication, the under-specification of Blanton's estimation models – might have contributed to her findings regarding human rights and democracy. Clearly, more work is needed to scrutinize the underlying reasons for these discrepancies.

Conclusions and discussion

Ideas of new beginnings, agendas and spatial horizons have long been a feature of the geopolitical imagination (Agnew and Corbridge 1995). Since the early-1990s, one such imaginary (re-)scripted by Western political elites is that they have moved away from the state-centric agenda of the Cold War era, dominated by purely self-interested concerns for domestic economy, security and power. According to the rhetoric, a more ethically-grounded foreign policy has taken its place, underpinned by universal moral principles and a commitment to promote the protection of rights and freedoms of extra-territorial citizens. Critical geographers have been quick to criticize these and similar socio-spatial imaginaries. Amongst others, they have argued that such scripts have often performed covert, instrumental roles. That is, rather than marking a more progressive moral turn in foreign policy action, they are part-and-parcel of a discursive strategy which seeks to legitimize existing security agendas, economic interests and patterns of domination over space (Flint and Falah 2004; O'Loughlin and Kolossov 2002; Ó Tuathail 2000; Power 2003; Roberts et al 2003; Sparke 2007).

In the present paper, we set-out to scrutinize the alleged gap between political imaginaries and material outcomes, using the example of Western arms exports to developing countries. Our basic thesis is that states' official commitment to a value-based arms controls policy is largely a matter of symbolic politics – with countries reluctant to sacrifice national interests of economy and security in name of protecting or advancing the rights and freedoms of extra-territorial citizens. Using quantitative data on large

weapons transfers from France, Germany, the UK and the US over the period 1992-2004, we find evidence to support our arguments.

According to our statistical estimations, neither human rights abuses nor autocratic polity would appear to reduce the likelihood of countries receiving Western arms, or reduce the relative share of a particular exporter's weapons they receive. In fact, human rights abusing countries are actually more likely to receive weapons from the US, while autocratic regimes emerge as more likely recipients of weaponry from France and the UK. Reinforcing the impression that extra-territorial ethical considerations are far from paramount, we show that the geography of Western arms exports is closely aligned with self-interested, economically and geopolitically-important relational ties. Hence developing countries which are more important trading partners exhibit a greater probability of qualifying for arms, as generally do countries which fulfill the domestic interests of the supplying state extra-territorially as military allies. Western countries have not, it seems, systematically acted counter to more conventional, materialist interests.

Our statistical estimations say nothing about underlying causality, but it would be difficult to square the above findings with behavioral explanations based solely on hegemony. If power were indeed the decisive variable, then the US should logically be expected to have shown a greater propensity to defy international normative roles than the three European states, both in the case of human rights and democracy. For sure, the US hardly acts in the spirit of its self-declared ethical principles, but nor does France or the UK. Both sets of countries have systematically contravened one principle or another.

Germany fares only slightly better with respect to democracy, but not human rights protection.

What seems to matter more, at least in defining what states can or cannot get away with, are domestic institutions (Donnelly and Liang-Fenton 2004). That the US is more willing to overtly ignore human rights abuses than autocratic government is broadly consistent with the idea that the country is, first and foremost, founded on democratic ideals rather than humanitarian ones (Moss 1995). Although far from irrelevant, the domestic appropriateness of defending or promoting democracy in non-domestic spaces would appear to be less deeply institutionalized in Britain and France than in the US. Instead, partly as a consequence of their historic role in colonialism, norms of extra-territorial responsibility are centrally defined around human rights.[13] The idea that domestic institutions matter is also supported by the German case – the country with the "least bad" record regarding arms transfers. Germany's foreign policy identity, which was formed in the shadow of an excessively autocratic, militaristic and human rights violating past, is one where economic or geostrategic concerns are least likely to trump the promotion of Western values (Erb 2003).

What are the implications of our findings? Most obviously, by exposing the hypocrisy underlying geopolitical imaginaries of ethical foreign policy, they remind us of the importance of interrogating the discursive constructions of political leaders (Flint and Falah 2004; Ó Tuathail 1992; Roberts et al 2003). While a more ethically-grounded foreign policy may script a geopolitics of hope (Sparke 2007), underpinned by a

[13] As noted earlier, human rights have formed the centre-piece of each country's ethical foreign policy commitments, as well as the EU's Code of Conduct.

deterritorialised concern for the well-being of a more spatially inclusive, cosmopolitan humanity, our findings suggest that such socio-spatial narratives (potentially) conceal a geopolitics of territorial egoism. In an important sense, therefore, our study speaks to wider debates about the changing boundaries of the modern state. Although it has become popular to talk about a blurring of domestic and foreign, and the emergence of a post-sovereign state identity, the findings of the present study suggest that it is important not to take this argument too far. Aspirationally and rhetorically, Western countries may subscribe to a non-territorial conception of rights and duties, and envision a state whose interests lie in promoting universal values across borders. Yet if the case of arms control is anything to go by, these universals have not generally dislodged the primacy of national economic and geopolitical interests. Far from the borderless world envisaged by hyperglobalists, territorial borders would appear to continue to enframe economic and geostrategic interests, and centrally guide Western states' foreign policy actions (Yeung 1998).

We do wish to caveat these remarks. Our statistical estimations capture general propensities, such that results suggesting that individual Western powers are no less likely to export arms to human rights abusing or autocratic countries cannot be taken as evidence that these countries' leaders have *never* embargoed arms sales on ethical grounds. Our results also say nothing about the behavior of other major arms exporters – including non-Western ones (e.g. China and Russia). Still, the study's findings nevertheless paints a rather gloomy portrayal of Western countries' post-Cold War value-driven foreign policy and serves as a reminder of some of the systemic contradictions opened by globalization (Ó Tuathail 2000; Toje 2008). For now, at least, these

contradictions would appear to have been frequently resolved through organizational hypocrisy in the case of arms. An important question is whether, looking into the future, promoting the rights and freedoms of distant strangers will become more deeply institutionalized among domestic actors to the extent that acting “ethically” towards extra-territorial others truly becomes a consequential national interest similar to more traditional economic and security concerns.

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Table 1. Estimation results.

	France	Germany	UK	US
		First stage: Selection		
Human rights violations (importer)	0.179	0.083	-0.094	0.220
	(1.04)	(0.38)	(0.45)	(1.28)
Democracy (importer)	-0.039	-0.038	-0.039	-0.017
	(1.50)	(1.32)	(1.24)	(0.63)
Bilateral trade (% of GDP of exporter)	5.37	-1.83	3.05	6.77
	(2.43)**	(1.26)	(2.14)**	(1.89)*
Importer is allied	0.792	2.207	2.616	1.220
	(1.14)	(1.63)*	(2.27)**	(2.67)***
Importer is former colony	0.003		0.387	
	(0.01)		(0.95)	
ln Distance	0.972	0.417	1.192	1.134
	(2.45)**	(1.08)	(2.02)**	(2.25)**
Armed conflict in importer	-0.083	0.180	0.105	0.014
	(0.60)	(0.98)	(0.70)	(0.12)
ln GDP p.c. (importer)	0.661	1.040	0.417	0.867
	(3.47)***	(5.34)***	(2.50)**	(6.18)***
Military capacity (importer)	0.960	1.349	0.727	1.163
	(1.82)*	(3.11)***	(2.53)**	(2.53)**
Military capacity squared	-6.280	-5.958	-4.763	-1.341
	(1.58)	(1.67)*	(2.19)**	(2.97)***
		Second stage: Allocation		
Human rights violations (importer)	-0.215	0.089	0.382	0.245
	(1.46)	(0.49)	(1.41)	(1.73)*
Democracy (importer)	-0.064	0.057	-0.044	-0.055
	(2.32)**	(1.86)*	(1.69)*	(1.50)
Bilateral trade (% of GDP of exporter)	-0.474	2.007	0.194	2.99
	(0.40)	(2.12)**	(0.15)	(2.82)***
Importer is allied	1.151	1.741	0.319	0.453
	(1.50)	(2.16)**	(0.63)	(1.05)
Importer is former colony	0.179		0.595	
	(0.21)		(1.34)	
ln Distance	0.155	0.418	0.154	0.848
	(0.60)	(1.42)	(0.45)	(1.97)*
Armed conflict in importer	0.283	-0.104	-0.089	0.250
	(1.74)*	(0.57)	(0.53)	(1.85)*
ln GDP p.c. (importer)	0.507	0.073	0.259	0.602
	(2.16)**	(0.43)	(1.16)	(3.84)***
Military capacity (importer)	0.791	0.300	0.571	0.397
	(5.05)***	(1.53)	(3.07)***	(1.20)
Military capacity squared	-4.583	-3.186	-4.580	-5.570
	(4.66)***	(2.02)**	(3.27)***	(1.96)*
(Pseudo) R-squared (first/second stage)	0.34/0.33	0.34/0.31	0.27/0.19	0.35/0.37
Observations (first/second stage)	1449/209	1388/190	1449/155	1436/358

Notes: s.e. clustered on dyad. Absolute z-statistics in parentheses. Constant included in both stages, but not reported. *** statistically significant at $p < .01$ ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$