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Beyond Emboldenment

Mark S. Bell

How Acquiring Nuclear Weapons Can Change Foreign Policy

What happens to the foreign policies of states when they acquire nuclear weapons? This question has grown in importance as new nuclear powers have emerged and other states have moved closer to joining the nuclear club. Indeed, determining the costs that the United States and others should be prepared to pay to prevent nuclear proliferation hinges on assessing how nuclear weapons affect the behavior of the states that acquire them and how dangerous those effects are. If states expand their interests in world politics or act more aggressively in the aftermath of nuclear acquisition, preventing nuclear proliferation should be a higher priority than if nuclear weapons do not significantly affect the foreign policies of the states that acquire them. Crafting deterrence strategies for new nuclear states also requires understanding the foreign policy effects that nuclear weapons are likely to have in a given case.¹

Despite its importance, the question of how nuclear weapons affect the foreign policies of the states that acquire them has not been satisfactorily answered. The literature on nuclear weapons has generally examined the effects of nuclear weapons on outcomes other than foreign policy; has focused on the effects of nuclear weapons on the calculations of other states rather than the acquiring state; and has often sought to explore how states with nuclear weapons should behave rather than how they do behave. The literature that has examined the effects of nuclear weapons on foreign policy has tended to conflate effects of nuclear weapons under catch-all terms such as “emboldenment” while ignoring other potential effects of nuclear acquisition.

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1. Joshua Rovner, “After Proliferation: Deterrence Theory and Emerging Nuclear Powers,” in Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes, eds., *Strategy in the Second Nuclear Age: Power, Ambition, and the Ultimate Weapon* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2012), pp. 17–36.

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Policymakers have also tended to worry in generic terms about emboldenment without specifying how or why nuclear weapons may incentivize specific behaviors.

This article offers a typology of the effects that nuclear weapons have on the foreign policies of the states that acquire them, and demonstrates its utility by using it to shed light on the effects of nuclear acquisition on British foreign policy. The article proceeds in four parts. First, I show that existing literature has failed to provide a typology or theory of the effects that nuclear weapons have on state foreign policy. Second, I offer such a typology. I identify six foreign policy behaviors that nuclear weapons may facilitate—aggression, expansion, independence, bolstering, steadfastness, and compromise; show theoretically how nuclear acquisition may facilitate each of these behaviors; and identify circumstances under which states may find each of these behaviors attractive. Third, I use the typology to examine the British case. I show that Britain used nuclear weapons to facilitate several, but not all, of the behaviors identified by the typology, thus demonstrating its utility. Fourth, I offer conclusions and avenues for future research.

Existing Literature

Foreign policy is the portion of grand strategy that deals with a state's relationships with other states. If grand strategy is the collection of means and ends with which a state attempts to achieve its goals,² then foreign policy is the collection of means and ends with which a state pursues its goals with respect to another state. Foreign policy therefore includes a state's goals with respect to other states, the strategies it uses to pursue them, and the resources it dedicates to pursuing them. Foreign policy is dyadic because state A may have a different foreign policy toward state B to that which it has toward state C. Understanding the ways in which nuclear weapons may affect foreign policy, then, requires a typology that allows scholars and policymakers to distinguish among different foreign policy behaviors that nuclear weapons may facilitate. To account for variation in the historical record, the typology must be sufficiently flexible to allow the effects of nuclear weapons on foreign policy to vary across states. Similarly, because foreign policy is dyadic, and because nuclear weapons may affect state A's foreign policy toward state B differently to the way in which nuclear weapons affect its relationship with state C, the

2. Barry R. Posen, *The Origins of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 7.

typology must also be flexible enough to allow nuclear weapons to affect a state's relationships with different states in different ways.

Existing work has not yet offered such a typology of effects of nuclear weapons on foreign policy for three reasons. First, most literature on nuclear weapons has examined the effects of nuclear weapons on outcomes other than the foreign policy of the state that acquires them. In particular, a large literature has examined the connections between nuclear weapons and interstate conflict occurrence,³ trajectories,⁴ and outcomes.⁵ Many of these works do make theoretical arguments linking nuclear weapons and particular foreign policy behaviors. For example, Kenneth Waltz argues that "nuclear weapons make states more cautious," while Erik Gartzke and Dong-Joon Jo argue that "nuclear-capable nations are bound to increase their influence in international affairs."⁶ These arguments, however, tend to specify the effects of nuclear acquisition to be the same for all states. Such claims are of limited use in shedding light on the variation in foreign policy responses to nuclear acquisition in the historical record.

A second reason why existing scholarship has insufficiently examined the effects of nuclear weapons on the foreign policies of the states that acquire

3. For examples of theoretical work on nuclear weapons and conflict occurrence, see Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better," Adelphi Paper No. 171 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies [IISS], 1981); John J. Mearsheimer, "Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe," *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Winter 1984/85), pp. 19–46; Scott D. Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory, Deterrence Theory, and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1994), pp. 66–107; and John Mueller, "The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons: Stability in the Postwar World," *International Security*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Fall 1988), pp. 55–79. For examples of empirical work, see Erik Gartzke and Dong-Joon Jo, "Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Disputes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (April 2009), pp. 209–233; Vipin Narang, "What Does It Take to Deter? Regional Power Nuclear Postures and International Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (June 2013), pp. 478–508; and Mark S. Bell and Nicholas L. Miller, "Questioning the Effect of Nuclear Weapons on Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (February 2015), pp. 74–92.

4. See, for example, Barry R. Posen, *Inadvertent Escalation: Conventional War and Nuclear Risks* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); Barry R. Posen, "U.S. Security Policy in a Nuclear-Armed World, Or: What If Iraq Had Had Nuclear Weapons?" *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Spring 1997), pp. 1–31; and Victor Asal and Kyle Beardsley, "Proliferation and International Crisis Behavior," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (March 2007), pp. 139–155.

5. See, for example, Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1987); Kyle Beardsley and Victor Asal, "Winning with the Bomb," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (April 2009), pp. 278–301; Matthew Kroenig, "Nuclear Superiority and the Balance of Resolve: Explaining Nuclear Crisis Outcomes," *International Organization*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (January 2013), pp. 141–171; and Todd S. Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann, "Crisis Bargaining and Nuclear Blackmail," *International Organization*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (January 2013), pp. 173–195.

6. Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), p. 39; and Gartzke and Jo, "Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Disputes," p. 210.

them is that scholarship has tended to focus on how nuclear acquisition affects the calculations of other states. For example, the literature on nuclear deterrence examines whether other states are deterred from attacking the state that has acquired nuclear weapons.⁷ While of importance, this literature does not provide direct insight into how nuclear weapons affect the foreign policy of the acquiring state. For example, if nuclear weapons provide deterrent benefits, do states that acquire them respond to that additional security by behaving more or less aggressively? The literature on deterrence offers little guidance. Similarly, the literature on nuclear compellence examines whether nuclear weapons affect how other states respond to compellent threats, largely ignoring whether nuclear states respond to the (possible) compellent benefits of nuclear weapons by altering their foreign policy.⁸

A third reason why scholarship on the connections between nuclear weapons and foreign policy has been underdeveloped is that the classic works on nuclear strategy and the impact of the nuclear revolution were written during the Cold War and thus share an emphasis on understanding symmetric nuclear possession (as by the United States and Soviet Union) and offering insights into how pairs of nuclear-armed states could or should conduct foreign policy, coercive diplomacy, and war against each other.⁹ Such works contributed enormously to scholars' understanding of nuclear weapons but largely ignored how nuclear weapons affect a state's interactions with nonnuclear states, and did not offer a theory of how nuclear-armed states did in fact conduct their foreign policy.

The exception to this is the literature on nuclear "emboldenment," which does offer a partial theory of the impact of nuclear acquisition on foreign policy. For example, Paul Kapur argues that emboldenment in the form of conventional aggression should be expected when weak, revisionist states acquire nuclear weapons.¹⁰ Although of importance, Kapur's work does not offer a complete typology or theory of how nuclear weapons affect foreign policy. Aggression is not the only behavior that nuclear weapons may facilitate, and

7. See, for example, Mearsheimer, "Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe"; and Narang, "What Does It Take to Deter?"

8. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*; and Sechser and Fuhrmann, "Crisis Bargaining and Nuclear Blackmail."

9. See, for example, Henry A. Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1957); Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960); and Robert Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984).

10. S. Paul Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007). For a recent argument that emboldenment should be expected in the aftermath of nuclear acquisition, see Matthew Kroenig, *A Time to Attack: The Looming Iranian Nuclear Threat* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Kapur is not explicit about what should be expected when powerful or status quo states acquire nuclear weapons.

A more discriminating conceptual language or typology is, therefore, needed to categorize and describe varying foreign policy responses to nuclear acquisition. The development of typologies is an important driver of theoretical progress in international relations and, in this case, would facilitate theorizing about the effects of nuclear weapons.¹¹ Such a typology would be useful not just for scholars. Policymakers have also frequently failed to disaggregate the different behaviors that nuclear weapons might facilitate and why, instead expressing broad concerns about the emboldening effects of nuclear acquisition.¹² A more discriminating typology would allow policymakers to more precisely specify concerns about potential proliferants and better develop strategies to counter specific behaviors that a state may use nuclear acquisition to facilitate.

Effects of Nuclear Weapons

What, then, are the potential effects of nuclear weapons on the foreign policies of the states that acquire them? This section identifies six conceptually distinct and empirically distinguishable foreign policy behaviors that nuclear weapons may facilitate. Some of these effects have previously been conflated under the term “emboldenment,” while others are not typically thought of as “emboldening” effects. I show why nuclear weapons may reduce the costs associated with each of these behaviors. When the cost of a behavior is reduced, that behavior should become more attractive to the state, incentivizing the state to engage in greater quantities of that behavior.¹³ This is not to say that nuclear weapons should be expected to lead all states to engage in greater levels of all of these behaviors. States may engage in different combinations of these behaviors because not all states find these behaviors equally attractive. Although offering a fully specified theory of why different states find different combinations of these behaviors attractive is beyond the scope of this article, I identify the types of states that are likely to find each behavior attractive.¹⁴ I also do not

11. Colin Elman, “Explanatory Typologies in Qualitative Studies of International Politics,” *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April 2005), pp. 293–326.

12. See, for example, John Mueller, *Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al Qaeda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 95–99.

13. This does not mean that nuclear weapons necessarily make a given behavior cheap, just that they may reduce its cost and thus make it more attractive to engage in greater levels of that behavior.

14. I offer a fully specified theory of this sort in Mark S. Bell, “What Do Nuclear Weapons Offer

rule out the possibility that nuclear acquisition may increase the costs of some of these foreign policy behaviors under some circumstances.¹⁵

In demonstrating that nuclear weapons may reduce the costs of these behaviors, I make three assumptions. First, I assume that nuclear weapons affect a state's foreign policy because they provide capabilities that the state previously lacked.¹⁶ Importantly, this assumption suggests that nuclear weapons should begin to affect a state's foreign policies at the point at which they can be used in the way the state intends to use them. The technological requirements of this depend on a state's nuclear posture.¹⁷ For example, if a state employs a catalytic posture that aims to compel outside intervention by threatening a nuclear test, as South Africa and Pakistan did, only the ability to conduct a nuclear test is required for nuclear weapons to affect calculations about foreign policy. If, however, a state anticipates using nuclear weapons to hit strategic targets in an adversary's homeland, then nuclear weapons should affect a state's foreign policy at the point at which the state can deliver nuclear weapons to those targets. For example, Britain envisioned delivering nuclear weapons to the cities of the Soviet Union, so nuclear weapons should have begun to affect British foreign policy once Britain possessed the capacity to deliver nuclear weapons to the Soviet Union. Second, I assume that the threat of using nuclear weapons is credible under at least some circumstances. The literature on nuclear deterrence also relies on this assumption, because the deterrent power of nuclear weapons depends on the possibility of nuclear use. Third, I assume that states seek to use their nuclear weapons to protect and pursue their interests. In other words, states are strategic actors that do not spend time and resources acquiring nuclear weapons only to ignore the benefits that they offer. Taking these assumptions as a starting point, I identify six foreign policy behaviors that nuclear weapons can facilitate.

AGGRESSION

First, nuclear weapons may facilitate aggression. Aggression is defined as the more belligerent pursuit of goals in preexisting disputes or in pursuit of previ-

States? A Theory of State Foreign Policy Response to Nuclear Acquisition," Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2014, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2566293>.

15. For example, Jervis notes that "nuclear weapons can decrease the state's freedom of action by increasing the suspicion with which it is viewed." See Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospects of Armageddon* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 3.

16. This assumption provides a rational baseline with which to theorize about the effects of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons, however, might also affect foreign policy through other mechanisms, such as psychological effects on leaders' perceptions of status.

17. On the requirements of different postures, see Vipin Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014).

ously articulated interests. Nuclear weapons may reduce the price of this behavior because they add a layer of military capability that can be called upon, or that might be used inadvertently by leaders enveloped by the fog of war. As a result, nuclear weapons raise the risk of escalation for the state's opponents in responding to aggression, which must now reckon with both the conventional forces the state previously possessed and their nuclear capabilities. As a result, the threat of nuclear escalation can act as a shield behind which aggression can be undertaken. Nuclear weapons can therefore make more attractive opportunities to escalate a conflict or attempt to revise the status quo.

A range of states should be expected to find it attractive to use nuclear weapons to facilitate aggression. In particular, states facing severe threats would often like to be able to improve their position against that threat, capture disputed territory, or tolerate higher levels of escalation in the conflict, and so are particularly likely to engage in greater levels of aggression in the aftermath of nuclear acquisition. States facing severe threats are likely to find many of the other behaviors discussed below (with the exception of steadfastness) less attractive given the political priority they must place on improving their position against the source of the threats. States with revisionist preferences may also find it particularly attractive to use nuclear weapons to engage in aggression.¹⁸ Pakistan provides an example of a state in this position that has used its nuclear weapons to facilitate aggression. In the face of a proximate and conventionally superior Indian threat, and possessing revisionist preferences, Pakistan has used nuclear weapons as a shield behind which it has pursued more aggressively its foreign policy goals against India, notably during the 1999 Kargil War and in the use of subconventional attacks against Indian cities.¹⁹ As Christine Fair argues, nuclear weapons "increase the cost of Indian action" against Pakistan, which facilitates Pakistani "risk-seeking behavior" aimed at revising the status quo.²⁰

It is worth noting that nuclear weapons might not reduce the costs of aggression if they are used as a substitute for existing conventional forces that the state possesses.²¹ If a state uses nuclear weapons as a substitute for conventional forces (i.e., if a state acquires nuclear weapons and uses them to replace existing conventional forces), then the costs of aggression may not be reduced. In such circumstances, the state has fewer conventional forces with which to

18. Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent*.

19. *Ibid.*; Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*; and C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

20. Fair, *Fighting to the End*, p. 203.

21. Elsewhere, I argue that nuclear substitution occurs among states that do not face severe threats but that are declining in power. See Bell, "What Do Nuclear Weapons Offer States?"

engage in aggression after acquiring nuclear weapons. Aggression can be identified by a range of behaviors, including: (1) the issuance of new or more demanding compelling threats in an ongoing dispute; (2) the dedication of larger conventional forces to missions associated with a particular dispute; (3) more belligerent rhetoric being used by government officials and political leaders toward a particular country; (4) the vertical escalation of a dispute through the use of new tactics, forces, or military doctrines; and (5) a greater tolerance for escalation and risk-taking behavior in an existing dispute.

EXPANSION

Second, nuclear weapons can facilitate expansion. While some scholars use the term “expansion” as more or less synonymous with aggression,²² I distinguish between the two terms. Expansion is defined as the widening of a state’s goals in international politics, leading to new interests, rather than more aggressive pursuit of existing interests. Expansion is primarily composed of two dyadic foreign policy behaviors: the formation of new dyadic alliance relationships and the initiation of new dyadic adversarial relationships. Nuclear weapons may reduce the cost of expansion because they allow states to free up conventional military and political resources that were previously dedicated to military tasks the state can now accomplish with nuclear weapons or by relying on nuclear deterrence. These freed-up forces can then be redeployed in pursuit of new interests at lower risk than would have been possible without nuclear weapons.

States facing a favorable security environment and rising in power are likely to be most interested in using nuclear weapons to facilitate expansion. States in a favorable security environment do not need to deal with immediate threats, and rising powers frequently seek to expand their influence and reach in international politics as their power position improves.²³ They may find that nuclear weapons offer them a tool that facilitates such behavior. The United States provides an example of a state in this position that pursued expansion in the aftermath of acquiring nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons played a key role in the U.S. Cold War strategy to contain the Soviet Union, facilitated a semi-permanent U.S. military presence in Europe, and allowed the United States to extend nuclear deterrence to a range of new allies. Nuclear weapons thus permitted the United States to pursue a vastly more expansive grand

22. See, for example, Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 1.

23. Karl W. Deutsch, *The Analysis of International Relations* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 88; and Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America’s World Role* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 38.

strategy than had ever previously been considered in its history.²⁴ Melvyn Leffler argues that U.S. strategic superiority was a prerequisite for American officials “realiz[ing] that their security interests stretched across the globe,” with the United States seeking to “resist Soviet expansion in Western Europe, the Middle East, and North East Asia. They wanted control over western Germany and all of Japan. They wanted to contain the Communist left in France, Italy, Greece, Korea, and China. They wanted to modify traditional imperial practices, co-opt the forces of revolutionary nationalism, and insure Western control of the underdeveloped world.”²⁵ Even today, the U.S. government describes nuclear weapons as a “foundational capabilit[y]” critical for reassuring the United States’ many allies and underpinning the U.S. power position.²⁶ More broadly, and consistent with the idea that states expand their interests after nuclear acquisition, quantitative research has found that states possessing nuclear weapons are more likely to initiate military disputes against countries with which they have no history of conflict.²⁷

As with aggression, nuclear weapons might not reduce the costs associated with expansion if they are used as a substitute for conventional forces. If nuclear weapons replace existing forces, then the state will have fewer conventional forces with which to pursue new interests or support new allies, and the cost of expansion may not be reduced. Identifying what constitutes a “new” interest of a state (and thus distinguishing expansion from aggression) is not always easy because states have incentives to claim that new alliances or rivalries are consistent with long-standing goals. Nonetheless, actions indicative of expansion include (1) broadening the state’s declared interests in world politics; (2) forming alliances with, or offering extended deterrence to, new states; (3) developing greater power projection capabilities; (4) providing support for insurgents, proxies, or rebel groups in new countries; and (5) participating in disputes with states with which the state has no history of conflict.

24. On the role played by nuclear weapons in U.S. grand strategy after World War II, see Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945–1950* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980); Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992); Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War*, revised and expanded ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Mearsheimer, “Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe.”

25. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, p. 97.

26. White House, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: White House, 2015), p. 8; and U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense 2010), p. iii.

27. Bell and Miller, “Questioning the Effect of Nuclear Weapons on Conflict.”

INDEPENDENCE

Third, nuclear weapons may reduce the costs associated with a state acting independently of allies or other states that help provide for a state's security. Independence is defined as the taking of actions that an ally either opposes or does not support the state taking. How might nuclear weapons affect the cost of independence? By providing an internal source of military power that the state previously lacked, nuclear weapons can act as a partial substitute for external sources of military power (alliances).²⁸ The alliance therefore becomes somewhat less valuable than it previously was.²⁹ Nuclear weapons can thus allow states to overcome "the dissatisfaction stemm[ing] from compromises of foreign policy autonomy necessary to retain [a] patron's support."³⁰ Because states with nuclear weapons have less need for an ally's protection, they should be less inclined to compromise their own goals in exchange for protection.

Many states that have senior allies that provide for their security are likely to find using nuclear weapons to pursue independence attractive. States in this position will often seek to pursue independence because they are constrained if they wish to engage in behaviors that the senior ally does not support, and will thus seek to use nuclear weapons to pursue a more autonomous and independent foreign policy. As Avery Goldstein argues, "[T]hose able to become more self-reliant often make the costly effort [to do so] . . . deference to a security patron is likely to be politically unattractive for the leaders of sovereign states."³¹ France provides an example of a state using nuclear weapons to facilitate independence. Upon acquiring a deliverable capability in 1964, France became more comfortable acting independently of the United States and took a series of actions despite American opposition, including criticizing the Bretton Woods monetary system, pursuing détente with the Soviet Union, recognizing China, and withdrawing from NATO's command structure.³² Similarly, observers have argued that North Korea's nuclear weapons allow Pyongyang to defy its Chinese patron. Jonathan Pollack argues that "the desire to be answerable to no external power" drove North Korea's nuclear program, and that

28. Although I use the term "alliance," this theoretical mechanism is not dependent on the alliance being formally codified.

29. This is not to say that the alliance becomes of no value to the state, just that its value is reduced upon nuclear acquisition.

30. Avery Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century: China, Britain, France, and the Enduring Legacy of the Nuclear Revolution* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 21.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

32. Philip H. Gordon, "Charles de Gaulle and the Nuclear Revolution," in John Lewis Gaddis et al., eds., *Cold War Statesmen Confront the Bomb: Nuclear Diplomacy since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 216–235, at p. 234; and Wilfrid L. Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971).

its nuclear weapons inhibit China's ability to control North Korea or sever Beijing's ties with Pyongyang.³³

Actions indicating increased independence from an ally include (1) an increased willingness to criticize an ally; (2) an increased willingness to cooperate with an adversary of an ally; (3) an increased willingness to engage in behaviors opposed by the ally; (4) a reduced inclination to inform an ally in advance of taking particular actions; (5) an increased willingness to take military actions in the absence of support from an ally; and (6) withdrawal from an alliance. Importantly, independence may go hand-in-hand with other behaviors identified by the typology, when those behaviors are at least partially constrained by the preferences of an ally. For example, nuclear acquisition may facilitate aggression via the mechanisms identified above or because a state previously refrained from aggression for fear of invoking the displeasure of an ally.

BOLSTERING

Fourth, nuclear weapons may reduce the costs associated with bolstering. Bolstering is defined as the taking of actions to improve the credibility or strength of an alliance or ally.³⁴ Thus, whereas independence involves using nuclear weapons as a substitute for an alliance, bolstering involves using nuclear weapons to augment an alliance. Nuclear weapons can reduce the costs associated with bolstering in several ways. First, nuclear weapons provide a state with resources that it can offer to an ally, such as by transferring sensitive nuclear technologies.³⁵ Second, nuclear weapons may offer the ability to defend an alliance partner at lower cost than with conventional forces. Third, having nuclear weapons may help a state deter attacks on its ally directly, thus making the alliance less costly to maintain and reducing the costs of making a stronger alliance commitment.³⁶

A range of states are likely to find it attractive to use nuclear weapons to bolster allies. States facing severe security threats may prefer to focus on using

33. Dick K. Nanto and Mark E. Manyin, "China–North Korea Relations," *North Korean Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2011), p. 97; Jonathan D. Pollack, "China's North Korea Conundrum: How to Balance a Three Legged Stool," *Yale Global Online*, October 23, 2009, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/chinas-north-korea-conundrum-how-balance-three-legged-stool>; and Jonathan D. Pollack, *No Exit: North Korea, Nuclear Weapons, and International Security* (London: IISS, 2011), p. 105.

34. As with independence, nuclear weapons can facilitate the bolstering of another state even if that state is not a formal ally.

35. Matthew Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb: Technology Transfer and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010).

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

their nuclear weapons to provide for their own security than to enhance the security of others; but among states not facing such binding constraints, many may find bolstering allies to be attractive. Rising powers seeking greater influence over other states may seek to bolster alliances to improve their power position. But equally, because nuclear forces are relatively cheap, states declining in power but seeking to avoid retrenchment may also seek to use nuclear commitments to bolster allies, as their conventional commitments to allies become harder to sustain over time. It is not surprising, therefore, that a range of states have used nuclear weapons to bolster their allies. For example, China provided Pakistan with highly enriched uranium and a nuclear weapon design to bolster Pakistan against their common adversary, India.³⁷ Indeed, the transfer of nuclear technologies is often undertaken to bolster allies against common enemies.³⁸ Similarly, countries have often sought to add a nuclear component to existing alliance guarantees to enhance alliance credibility.³⁹ Actions indicating bolstering include (1) offering a firmer defense commitment than had previously been offered to an ally; (2) stationing new forces or weapons systems on the territory of the ally; (3) institutionalizing or formalizing a previously informal cooperative relationship; and (4) providing additional resources to the ally (including nuclear technologies).

STEADFASTNESS

Fifth, nuclear weapons may decrease the costs associated with steadfastness. Steadfastness is defined as a reduced inclination to back down in disputes or in response to coercion and an increased willingness to fight to defend the status quo. Nuclear weapons can reduce the cost of this behavior by raising the risk of escalation for an opponent, making offensive threats against the nuclear state less credible, and reducing the danger for the nuclear state of refusing to back down. This logic—that nuclear weapons increase the level of escalation a state is willing to tolerate in a particular dispute—is the same as that underpinning aggression; but in the case of steadfastness, this leverage is used in defense of the status quo rather than in pursuit of revisionist goals.

Almost all states are likely to find it attractive to use nuclear weapons to stand more firmly in defense of the status quo, because few states like to be pushed around by others. Greater steadfastness, however, may not always be observed in the aftermath of acquisition, because states will appear more

37. Feroz Hassan Khan, *Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 188.

38. Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb*.

39. Fuhrmann and Sechser, "Signaling Alliance Commitments."

steadfast only in the event of challenges to their position: steadfastness will therefore be most observable in states that are regularly challenged. For example, Pakistani elites viewed the various India-Pakistan crises of the 1980s as validating the decision to acquire a nuclear capability, which “ensures defense against physical external aggression and coercion from adversaries, and deters infringement of national sovereignty.”⁴⁰ Nuclear weapons allowed Pakistan to tolerate higher levels of escalation in disputes with India, and thus to stand more firmly in defense of what it perceived to be the status quo.

Unlike aggression, nuclear acquisition might reduce the cost of steadfastness even if nuclear weapons are used as a substitute for conventional forces. When a state uses nuclear weapons as a substitute for conventional forces, it relies on nuclear deterrence to a greater degree. Because the nuclear state has fewer conventional military options, the nuclear option becomes more attractive, and escalation against the nuclear state is therefore more dangerous, even if the nuclear state has used nuclear weapons as a substitute for conventional forces. Actions indicating steadfastness include (1) issuing more explicit deterrent threats to opponents; (2) more quickly mobilizing forces in response to aggression; (3) using more belligerent rhetoric during disputes and crises; and (4) responding to military provocations at higher rates.

COMPROMISE

Sixth, nuclear weapons may reduce the costs associated with compromise. Compromise is defined as the acceptance of less than what was previously demanded in preexisting disputes. Nuclear weapons may reduce the cost of compromising in disputes because they provide a source of military capability (and therefore security) that means that a state may face lower risks if it makes compromises. For example, if nuclear weapons make conventional aggression against the state less likely, then they also reduce the value of strategic depth and holding territory. The risks associated with making territorial compromises are therefore lower.

Actions indicating compromise include (1) the dedication of fewer or less offensively postured conventional forces to missions associated with a particular dispute; (2) less belligerent rhetoric being used toward a particular country; (3) the initiation of negotiations or issuance of less onerous demands in a given dispute; and (4) the negotiated settlement of territorial disputes. It is unclear whether any state has ever behaved in this way in response to nuclear acquisition. One possible case is that the Soviet withdrawals from Eastern Europe,

40. Khan, *Eating Grass*, p. 207; Fair, *Fighting to the End*, p. 221; and Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*.

Afghanistan, and Africa reflected the reduced benefits of controlling territory in the nuclear age. The role of nuclear weapons in these cases is contested, however, and even advocates of this view acknowledge that other factors influenced Soviet thinking.⁴¹ Nonetheless, scholars have frequently argued that states should use nuclear weapons to facilitate compromise.⁴²

SUMMARY

Importantly, a state may respond to nuclear acquisition by engaging in increasing quantities of more than one of the behaviors discussed above. Similarly, because of the dyadic nature of foreign policy, a state may engage in greater quantities of different behaviors toward different states. For example, I argue below that after acquiring nuclear weapons, Britain became more independent from the United States, bolstered its alliances with existing allies, and was more steadfast in responding to challenges. This typology therefore allows for state responses to nuclear acquisition to vary both between states and across an individual state's foreign policies toward different states. Further, because the typology distinguishes among behaviors, it avoids the need for difficult assessments of the underlying motivations driving those behaviors. For example, one does not need to assess whether a state is ultimately security seeking or revisionist to identify whether it is engaging in aggression.

Evaluating the Typology Using the Case of Britain

I examine the utility of the typology described above using the case of Britain. Within the case, I aim to observe and distinguish among the behaviors identified by the typology. A typology may identify important conceptual distinctions, but if those differences cannot be observed in actual cases the typology is unlikely to be useful, either for political scientists or policymakers. Similarly, if all (or none) of the behaviors are observed in every case, a more discriminating typology would offer little additional insight beyond that offered by the broader concept of emboldenment. If, however, states engage in some, but not all, of the behaviors, and if those behaviors can be identified, then the typology is likely of value.

The British case provides a hard case with which to identify the effects of nu-

41. See, for example, Kenneth A. Oye, "Explaining the End of the Cold War: Morphological and Behavioral Adaptations to the Nuclear Peace," in Richard Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen, eds., *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 78.

42. See, for example, Shai Feldman, *Israeli Nuclear Deterrence: A Strategy for the 1980s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

clear weapons on foreign policy. When Britain acquired nuclear weapons, it was conventionally powerful and had status quo preferences, a nuclear-armed protector (the United States), and defensible sea borders. All of these factors would suggest that Britain would have limited desire or need to emphasize nuclear weapons within its grand strategy. If the typology can nonetheless identify the effects of nuclear acquisition in this case, it is likely to be at least as useful in other cases where the effects of nuclear weapons should be more dramatic.

I examine the period before and after British nuclear acquisition and look for discontinuities in British foreign policy behavior caused by nuclear acquisition. This focus on a narrow window before and after nuclear acquisition enhances internal validity, because the likelihood of bias caused by other variables that are stable or change only slowly is reduced. Examining a short period of time also allows for more detailed analysis of particular policy decisions than would be possible in the analysis of a longer period. Although “smoking gun” evidence is hard to find in every case, I also look for evidence from speeches, writings, and internal deliberations that suggests nuclear weapons caused any discontinuities in British behavior and examine whether changes in British behavior correspond to British beliefs about what nuclear weapons allowed Britain to do. For example, if British decisionmakers stated that nuclear weapons were needed to allow them to act more independently of the United States and then displayed greater independence from Washington upon acquiring nuclear weapons, that would suggest that nuclear weapons did indeed facilitate independence.

I examine the period before and after 1955, because this was the point at which Britain acquired the ability to reliably deliver a nuclear weapon to the Soviet Union. As discussed above, this is the point at which nuclear weapons should begin to affect British foreign policy calculations, because Britain’s primary envisioned use of nuclear weapons was to deliver them to the cities of the Soviet Union. Britain’s nuclear strategy thus “presumed a strategic bomber force capable of attaining targets in the Soviet Union.”⁴³ More colloquially, “A carriage is of little use without a horse.”⁴⁴ Although Britain tested a nuclear device in 1952, the first nuclear weapons were not delivered to Bomber Command until November 1953, and it was not until the Valiant bombers came into service in 1955 that Britain became able to reliably deliver a nuclear weapon to the Soviet Union.⁴⁵ The Canberra bombers that Britain possessed

43. A.J.R. Groom, *British Thinking about Nuclear Weapons* (London: Pinter, 1974), p. 36.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

45. Humphrey Wynn, “The RAF Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Forces: Their Origins, Roles, and De-

prior to 1955 were capable of delivering atomic weapons, but did not have the range to reach the Soviet Union.⁴⁶ And although the Valiants were less capable than the Victor and Vulcan bombers that came into service in the late 1950s, the Valiants provided Britain with a delivery capability from 1955 onward.⁴⁷ As Humphrey Wynn's internal Royal Air Force (RAF) history argues, it was in 1955 that "an A-bomb could have been deployed operationally."⁴⁸ The importance of deliverability was not lost on British leaders. Anthony Eden notes in his memoirs that "alone among the allies of the United States, we were making nuclear bombs and building air power to deliver them."⁴⁹ Similarly, the recently retired chief of the air force argued in 1954 that Britain's "ability to put those bombs down where we want to" was the crucial capability Britain required to gain benefits from its nuclear weapons, and identified the incoming V-bombers as providing that capacity.⁵⁰

I examine whether Britain engaged in greater quantities of each of the six behaviors identified above in the aftermath of 1955.⁵¹ I show that Britain did not engage in greater aggression, expansion, or compromise, but did use nuclear weapons to bolster junior allies and demonstrate greater steadfastness and independence from the United States. These outcomes accord with the above discussion of the types of states that are likely to find each behavior attractive.

ployment 1946–1969," 1991, AIR 41/87, National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom (National Archives), pp. 41–42, 62; Christopher J. Bartlett, *The Long Retreat: A Short History of British Defence Policy, 1945–70* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Macmillan, 1972), p. 99; and Robert S. Norris, Andrew S. Burrows, and Richard W. Fieldhouse, *Nuclear Weapons Databook*, Vol. 5: *British, French, and Chinese Nuclear Weapons* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994), chaps. 2–3.

46. Wynn, "The RAF Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Forces," pp. 64, 68, 100–101; and George C. Peden, *Arms, Economics, and British Strategy: From Dreadnoughts to Hydrogen Bombs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 238.

47. Andrew J. Pierre, *Nuclear Politics: The British Experience with an Independent Strategic Force 1939–1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 155; Groom, *British Thinking about Nuclear Weapons*, p. 122; William P. Snyder, *The Politics of British Defense Policy, 1945–1962* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964), p. 26; Peden, *Arms, Economics, and British Strategy*, p. 238; and Wynn, "The RAF Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Forces," pp. 76, 95–98.

48. Wynn, "The RAF Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Forces," p. 98.

49. Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden* (Cambridge: Riverside, 1960), p. 414.

50. John Slessor, *Strategy for the West* (New York: William Morrow, 1954), pp. 114–117.

51. One other variable that changes in 1955 is the replacement of Churchill by Eden as prime minister. There are, however, reasons to doubt that this change caused significant discontinuities in British behavior. First, Eden was intimately involved in foreign policy making as foreign secretary and deputy prime minister prior to becoming prime minister, including being the "principle architect" of several of the pre-1955 policies discussed below such as the pursuit of U.S. assistance in responding to the 1951 nationalization of Anglo-Iranian oil and the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian settlement. See Tony Shaw, *Eden, Suez, and the Mass Media: Propaganda and Persuasion during the Suez Crisis* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1996), p. 6; and Eden, *Full Circle*, chap. 9–10. Second, Eden and Churchill came from the same political party and shared a similar outlook on foreign policy, with Eden recalling Churchill commenting that one could "put any questions of foreign policy to us, and nine times out of ten we would give the same answer." See Eden, *Full Circle*, p. 274.

Britain did not face serious territorial threats at the time of nuclear acquisition; it had status quo preferences; and it was declining in relative power, making aggression and expansion unattractive.⁵² But in the effort to maintain its position in world politics, Britain sought to use nuclear weapons to bolster alliances that would have otherwise become increasingly hard to sustain given Britain's declining position, and also to respond to challenges more steadfastly and independently of its senior ally, the United States.

EXPANSION AND AGGRESSION

Nuclear weapons did not lead to British expansion or aggression. Instead, Britain—a declining power—saw nuclear weapons as a substitute for its conventional forces that would allow it to maintain, but not to expand, its position in international politics.

There is no evidence to suggest that Britain became more aggressive after acquiring nuclear weapons. In the ten years preceding 1955, it engaged in an average of 2.6 militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) per year. In the ten years following 1955, Britain engaged in an average of 2.3 MIDs per year.⁵³ Although Britain was involved in more conflict than most countries, there is no evidence of an uptick in British aggression after acquiring nuclear weapons. Another indication of aggression would be if Britain became more belligerent toward the Soviet Union (Britain's only enduring rival over the period) or its proxies. Britain remained committed to resisting encroachment by the Soviet Union, and, as discussed below, became more willing to stand up to challenges to its position in the aftermath of acquiring a deliverable capability. This occasionally led to tension with the Soviet Union. But in these cases, the British were responding to perceived challenges to the status quo; these behaviors are thus more accurately seen as instances of steadfastness than aggression.

Similarly, Britain did not expand its interests after 1955. As T.C.G. James's internal RAF history states, "[T]he period [from 1956] was one which saw little change in the objectives of British defence commitments outside Europe."⁵⁴ As I discuss below, Britain sought to use nuclear weapons to bolster allies in

52. It is widely acknowledged that Britain was in long-term decline when it acquired nuclear weapons. Britain had emerged from World War II victorious but bloodied, and was in the midst of retrenchment. See, for example, Pierre, *Nuclear Politics*, p. 69; and Peden, *Arms, Economics, and British Strategy*, pp. 245–249. Although British strategists viewed the Soviet Union as an adversary, they recognized that the English Channel and Western Europe provided a substantial buffer between Britain and the Soviet Union. See Sebastian Rosato, *Europe United: Power Politics and the Making of the European Community* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 83–87.

53. Glenn Palmer et al., "The MID4 Dataset, 2002–2010: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (April 2015), pp. 222–242.

54. T.C.G. James, "Defence Policy and the Royal Air Force 1956–1963," 1987, AIR 41/86, National Archives, p. xiv.

Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, but there was no effort to widen British commitments. Instead, Britain hoped to place increasing emphasis on nuclear weapons at the expense of conventional forces, thus reducing the cost of maintaining British commitments. Nor did Britain initiate new rivalries over the period.⁵⁵

As discussed above, aggression or expansion are not necessarily incentivized when states use nuclear weapons as a substitute for conventional forces. And, indeed, British elites had long planned that nuclear weapons could be used as a substitute for conventional forces. British planning documents as far back as 1947 had argued that Britain could rely on nuclear weapons as a substitute for more expensive conventional forces, and the idea was emphasized particularly strongly in the 1952 Global Strategy Paper.⁵⁶ British elites were under no illusions about the increasing economic difficulties facing their country, and these concerns continued throughout the 1950s, with incoming Prime Minister Anthony Eden told in 1955 that “unless existing programs were revised, the cost of defence would rise during the next four years from £1,527 million in 1955 to £1,929 million in 1959.”⁵⁷ Eden agreed that this situation was unsustainable, stating: “We must now cut our coat according to our cloth. There is not much cloth.”⁵⁸

Nuclear weapons offered a solution to this problem. Starting in 1955, Britain began to substitute nuclear weapons for conventional forces. Although the 1952 Global Strategy Paper had endorsed nuclear substitution, the 1952 paper ultimately resulted in “little alteration [to] Britain’s force posture.”⁵⁹ Despite its successful nuclear test, Britain lacked a deliverable nuclear capability. Reinforcing the argument above that it was Britain’s “ability to put those bombs down where we want to” that would allow British strategy to change, it was in 1955 that the concepts articulated in the 1952 Strategy Paper began to be reflected in Britain’s conventional posture.⁶⁰ British manpower stayed around 850,000 from 1952 to 1954, but started to decrease beginning in 1955, reaching 700,000 in 1957 and falling to 500,000 by the end of the 1950s. Defense expenditure was held constant in 1956 (declining in real terms), and subsequently fell

55. William R. Thompson, “Identifying Rivals and Rivalries in World Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (December 2001), pp. 557–586.

56. Pierre, *Nuclear Politics*, p. 87; Richard N. Rosecrance, *Defense of the Realm: British Strategy in the Nuclear Epoch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 171; and Ian Clark and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The British Origins of Nuclear Strategy, 1945–1955* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), pp. 160–161.

57. Rosecrance, *Defense of the Realm*, p. 188.

58. James, “Defence Policy and the Royal Air Force 1956–1963,” p. 11; and Groom, *British Thinking about Nuclear Weapons*, pp. 108–109.

59. Martin S. Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning, 1955–1958* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), p. 4; and Bartlett, *The Long Retreat*, p. 97.

60. Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning, 1955–1958*, p. 5.

as British planners placed greater “reliance upon the nuclear deterrent.”⁶¹ British elites were clear that this substitution was occurring. Eden sought to “continue the trend towards greater reliance on nuclear weapons,” and stated in 1956 that it is on “the atomic weapons that we now rely . . . we are spending too much on forces of types which are no longer of primary importance.”⁶² Similarly, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan explicitly stated that further proposed cuts in 1957, which would have taken British manpower down to 375,000, “must depend on the acceptance of nuclear weapons.”⁶³

British elites did not, therefore, use nuclear weapons to facilitate aggression or expansion. Instead, British planners believed that nuclear weapons would allow Britain to maintain its strategic position. As James’s internal history states, “The nuclear dimension of defence . . . was seen as providing the opportunity for economies in defence . . . without any sacrifices” to Britain’s position.⁶⁴

BOLSTERING

Britain did use nuclear weapons to bolster its junior allies. British policymakers sought to emphasize extended nuclear deterrence to make its existing relationships in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe stronger and more credible than they would otherwise have been, while it reduced the costs (but not the extent) of the political commitments associated with those relationships.

ASIA. From the early 1950s, the British had sought to formalize British alliance relationships in Asia. After the establishment of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954, states in the region made a number of attempts to persuade British planners to confirm the details of British conventional deployments to the alliance. These efforts created a dilemma for British planners. The alliance was perceived by British elites to serve an important strategic and political purpose, but they were unable to commit large numbers of conventional forces to the region beyond those fighting in Malaya (now Malaysia), and the alliance lacked the ability to meet a large-scale Chinese offensive with conventional forces.⁶⁵ The United States was also unwilling to make a firm commitment of forces to the defense of Southeast Asia.⁶⁶ SEATO member states were well aware of, and uneasy about, the alliance’s lack of credibility.

61. Rosecrance, *Defense of the Realm*, p. 190.

62. John Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence: British Nuclear Strategy 1945–1964* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), p. 206.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 246–247.

64. James, “Defense Policy and the Royal Air Force 1956–1963,” pp. xv–xvi.

65. Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, p. 228.

66. Matthew Jones, “The Radford Bombshell: Anglo-Australian-U.S. Relations, Nuclear Weapons, and the Defence of South East Asia, 1954–57,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (December 2004), p. 643.

Australia, for example, increasingly “believed that London assigned the area a very low priority.”⁶⁷ Britain and the United States were aware of these concerns, with a State Department official telling the British that “we must breathe life into the blue baby.”⁶⁸

Nuclear weapons allowed the British to make SEATO more credible than it would otherwise have been. As Matthew Jones argues, elites in London and Washington resolved “that if SEATO was going to have any real teeth, they would need to be nuclear ones” and that “those teeth would need to be much more visible to the other members of the alliance.”⁶⁹ British elites were explicit that the primary purpose of nuclear deployments would be to bolster British allies: one defense official wrote that deploying nuclear assets to Asia would “[retain] our influence in the Far East and the confidence of our . . . friends.”⁷⁰ Nuclear weapons thus became increasingly prominent in British thinking about military strategy in Asia. The British Joint Planning Staff emphasized that “the use of nuclear air power must form the basis of our strategy [in the Far East],”⁷¹ and the Joint Intelligence Committee concluded that tactical nuclear air power would allow Britain to “eliminate” a Chinese offensive. In late 1955, the British chiefs of staff endorsed the committee’s conclusion: “In the case of a Chinese Communist advance, the early delivery of nuclear weapons . . . [would] delay the advance.”⁷² According to Jones, “As dissatisfaction within SEATO grew, both the U.S. and Britain moved toward a more overt acceptance of nuclear planning assumption that would reassure their allies without producing a greater call on their resources.”⁷³ In 1956 the Joint Planning Staff concluded it was “essential that the future strategy for the defence of the treaty area . . . be based on the assumption that nuclear weapons would be used,” and that “reductions in our conventional forces would not be possible unless . . . nuclear weapons would be used.”⁷⁴ At the SEATO Council meeting in March 1956, members agreed that nuclear weapons would be incorporated into SEATO military plans. These plans appear to have worked as intended by facilitating the withdrawal of conventional forces while reassuring allies. For example, when Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies visited London in 1957 to be briefed on the implications of the Sandys

67. *Ibid.*, p. 652.

68. Matthew Jones, “Up the Garden Path? Britain’s Nuclear History in the Far East, 1954–1962,” *International History Review*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (June 2003), p. 310.

69. Jones, “The Radford Bombshell,” p. 652.

70. Jones, “Up the Garden Path?” p. 315.

71. Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning, 1955–1958*, p. 49.

72. Jones, “Up the Garden Path?” p. 311.

73. Jones, “The Radford Bombshell,” pp. 636–637.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 653.

White Paper (which included plans to reduce British deployments in Malaya), he was mollified by plans to deploy V-bombers to the region if a threat appeared imminent.⁷⁵

THE MIDDLE EAST. Britain remained for much of the 1950s the most militarily powerful state in the Middle East, but British conventional capabilities were increasingly stretched and unsustainable. A 1950 report for the chiefs of staff acknowledged “the little the United Kingdom can actually do to protect the Middle East,”⁷⁶ and in 1952, the chiefs of staff informed the cabinet that Britain “cannot afford to maintain its present forces [in the Middle East].”⁷⁷

Nonetheless, in April 1955, Britain formalized existing relationships in the Middle East by joining the Baghdad Pact. The British viewed the alliance as a “vehicle for the maintenance of [British] influence” that would protect the Middle East against Soviet encroachment, limit the regional influence of both the United States and Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser, and protect British oil investments.⁷⁸ Britain could not, however, afford to contribute large numbers of conventional forces to the alliance, and British elites understood “that a conventional defence of the Middle East in global war [would be] far too difficult and expensive.”⁷⁹ A Joint Planning Staff paper in 1956 concluded that “[w]e have neither the men nor the money in current circumstances to make the Baghdad Pact effective militarily.”⁸⁰ As in Asia, British reticence to commit conventional forces caused unease, with the Joint Planning Staff noting that “it required a lot of talking to persuade the other planners that the United Kingdom was not trying to avoid helping.”⁸¹

Nuclear weapons provided a solution to the problem of bolstering alliance credibility while reducing conventional force commitments, and became increasingly prominent in British plans for Middle East defense. As the defense secretary, Harold Macmillan, stated in the House of Commons in March 1955: “The power of interdiction upon invading columns by nuclear weapons gives

75. Jones, “The Radford Bombshell,” p. 655. See also Wayne Reynolds, *Australia’s Bid for the Atomic Bomb* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), p. 169.

76. “Review of Middle East Policy and Strategy: Report by the Chiefs of Staff,” September 15, 1950, Appendix II, CAB 21/2088, COS(50) 363, Records of the Cabinet Office, National Archives, p. 13.

77. “Defence Policy and Global Strategy: Report by the Chiefs of Staff,” June 17, 1952, CAB 129/23, D(52) 26, Records of the Cabinet Office, National Archives, p. 19.

78. Nigel John Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan, and the Problem of Nasser: Anglo-American Relations and Arab Nationalism, 1955–59* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Macmillan, 1996), p. 59; Simon C. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East: Britain, the United States, and Post-War Decolonization* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 39; and John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1988), p. 210.

79. Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning, 1955–1958*, p. 40.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

81. *Ibid.*

a new aspect altogether to strategy, both in the Middle East and the Far East."⁸² In 1955 a British planning document confirmed that Britain planned to launch nuclear attacks from the Middle East, and in 1956 the Joint Planning Staff wrote that "the main United Kingdom contribution to the military effectiveness of the Baghdad Pact will be nuclear interdiction."⁸³ Although the British Middle East Land Forces were theoretically able to support operations, "Baghdad Pact planners were informed that the peacetime deployment of those forces precluded any more than a small proportion of them being able to participate in the land defence of the Pact area," and as a result, "Britain's contribution to the Pact defence would mainly be in the realm of strategic and tactical nuclear delivery capabilities."⁸⁴ As Martin Navias and John Baylis argue, Britain sought to use its nuclear weapons as its primary contribution to the Baghdad Pact in 1955, seeking to "avoid large force commitments through a stress on the centrality of massive retaliation."⁸⁵ James's internal history of the RAF makes clear that "nuclear strike was seen as the main component of the assistance which could be offered [to the Baghdad Pact]."⁸⁶ Britain was not squeamish about deploying nuclear assets close to the Middle East: Wynn's internal history of the RAF states that as early as November 1955, "the plans were for two Canberra B2 squadrons" to be deployed in the Middle East, and "it was considered that they would then, or shortly afterwards, be capable of carrying nuclear weapons."⁸⁷

EUROPE. Even in NATO, Baylis argues that "the same pattern can be discerned" in the mid-1950s.⁸⁸ Britain sought to use nuclear weapons to make NATO more credible than it otherwise would have been and at the same time reduce British conventional commitments.

By the end of 1955, "British military policymakers were well on their way to shifting the focus from conventional to nuclear forces," and Britain was unwilling to make the conventional commitments necessary to make credible NATO's strategic concept, which envisaged a "two-phase war" in which conventional forces would fight in the aftermath of a thermonuclear exchange.⁸⁹ Britain began to voice disapproval of NATO's strategy, with Prime Minister Eden arguing in a 1956 letter to President Dwight Eisenhower that "a 'shield'

82. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

83. Reynolds, *Australia's Bid for the Atomic Bomb*, p. 168, fn. 37; and "Facilities Required by H.M. Forces in Cyprus in Peace and War: Report by the Joint Planning Staff," May 26, 1956, DEFE 4/87 JP(56) 54, Records of the Ministry of Defence, National Archives, p. 3.

84. Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning, 1955–1958*, p. 44.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 40; and Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, p. 229.

86. James, "Defence Policy and the Royal Air Force 1956–1963," p. 12.

87. Wynn, "The RAF Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Forces," pp. 125–126.

88. Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, p. 230.

89. *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 230.

of conventional forces is still required: but it is no longer our principal military protection," and was needed only to "meet limited incursions and identify aggression."⁹⁰ Similarly, British Defense Secretary Walter Monckton "rejected the idea that the West needed to build up conventional forces large enough to hold an all-out [Soviet] attack."⁹¹ The United States did not appreciate Britain's efforts to change NATO strategy. U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was clear that "we find unacceptable any proposal which implies . . . a NATO strategy of total reliance on nuclear retaliation," and that "no unsound strategic concept should be forced on NATO to meet financial problems."⁹² Ultimately, NATO did not change its strategy in accordance with British preferences, but nor did the British give way to U.S. preferences. Britain reduced its conventional commitment in December 1956, and further reductions were made over the following years.⁹³ As in its alliances in Asia and the Middle East, Britain's ambition and commitments had not changed, but nuclear weapons were used to bolster allies as conventional reductions were undertaken.

INDEPENDENCE, STEADFASTNESS, AND COMPROMISE

To assess whether Britain exhibited greater independence from its senior ally (the United States), steadfastness in responding to challenges, or greater willingness to compromise, I examine British responses to a series of challenges in the Middle East before and after 1955. Because U.S. and British preferences diverged most dramatically in the Middle East, focusing on challenges in that region sheds light on changes in the level of British independence from the United States, while holding a range of factors constant across the cases.

I examine Britain's response to the six challenges in the Middle East over this period: the nationalization of Anglo-Iranian oil in 1951, Egyptian efforts to eject the British from Suez from 1945 to 1954, the 1952 Saudi occupation of Buraimi, the 1956 Suez crisis, and subsequent crises in Oman and Jordan. Before Britain acquired a deliverable nuclear capability in 1955, its responses to challenges were characterized by a willingness to compromise and deference to U.S. policy preferences. After 1955, Britain became more willing to use force unilaterally, showed less inclination to compromise, and paid less attention to U.S. preferences.

ANGLO-IRANIAN OIL, 1951. Prior to 1955, Britain was wary of responding to challenges to its position without the support of the United States. The response to the 1951 nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC)

90. Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden* (London: Cassell, 1960), pp. 372–373; and Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, p. 230.

91. Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, p. 231.

92. Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning, 1955–1958*, pp. 61, 63.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 184; and Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, p. 231.

by Iran's prime minister, Mohammad Mosaddegh, provides an example. For three months after the nationalization of AIOC, Britain seriously considered a military response.⁹⁴ The ultimate decision to eschew a military response was not made because AIOC was of limited importance. On the contrary, the AIOC was Britain's largest overseas investment and was critical to reducing the British dollar deficit and maintaining the status of sterling.⁹⁵ As Chancellor of the Exchequer R.A. Butler stated in a meeting in November 1951, Britain's "economic viability was at stake."⁹⁶ And in H.W. Brands's words, the nationalization of AIOC "portended the apocalypse, to judge by [British] reactions."⁹⁷ Nor did British reticence result from a lack of military options. Although securing and holding Iran's inland oil fields was beyond British capabilities, a more limited plan to occupy Abadan Island and retake control of the refinery was viewed as feasible. Indeed, plans were sufficiently advanced that Britain could have launched such an operation within twelve hours of a decision to do so.⁹⁸

Instead, Britain decided against a military response because of U.S. opposition.⁹⁹ For the United States, the dispute over AIOC was subordinate to the goal of keeping Iran out of the Soviet sphere, but American policymakers felt that the U.S. position was too weak to provoke a dispute that might risk war with the Soviet Union, and thus opposed military action.¹⁰⁰ U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson wrote that "[o]nly on invitation of the Iranian Government, or Soviet military intervention, or a Communist coup d'état in Tehran, or to evacuate British nationals in danger of attack could we support the use of military force," and a paper was presented by U.S. officials to the British ambassador on April 17, 1951, stating that "we would be opposed to the adoption of 'strong measures' by the British . . . [such as] the

94. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, p. 161; Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, p. 29; and Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley and Sons, 2008), p. 3.

95. Steven G. Galpern, *Money, Oil, and Empire in the Middle East: Sterling and Postwar Imperialism, 1944–1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1–2, 107; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 525, 556–557; and Tore T. Petersen, *The Middle East between the Great Powers: Anglo-American Conflict and Cooperation, 1952–7* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Macmillan, 2000), p. 19.

96. Galpern, *Money, Oil, and Empire in the Middle East*, p. 127.

97. H.W. Brands, "The Cairo-Tehran Connection in Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East, 1951–1953," *International History Review*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (August 1989), pp. 437–438.

98. Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 557; and Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Free Press, 2009), pp. 440, 445.

99. See, for example, Brands, "The Cairo-Tehran Connection in Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East, 1951–1953," p. 440.

100. Francis J. Gavin, "Politics, Power, and U.S. Policy in Iran, 1950–1953," *Journal of Cold War Studies* Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 1999), pp. 65–68.

introduction of force or the threat of force.”¹⁰¹ Even though a diplomatic solution appeared unlikely, the United States insisted that Britain forgo military options.

Ultimately, for all the British huffing and puffing at the U.S. reticence to assist them, Britain was not prepared to act alone. As Prime Minister Clement Attlee told the Cabinet, “[I]n view of the attitude of the United States Government, [he did not] think it would be expedient to use force to maintain the British staff in Abadan.”¹⁰² The Cabinet agreed, concluding, “[I]n light of the United States attitude . . . force could not be used,” and that “we could not afford to break with the United States on an issue of this kind.”¹⁰³ In the absence of U.S. support for military action, Britain was forced to pursue a purely economic approach, threatening to sue anyone who purchased Iranian oil.¹⁰⁴ Britain continued to try and persuade the United States to act throughout 1952, but President Harry Truman again rejected British proposals.¹⁰⁵ It was only with an increasingly favorable balance of power, combined with Eisenhower’s accession to the presidency, that U.S. policy changed, with Dulles informing the British in early 1953 that the United States was ready to take action against Mosaddegh. Thus, although Britain ultimately took part in covert action to remove Mosaddegh, the episode demonstrated Britain’s dependence on the United States.¹⁰⁶

EGYPT, 1945–54. Britain also sought assistance from the United States to support the British position in Egypt. After the end of World War II, as it had prior to the start of war in 1939, Egypt lay at the center of British strategy in the Middle East, with a network of bases in the Suez Canal Zone possessing the ability to maintain an army of half a million men.¹⁰⁷ As soon as the war had ended, however, Egypt requested negotiations to end Britain’s military presence in the country. Britain was willing to withdraw forces from Suez, but only under conditions the Egyptians were unwilling to grant. Egyptian nationalism was insufficient to compel British withdrawal, but Britain was increasingly forced to expend resources defending the bases.¹⁰⁸ Despite Britain’s military strength in the Middle East and the centrality of Egypt within British strategic thinking, the British relied on the United States for support. Foreign Minister Eden “constantly sought to enlist American aid,” while Prime Minister Winston

101. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

102. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, p. 29.

103. *Ibid.*

104. Petersen, *The Middle East between the Great Powers*, p. 19.

105. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, p. 30.

106. *Ibid.*, pp. 30–31.

107. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, p. 113.

108. *Ibid.*, p. 121; and Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 564.

Churchill “bombard[ed Eisenhower with] letters and telegrams pleading for American aid.”¹⁰⁹ The British pursued this strategy despite awareness that the United States increasingly viewed supporting the British as at odds with the goal of strengthening its position in the Middle East. In November 1953, the Eisenhower administration attempted to use the threat of providing aid to Egypt to coerce the British into making concessions, with Dulles telling Eden that “time is fast running out.”¹¹⁰ Ultimately, through the spring of 1954, U.S. pressure forced the British to make serious concessions to Egypt—agreeing to end British rule in the Sudan and withdraw British troops from the Canal Zone without any guarantee that they could return in the event of war.¹¹¹ While British leaders blamed the United States for Egyptian intransigence, they were ultimately dependent on and “brought to heel” by the United States.¹¹²

BURAIMI, 1952–55. Buraimi, an oasis at the southeastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, represented a strategically valuable crossroads: whoever controlled it controlled approaches to both Muscat and Oman.¹¹³ Saudi leaders were aware of these benefits, and in 1952 sent forces to occupy the oasis with the support of the Arabian American Oil Company and the implicit approval of the United States.¹¹⁴ Again, the Britain encouraged caution. The sultan of Muscat and Oman raised a force with which to evict the Saudis, but the British persuaded him to pursue a diplomatic solution.¹¹⁵ In doing so, the British again sought U.S. support. Churchill’s briefing papers emphasized that Britain and the United States “must support the other fully and be seen by all to do so. Lack of positive support and an affectation of impartiality by either power will be interpreted as disagreement with the other and exploited.”¹¹⁶ As the British tried to bring U.S. support to bear against the Saudis, they agreed to a “Standstill Agreement,” by which both sides would remain in their current positions and avoid taking further actions that might threaten the other or prejudice a future settlement.¹¹⁷ Further negotiations undertaken at

109. Petersen, *The Middle East between the Great Powers*, pp. 1–3.

110. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

111. Rosecrance, *Defence of the Realm*, p. 202; and Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, p. 208.

112. Petersen, *The Middle East between the Great Powers*, p. 17; and Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 596.

113. Tore Tingvold Petersen, “Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East: The Struggle for the Buraimi Oasis, 1952–1957,” *International History Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (February 1992), p. 71.

114. Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan, and the Problem of Nasser*, p. 75; and Petersen, “Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East,” p. 71.

115. Petersen, *The Middle East between the Great Powers*, p. 38.

116. Petersen, “Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East,” p. 73.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

the behest of the United States yielded little progress.¹¹⁸ When Eden took charge of the Foreign Office in 1953, he asked why Saudi forces had not yet been evicted from Buraimi and was told that the British could not use force while they required U.S. support in Egypt and Iran, and in 1954 Eden and Churchill committed to solve the dispute via arbitration.¹¹⁹ As with Iran and Egypt, Britain's ability to take action was, therefore, constrained by the United States, and Britain again bent to American preferences.

At the point at which Britain acquired nuclear weapons in 1955, arbitration with Saudi Arabia over control of the Buraimi Oasis was ongoing. In the eyes of the British, however, the Saudis were undermining the agreed-upon arbitration process, and the British disbanded it. In contrast to the British strategy since 1952 of pursuing a diplomatic solution, Britain pursued a unilateral, military approach. Despite the Foreign Office telling Eden two years earlier that Britain could not take military action in Buraimi because of U.S. opposition, British forces evicted the Saudis from Buraimi and returned the boundaries to their pre-1952 positions.

Not only did Britain take military action, but it did so without informing the United States. Only after Eden had announced in Parliament that action was being taken did the British cable Washington to let the United States know that "[w]e cannot allow this primitive and expansionist power to seize control of sources from which we draw an essential part of our fuel."¹²⁰ This "brazen piece of unilateralism" caused "considerable consternation" in Washington, with Undersecretary of State Herbert Hoover Jr. "berating the British ambassador for the lack of consultation."¹²¹ Dulles also protested the reoccupation of Buraimi to the British Foreign Office, and U.S. displeasure was sufficient that Eisenhower raised the issue with Eden during a state visit to Washington.¹²² Despite this pressure, Eden refused to give ground.¹²³

SUEZ, 1956. The 1954 Anglo-Egyptian settlement discussed above did not last long, with Nasser nationalizing the Suez Canal in July 1956. The nationalization was viewed as a crucial challenge to British interests. Concerns about Britain's future ability to trade through the canal further eroded confidence in the pound and made a second devaluation of the currency in less than a dec-

118. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

119. Petersen, *The Middle East between the Great Powers*, pp. 42, 47; and Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan, and the Problem of Nasser*, p. 75.

120. Petersen, *The Middle East between the Great Powers*, p. 53.

121. *Ibid.*; and Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, p. 37.

122. Petersen, "Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East," p. 85.

123. Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan, and the Problem of Nasser*, p. 75.

ade a possibility, while senior policymakers feared that Nasser's anti-British nationalism would lead the Egyptian leader to turn other Middle East oil-producing states against Britain and use the canal to control the supply of oil to Europe.¹²⁴ In many ways, British interests in the Suez crisis were similar to those at stake over the nationalization of Anglo-Iranian oil. Both posed challenges to the British position that threatened to undermine British standing and prestige; both threatened access to British oil holdings and thus threatened the status of sterling; and both threatened to set a precedent for how Britain would respond to future challenges.¹²⁵

As in the case of Anglo-Iranian oil, Britain had no doubts about U.S. opposition to military action. Dulles reassured the British and French foreign ministers in the aftermath of nationalization that "a way had to be found to make Nasser disgorge" the canal, but the diplomatic strategies they proposed appeared to the British as efforts to forestall action rather than strategies likely to succeed.¹²⁶ Eisenhower had communicated to Eden as early as July 31, 1956, the "unwisdom even of contemplating the use of military force," and on September 9, he told Eden that military action "might cause a serious misunderstanding between us."¹²⁷ And a memorandum to Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd made clear that the British would have little or no international support if they used military force. Chancellor of the Exchequer Macmillan also warned that the British currency would come under significant strain in a crisis.¹²⁸

Britain committed to military action despite these challenges. At a meeting soon after nationalization, Eden made it "clear that military action would have to be taken" and informed U.S. Undersecretary of State Robert Murphy that Suez was a test that "could be met only by the use of force."¹²⁹ On October 24, 1956, British, French, and Israeli officials met secretly, agreeing that Israel would launch an attack across the Sinai Peninsula toward the Suez Canal. Britain and France would commit to protect the canal if fighting continued, and then invade when the fighting failed to stop.¹³⁰ On October 29, Israel launched its invasion, with Britain and France issuing their ultimatum the following day. On October 31, Britain began bombing Egyptian airfields; and on

124. Yergin, *The Prize*, p. 467.

125. *Ibid.*

126. *Ibid.*, p. 466.

127. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, p. 47; Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan, and the Problem of Nasser*, p. 88; and Petersen, *The Middle East between the Great Powers*, p. 68.

128. Petersen, *The Middle East between the Great Powers*, p. 82.

129. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, pp. 46–47; and Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan, and the Problem of Nasser*, p. 85.

130. Yergin, *The Prize*, p. 471.

November 5, British and French forces began their assault on the Canal Zone. The invasion surprised the United States. Indeed, Eisenhower was sufficiently enraged by the British betrayal that he berated one of Eden's aides on the phone thinking it was the prime minister and then hung up before the mistake could be corrected.¹³¹ By November 6, Nasser had sunk ships filled with rocks and cement in the canal, and the British goal of unrestricted use of the canal had already been lost. Britain and France agreed to a cease-fire, but the United States now demanded a complete withdrawal of forces.

British operations were ultimately curtailed by U.S. economic coercion, including the large-scale selling of sterling by the Federal Reserve, and Soviet threats.¹³² Although examining how the Suez crisis ended is of less importance than how the British responded to the challenge of nationalization, it is worth noting that the outcome of the crisis does not undermine the claim of greater British independence. Nuclear weapons are not all-powerful tools of statecraft, and it is unsurprising that nuclear weapons were of little use in resisting the powerful economic coercion applied by the United States. Nonetheless, in comparison to pre-1955 crises, the British acted with greater independence from the United States in responding to the Suez crisis.

POST-SUEZ: OMAN AND JORDAN. In the aftermath of the Suez crisis, the conventional wisdom is that Britain shrunk away from the world stage and what remained of its empire.¹³³ Similarly, it is argued that Britain subjugated its nuclear weapons to the United States, and that after 1958 Britain no longer possessed an independent nuclear deterrent.¹³⁴ It is true that Britain became increasingly dependent on the United States for missile technologies, and that strategic targeting became increasingly coordinated with NATO. Nonetheless, Britain deliberately retained both control over its deployed forces and "the right to launch the missiles independently of NATO authorization if the British national interest warrant[ed] such action."¹³⁵ Prime Minister Macmillan was clear in articulating the need for "a deterrent influence independent of the United States," even as targeting and technological cooperation with the United States grew stronger.¹³⁶ Similarly, more recent historical scholarship ar-

131. *Ibid.*, p. 472.

132. Pierre, *Nuclear Politics*, p. 97; Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, pp. 62–63; and Petersen, *The Middle East between the Great Powers*, p. 94.

133. See, for example, W. Scott Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the United States, and the Suez Crisis* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991); and Keith Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2003).

134. Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*, p. 3, fn. 3.

135. Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century*, pp. 171–172.

136. Ian Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy and the Special Relationship: Britain's Deterrent and America, 1957–1962* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 112.

gues that British independence and steadfastness persisted even in the aftermath of Suez. Britain continued to respond to challenges to its position and was “prepared neither to relinquish its residual interests in the region, nor become subservient to the United States.”¹³⁷ Nigel Ashton argues that “the British were resolved to pursue [their interests] . . . with even greater vigor after the Suez debacle, and were certainly not ready to cast off any mantle.”¹³⁸ In short, Britain continued to act unilaterally in the region when it felt its interests were challenged, often “with little regard for American policy.”¹³⁹

For example, Britain intervened unilaterally in Oman in 1957 in response to a request from Sultan Said, who was battling the Saudi-backed Ghalib bin Ali. The United States had significant concerns about the British intervention, with Dulles informing President Eisenhower of his “concern that it [British intervention] could not be quickly wound up.”¹⁴⁰ The United States did not actively oppose the British intervention but did not support the operation, and Dulles was irritated by the lack of consultation, with the deployment of British forces coming days after the British assured him that there “was no question of using British forces there.”¹⁴¹ Second, Britain sent its forces into Jordan in response to a request for assistance in the aftermath of the July 1958 coup in Iraq. The coup was viewed as a challenge to the British position, because Iraq stood at the heart of the Baghdad Pact, and because the revolution appeared to threaten oil interests in Iraq, Kuwait, and the Persian Gulf, and the possibility of regional instability.¹⁴² Again, while the Eisenhower administration did not actively oppose the British intervention, it was not enthusiastic and refused to commit U.S. forces to the operation, with the president stating that the United States should not “support Kings against their people,” and Dulles stating that the British had let themselves be “foolishly exposed in Jordan.”¹⁴³ British intervention in Jordan thus further demonstrates Britain’s continued willingness to act unilaterally and independently of U.S. preferences even in the aftermath of Suez.

SUMMARY OF CASES

Across a series of crises, British responses in the period following 1955 were characterized by greater steadfastness, greater independence from the United States, and a reduced inclination to compromise.

137. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, p. 67.

138. Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan, and the Problem of Nasser*, p. 112.

139. Petersen, *The Middle East between the Great Powers*, p. 216.

140. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, p. 81.

141. *Ibid.*

142. Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan, and the Problem of Nasser*, p. 189.

143. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, pp. 85–86.

That Britain became more independent from the United States in 1955 does not prove that nuclear weapons caused this change. This change in behavior is consistent, however, with Britain's reasons for acquiring nuclear weapons. The desire to reduce Britain's dependence on the United States was a critical driver behind British nuclear acquisition. As Churchill's science adviser, Lord Cherwell, had put it when considering whether Britain should cooperate with the U.S. wartime effort to build the bomb: "However much I may trust my neighbour, I am very much averse to putting myself completely at his mercy."¹⁴⁴ Britain was initially hesitant to cooperate in the Manhattan Project, and did so only after it became evident that the costs of collaboration were outweighed by the vast resources the United States could dedicate to the project and its greater ability to protect a weapons facility.¹⁴⁵ As Goldstein argues, Britain's "preference for continued nuclear independence faded only when the costs of autonomy in the desperate wartime years became clearly prohibitive."¹⁴⁶ After the war, concerns about dependence on the United States were a core driver behind Britain's efforts to pursue an independent nuclear capability. U.S. and British policy preferences diverged on important issues, and the British worried about the constraints that dependence on the United States would impose upon them.¹⁴⁷ In 1946 Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin declared that "we've got to have [nuclear weapons, because] . . . I don't want any other Foreign Secretary of this country to be talked at by a Secretary of State in the United States as I have just [been]," concluding that "[w]e have got to have this thing . . . [with] the bloody Union Jack flying on top of it."¹⁴⁸ In 1947, as the decision to build the bomb was made, Bevin argued that "we could not afford to acquiesce in an American monopoly," and Attlee stated, "If we had decided not to have it, we would have put ourselves entirely in the hands of the Americans. That would have been a risk a British government should not take."¹⁴⁹ These views were also shared by military leaders. The chiefs of staff argued that "it would be most unwise for the United Kingdom to be completely dependent on the United States and to accept the serious political disadvantages of not having a stock of atom bombs under its own control," and that it was not "compatible with our status . . . to depend on others for a weapon of this supreme importance," while the chief of the air force advised,

144. Groom, *British Thinking about Nuclear Weapons*, p. 3.

145. Pierre, *Nuclear Politics*, pp. 27–29; and Margaret Gowing, *Britain and Atomic Energy, 1939–1945* (London: Macmillan, 1964), p. 128.

146. Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century*, p. 155.

147. *Ibid.*, chap. 5.

148. Roger Ruston, *A Say in the End of the World: Morals and British Nuclear Weapons Policy 1941–1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 90.

149. *Ibid.*; and Goldstein, *Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century*, p. 158.

“we cannot possibly leave to an ally, however staunch and loyal, the monopoly of this instrument.”¹⁵⁰

In short, British elites said that they would use nuclear weapons to reduce their dependence on the United States, and then behaved more independently of the United States after they acquired nuclear weapons.

Conclusion

Nuclear acquisition appears to have significantly affected British foreign policy. Starting in 1955, Britain used its nuclear weapons to bolster allies and respond to challenges more independently of the United States and with greater steadfastness. Britain thus engaged in greater levels of some, but not all, of the behaviors in the typology introduced above, demonstrating its utility. The case also demonstrates that the behaviors identified are empirically distinguishable. I here lay out some implications.

First, substantial traction on the effects of nuclear weapons can be gained by using a more discriminating conceptual language. “Emboldenment” is a convenient catch-all term, but it conflates conceptually distinct behaviors and misses other effects that nuclear weapons may have. These distinctions are important because not all emboldening effects are equally concerning to policymakers. Both expansion and steadfastness might be considered emboldening effects, but, for example, a nuclear Iran that displays greater steadfastness is likely less concerning than an Iran that pursues aggression. A more discriminating typology allows policymakers to more precisely specify the concerns associated with particular potential proliferants.

Second, the typology itself provides insights into the role of nuclear weapons in international politics. For example, since the end of the Cold War it has become increasingly common for scholars to think of nuclear weapons as “weapons of the weak” or “the great equalizer.”¹⁵¹ It is certainly true that because of their limited conventional capabilities, conventionally weak states gain from the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Nonetheless, powerful states have regularly sought and benefited from the acquisition of nuclear weapons. The typology offered here sheds light on this fact, by showing that nuclear weapons can fa-

150. “Defence Policy and Global Strategy,” p. 22; Ruston, *A Say in the End of the World*, p. 95; and Pierre, *Nuclear Politics*, pp. 149–150.

151. Richard K. Betts, “The New Threat of Mass Destruction,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (January/February 1998), p. 27; and T.V. Paul, “Great Equalizers or Agents of Chaos? Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Emerging International Order,” in Paul and John A. Hall, eds., *International Order and the Future of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 373–392.

cilitate foreign policy behaviors that powerful states are likely to find attractive, such as expansion or the bolstering of allies. It should not, therefore, be surprising that states have sometimes seen nuclear weapons as “status symbols,” nor that powerful states have often sought them.

Third, the analysis demonstrates the importance of looking beyond the possession of nuclear weapons in understanding their political effects. Although Britain first tested a nuclear weapon in 1952, it was only with the acquisition of a deliverable capability in 1955 that nuclear weapons began to influence British foreign policy. Despite this, political scientists tend to emphasize a country’s first nuclear test as indicating the point at which the effects of nuclear weapons should be observed. This approach may generate misleading inferences, because nuclear weapons may not influence foreign policy immediately upon testing a device. Similarly, for policymakers, even after a state has conducted a nuclear test, there may still be policy options available to limit the effects that nuclear weapons have on the behavior of new nuclear states.

Fourth, the typology offered here opens up the possibility of more nuanced theoretical and empirical work on the effects of nuclear weapons. For example, increases in certain behaviors may be easier for states to sustain over time than others, which could mean that the effects of nuclear weapons on particular behaviors may alter over time in interesting ways. Similarly, increases in certain behaviors may be easier for other states to mitigate or take actions to prevent, and different policies might be better suited for deterring or countering increases in different foreign policy behaviors. Both theoretical and empirical work on these questions could have important implications for the ways in which policymakers think about the challenges posed by emerging nuclear states. Finally, although nuclear weapons may facilitate each of the behaviors identified, not all states engage in greater quantities of all behaviors upon acquiring nuclear weapons. This article identified circumstances in which states are likely to find particular behaviors attractive, but more theoretical and empirical work needs to be done to flesh out why different states use nuclear weapons to facilitate different combinations of these behaviors.¹⁵² Such work would have considerable policy relevance, because it would allow practitioners to make more precise assessments of the behaviors that Iran, or other potential proliferants, might engage in if they were to acquire nuclear weapons.

152. For such a theory, see Bell, “What Do Nuclear Weapons Offer States?”