

Beyond Emboldenment: The Effects of Nuclear Weapons on State Foreign Policy

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Abstract: What happens to the foreign policies of states when they acquire nuclear weapons? Despite its critical importance, this question has been understudied. This paper offers a new typology of the effects of nuclear weapons on foreign policy, and hypothesizes the circumstances in which these effects might be observed. I distinguish between five conceptually distinct foreign policy behaviors—*aggression, expansion, independence, bolstering* and *steadfastness*—and show theoretically how nuclear acquisition may facilitate each of these behaviors. The typology therefore allows scholars to move beyond simple claims of “nuclear emboldenment,” and allows for more nuanced predictions and empirical examinations of the ways in which nuclear weapons affect the foreign policies of current and future nuclear states. I demonstrate the utility of this typology using a “hard” case: the United Kingdom. I show that the acquisition of a deliverable nuclear capability in 1955 significantly affected British foreign policy. Britain did not use its nuclear weapons for aggression or expansion, instead seeking to use its nuclear weapons to maintain its forward conventional posture at lower cost and thus postpone retrenchment. However, Britain did use its nuclear weapons to bolster its junior allies in the Middle East, Far East and Europe, and to exhibit greater independence from the United States and greater steadfastness in responding to challenges to its position—most dramatically during the 1956 Suez crisis.

How do nuclear weapons affect the foreign policies of the states that acquire them? 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 by states such as Iran hinges on correctly assessing how nuclear weapons affect the behavior of the states that acquire them, and how dangerous those effects are. For example, if states typically expand their interests in world politics

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or act more aggressively in the aftermath of nuclear acquisition, preventing nuclear proliferation should be a higher priority than if nuclear weapons do not much 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, this question has been understudied. The large literature on nuclear weapons and the impact of the “nuclear revolution” has generally examined the effects of nuclear weapons on outcomes other than foreign policy (such as interstate conflict); has focused on the effect of nuclear weapons on the calculations of *other* states rather than the state acquiring nuclear weapons; and has often sought to explore how states with nuclear weapons *should* behave rather than how they *do* behave. That literature which 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. Policymakers have also tended to worry in generic terms about emboldenment without specifying how or why nuclear weapons may incentivize different behaviors.

This paper offers a more discriminating typology of the effects of nuclear weapons on state foreign policy, and hypothesizes when these effects are likely to occur. The typology allows us to move beyond claims of “emboldenment” when assessing the effects of nuclear weapons. Specifically, I distinguish between five behaviors of concern to policymakers—*aggression, expansion, independence, bolstering, and steadfastness*—and show theoretically why nuclear acquisition may facilitate these behaviors. Second, I probe the utility of this typology by examining the effects of nuclear weapons on British foreign policy. A more discriminating typology is only useful if the different outcomes it identifies can be distinguished empirically. Britain provides a hard case in which to identify such effects because nuclear weapons would be expected to have limited effects on the foreign policy of a democratic state with status quo preferences, substantial conventional military power, and a nuclear-armed ally. I examine British behavior in the immediate period before and after Britain acquired a deliverable nuclear weapons capability in 1955. I show that the acquisition of nuclear weapons significantly affected British foreign policy. Britain displayed several, but not all, of the effects identified in the typology, demonstrating its utility.

1. Joshua Rovner, “After Proliferation: Deterrence Theory and Emerging Nuclear Powers,” in *Strategy in the Second Nuclear Age*, ed. Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2012).

Existing literature

I define foreign policy as the portion of grand strategy that deals with a state's relationships with other states. If grand strategy is the "collection of military, economic, and political means and ends with which a state attempts to achieve security,"² then foreign policy is the collection of military, economic, and political means and ends with which a state pursues its goals with respect to a given other state. The definition of foreign policy therefore includes a state's declared goals with respect to other states; the diplomatic, political, economic and military strategies they use to pursue them; the logics underpinning those strategies; and the resources the state dedicates to pursuing them.³ I focus on matters relating to the state's security, which encompasses a state's sovereignty, safety, territorial integrity, and power position.⁴ Other matters may be important components of foreign policy, but I focus on security calculations because they are the most clearly affected by nuclear weapons. Foreign policy is defined at the level of the dyad, because state *A* may have a different foreign policy towards state *B* to that which it has towards state *C*. Thus, a state has a foreign policy towards a particular other state, rather than having a single foreign policy writ large.

Understanding how nuclear weapons affect foreign policy, then, requires a typology that allows us to distinguish between different effects that nuclear weapons may have on a state's foreign policy. This is necessary to fully *describe* the effects of nuclear weapons on foreign policy, and is a prerequisite for beginning to theorize why some effects are likely to be observed in certain circumstances and not others. Such a typology must be sufficiently flexible to allow the effects of nuclear weapons on foreign policy to vary across states. For example, nuclear acquisition has affected Pakistan's foreign policies very differently to the ways in which nuclear acquisition affected India's foreign policies.⁵ Similarly, because foreign policy is defined at the dyad level,

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

3. Foreign policy does not therefore simply refer to the day-to-day conduct of a nation's diplomats, and is not the sole preserve of the organ of the state tasked with conducting bilateral diplomacy (e.g., the U.S. State Department).

4. Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 1.

5. For a sampling of the literature on nuclear weapons in South Asia, see Devin T. Hagerty, *The Consequences of Nuclear Proliferation: Lessons From South Asia* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998); George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002); Sumit Ganguly and Devin T. Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry: India-Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005); S. Paul Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent: Nuclear Weapons Proliferation and Conflict in South Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Sumit Ganguly, "Nuclear Stability in South Asia," *International Security* 33, no. 2 (2008): 45–70; Vipin

and because there is no *a priori* reason to think that nuclear weapons will affect State *A*'s foreign policy towards State *B* in the same way as nuclear weapons affect its relationship with State *C*, the typology must also be sufficiently flexible to allow nuclear weapons to affect a state's relationships with different states in different ways. For example, Pakistan's acquisition of nuclear weapons affected its relationship with the United States very differently to the way in which nuclear weapons affected Pakistan's relationship with India.

Existing work has not yet provided us with such a typology of effects of nuclear weapons on the foreign policies of the states that acquire them, let alone a theory that might explain their origins, 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, an impressive body of theoretical and empirical work has examined the connections between nuclear weapons and interstate conflict occurrence,⁶ trajectories,⁷ and outcomes.⁸ Many

Narang, "Posturing for Peace? Pakistan's Nuclear Postures and South Asian Stability," *International Security* 34, no. 3 (2010): 38–78; Feroz Hassan Khan, *Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

6. For theoretical work on the links between nuclear weapons and the likelihood of interstate conflict, see Glenn H. Snyder, "The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror," in *Balance of Power*, ed. Paul Seabury (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965); Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better," *The Adelphi Papers* 21, no. 171 (1981); John J. Mearsheimer, "Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe," *International Security* 9, no. 3 (1984): 19–46; John J. Mearsheimer, "The Case for a Ukrainian Nuclear Deterrent," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 50–66; Scott D. Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory, Deterrence Theory, and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons," *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994): 66–107; John Mueller, "The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons: Stability in the Postwar World," *International Security* 13, no. 2 (1988): 55–79; Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003); John Mueller, *Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism from Hiroshima to Al Qaeda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For empirical work examining the association between nuclear weapons and conflict occurrence, see Paul K. Huth and Bruce Russett, "What Makes Deterrence Work? Cases from 1900 to 1980," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (1984): 496–526; Paul K. Huth, "Extended Deterrence and the Outbreak of War," *The American Political Science Review* 82, no. 2 (1988): 423–443; Paul K. Huth and Bruce Russett, "Deterrence Failure and Crisis Escalation," *International Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (1988): 29–45; Curtis S. Signorino and Ahmer Tarar, "A Unified Theory and Test of Extended Immediate Deterrence," *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 3 (2006): 586–605; Erik Gartzke and Dong-Joon Jo, "Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Disputes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 2 (2009): 209–233; Robert Rauchhaus, "Evaluating the Nuclear Peace Hypothesis: A Quantitative Approach," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 2 (2009): 258–277; Narang, "Posturing for Peace?"; David Sobek, Dennis M. Foster, and Samuel B. Robison, "Conventional Wisdom? The Effect of Nuclear Proliferation on Armed Conflict, 1945–2001," *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2011): 149–162; Vipin Narang, "What Does It Take to Deter? Regional Power Nuclear Postures and International Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57, no. 3 (2013): 478–508; Vipin Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Mark S. Bell and Nicholas L. Miller, "Questioning the Effect of Nuclear Weapons on Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (forthcoming).

7. For work on how nuclear weapons impact the process by which interstate conflicts unfold, see Barry R. Posen, *Inadvertent Escalation: Conventional War and Nuclear Risks* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Barry R. Posen, "US Security Policy in a Nuclear-Armed World, Or: What If Iraq Had Had Nuclear Weapons?," *Security Studies* 6, no. 3 (1997): 1–31; Victor Asal and Kyle Beardsley, "Proliferation and International Crisis Behavior," *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 2 (2007): 139–155; Michael Horowitz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons and International Conflict: Does Experience Matter?," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 2 (2009): 234–257

8. For work on how nuclear weapons affect the outcomes of international conflict, see Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear*

of these works do make theoretical arguments linking nuclear weapons acquisition and particular foreign policy behaviors. For example, Waltz argues that “nuclear weapons make states more cautious,” while Gartzke and Jo argue that “nuclear-capable nations are bound to increase their influence in international affairs.”⁹ However, these arguments tend to be general statements that specify the effects of nuclear acquisition to be the same for all states. As discussed above, such claims are of limited use in shedding light on the variation in foreign policy responses to nuclear acquisition that we see in the historical record.

A second reason why existing scholarship has not sufficiently examined the effect of nuclear weapons on the foreign policies of the states who acquire them is that scholarship has tended to focus on how nuclear acquisition affects the calculations of *other* states. The most obvious example is the large literature on whether, and under what circumstances, nuclear weapons can deter other states. This literature examines whether *other* states are deterred from attacking the state that has acquired nuclear weapons.¹⁰ While of clear importance, this literature does not provide direct insight into how nuclear weapons affect the foreign policy of the acquiring state itself. For example, if nuclear weapons provide deterrent benefits, how do the states that acquire nuclear weapons respond to that additional security? Do they do so by behaving more or less aggressively, or acting more expansively in world politics? The literature on deterrence offers little guidance. Similarly, the literature on nuclear compellence examines whether nuclear weapons help compellence *conditional on a compellent threat being made*.¹¹ This question also focuses on how *other* states respond to threats made by nuclear states, and largely ignores the question of whether nuclear states respond to the (possible) compellent benefits of nuclear weapons by altering their foreign policy—perhaps by making more frequent or demanding compellent threats than non-nuclear states.

Blackmail and Nuclear Balance (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1987); Kyle Beardsley and Victor Asal, “Winning with the Bomb,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 2 (2009): 278–301; Matthew Kroenig, “Nuclear Superiority and the Balance of Resolve: Explaining Nuclear Crisis Outcomes,” *International Organization* 67, no. 1 (2013): 141–171; Todd S. Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann, “Crisis Bargaining and Nuclear Blackmail,” *International Organization* 67, no. 1 (2013): 173–195.

9. Sagan and Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons*, 39; Gartzke and Jo, “Bargaining, Nuclear Proliferation, and Interstate Disputes,” 210.

10. Many of these works are cited above, and include Huth and Russett, “What Makes Deterrence Work”; Mearsheimer, “Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe”; Huth, “Extended Deterrence and the Outbreak of War”; Signorino and Tarar, “A Unified Theory and Test”; Narang, “What Does It Take to Deter?”

11. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance*; Sechser and Fuhrmann, “Crisis Bargaining and Nuclear Blackmail.”

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 developed during the Cold War and thus share a strong emphasis both on understanding symmetric nuclear possession (as by the U.S. and U.S.S.R.); and on offering prescriptions or insights into how pairs of nuclear-armed states could or should conduct foreign policy, coercive diplomacy, and war against each other.¹² Such works contributed enormously to scholars' and policymakers' understanding of nuclear weapons and strategy. Nonetheless, they largely ignored how nuclear weapons affect a state's interactions with non-nuclear states, and did not offer a theoretical explanation or empirical assessment of how nuclear-armed states *did in fact* conduct their foreign policy. Indeed, many such works were critical of how the U.S. did in fact behave, and argued that U.S. policymakers had failed to understand the true nature of the nuclear revolution.¹³

The exception to this discussion is the literature on nuclear "emboldenment," which does offer a partial theory of the impact of nuclear acquisition on foreign policy. For example, S. Paul Kapur argues that emboldenment in the form of conventional aggression should generally be expected when conventionally weak, revisionist states acquire nuclear weapons.¹⁴ However, Kapur's work, although of great importance, does not offer a complete typology of how nuclear weapons affect foreign policy. Kapur is not explicit about the behaviors that should be expected when conventionally powerful or status-quo states acquire nuclear weapons, and aggression is not the only behavior that nuclear weapons may facilitate. As a result, we remain in need of a more discriminating conceptual language with which to categorize the effects of nuclear weapons,

12. For examples, see Henry A. Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1957); Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966); Robert Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Charles L. Glaser, *Analyzing Strategic Nuclear Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Posen, *Inadvertent Escalation*.

13. E.g., Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy*.

14. S. Paul Kapur, "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace: Why Nuclear South Asia is Not Like Cold War Europe," *International Security* 30, no. 2 (2005): 127–152; Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent*; S. Paul Kapur, "Ten Years of Instability in a Nuclear South Asia," *International Security* 33, no. 2 (2008): 71–94; Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur, *India, Pakistan, and the Bomb: Debating Nuclear Stability in South Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). Qualifications to Kapur's theory are offered by Negeen T. Pegahi, "Dangerous Deterrent? Assessing the Risk that Nuclear Acquisition Will Embolden Weak States" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2013). For an example of 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).

and identify them empirically.

Developing a more discriminating typology of the ways in which nuclear weapons might affect state foreign policy would not just be useful for scholars. U.S. policymakers have also frequently failed to disaggregate the different behaviors that nuclear weapons might facilitate. Instead, policymakers throughout the nuclear age have often expressed broad and generic concerns about the potential emboldening effects of nuclear acquisition, but without thinking in detail about how and why nuclear weapons may incentivize certain behaviors, or examining the certain circumstances in which different effects are likely to be observed.¹⁵

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 offers a typology of conceptually distinct and empirically distinguishable foreign policy behaviors. I distinguish between “aggression,” “expansion,” “independence,” “bolstering,” and “steadfastness.” I focus on describing and articulating the mechanisms by which nuclear weapons may incentivize behaviors that are particularly worrying to policymakers concerned about the behavior of current and potential nuclear weapon states.¹⁶ Some of these effects have previously been conflated under the catch-all term “emboldenment,” while others are not typically thought of as “emboldening” effects. I show theoretically why nuclear weapons may reduce the costs associated with these behaviors. When the cost of a behavior is reduced, we should expect that that behavior would become more attractive to the state, and engaging in greater quantities of that behavior would be incentivized.¹⁷ Thus, in the same way

15. E.g., Mueller, *Atomic Obsession*, 95–99. For examples of this sort of thinking in U.S. debates about the consequences of Soviet proliferation, see Marc Trachtenberg, “A ‘Wasting Asset’: American Strategy and the Shifting Nuclear Balance, 1949–1954,” *International Security* 13, no. 3 (1988): 5–49. For similar debates about the consequence of a nuclear-armed China and broader concerns about proliferation in the 1960s, see William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, “Whether to ‘Strangle the Baby in the Cradle’: the United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960–64,” *International Security* 25, no. 3 (2000/2001): 54–99; Francis J. Gavin, “Blasts From the Past: Proliferation Lessons from the 1960s,” *International Security* 29, no. 3 (2004/2005): 100–135; Hal Brands, “Rethinking Nonproliferation: L.B.J., the Gilpatric Committee, and U.S. National Security Policy,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 2 (2006): 83–113.

16. For example, I do not examine the possibility that nuclear weapons may have a calming effect on states, since this is not a behavior that would generally worry policymakers.

17. This is not to suggest that nuclear weapons necessarily make a given behavior cheap, just that they may reduce its cost and thus make the behavior relatively more attractive to engage in. This argument is equivalent to the microeconomic concept of “risk compensation” that suggests that individuals may engage in more of a costly behavior (in the canonical example, dangerous driving) when the costs of that behavior are reduced (for example, by a law mandating seat-belt use). See Sam Peltzman, “The Effects of Automobile Safety Regulation,” *Journal of Political Economy*

that offense-defense theory suggests that more aggressive behavior should be expected when conquest is perceived to be easier (or less costly), the foreign policy behaviors described below should also be expected to occur more often when their cost is lowered.¹⁸ This typology does not intend to be exhaustive: nuclear weapons may also affect the cost of other foreign policy behaviors. Similarly, it is also possible that nuclear acquisition may increase the costs of certain foreign policy behaviors under some circumstances.¹⁹ However, the purpose of this article is to provide an initial disaggregation of the concept of “emboldenment;” to offer a typology of behaviors that are of particular concern to policymakers; to identify the theoretical mechanisms by which nuclear acquisition may facilitate those behaviors; and to demonstrate the utility of the typology by using it to shed light on the case of Britain. Developing an exhaustive list of behaviors that nuclear weapons could facilitate, or identifying circumstances in which nuclear acquisition may in fact discourage certain behaviors, is therefore beyond the scope of this paper, though it would be a fruitful subject for future research.

In demonstrating theoretically how nuclear weapons might affect the costs of these behaviors, I make three assumptions. First, I assume that nuclear weapons affect a state’s foreign policy because they provide military capabilities that the state previously lacked: the ability to deliver significant destruction in a short time period against an adversary’s military assets and/or civilian populations with relatively little effort or cost. This assumption provides a rational baseline with which to theorize about the expected effects of nuclear weapons.²⁰

Second, I assume that the threat of unleashing the military capabilities offered by nuclear weapons is credible under at least some circumstances. Thus, according to this assumption, nuclear weapons would not affect a state’s foreign policy if there was no circumstance in which their use could be credibly threatened. Again, although there are clearly circumstances in which

83, no. 4 (1975): 677–725.

18. Stephen Van Evera, “Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War,” *International Security* 22, no. 4 (1998): 5–43; Sean M. Lynn-Jones, “Offense-Defense Theory and its Critics,” *Security Studies* 4, no. 4 (1995): 660–691.

19. For an example of an argument of this sort, Jervis notes that “the possession of nuclear weapons can decrease the state’s freedom of action by increasing the suspicion with which it is viewed.” Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospects of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 3.

20. Nuclear weapons might also affect foreign policy through other non-rational mechanisms. For example, nuclear weapons could have psychological effects on leaders’ perceptions of their status in international politics that lead to changes in foreign policy behavior. Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution*, ch. 6; Jacques E.C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

the threat of nuclear use is not credible, this seems a reasonable assumption.²¹ Indeed, the literature on nuclear deterrence relies on this assumption, because the deterrent power of nuclear weapons depends on the possibility that they might be used.

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 will depend on a state's nuclear posture.²² 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 threaten a nuclear test is required for nuclear weapons to affect calculations about foreign policy.²³ However, if 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 that target. For example, Britain's primary envisioned employment of nuclear weapons was to deliver them to the cities of the Soviet Union, so we should expect that nuclear acquisition would affect British foreign policy when Britain possessed the capacity to deliver nuclear weapons to the Soviet Union. Thus, the point at which nuclear weapons affect state calculations about foreign policy will be the point at which the nuclear weapons can be used in the way the state intends to use them.

Third, I assume that the states that acquire nuclear weapons seek to use their nuclear weapons to improve their ability to protect and pursue their interests. In other words, states are strategic actors that seek to gain benefits from the fact that they possess nuclear weapons. According to this assumption, then, states do not spend significant time and resources acquiring nuclear weapons only to then ignore the potential benefits that they have for the state's ability to protect and pursue its interests in world politics.

Taking these assumptions as a starting point, what foreign policy behaviors could nuclear weapons facilitate?

21. It might be argued that an increasingly robust nuclear taboo has diminished the validity of this assumption over time, although whether such a taboo exists remains debated. For example, see Nina Tannenwald, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Daryl G. Press, Scott D. Sagan, and Benjamin A. Valentino, "Atomic Aversion: Experimental Evidence on Taboos, Traditions, and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (2013): 188–206.

22. On the requirements of different nuclear postures, see Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*.

23. *Ibid.*

Aggression

First, nuclear weapons may facilitate *aggression*. Aggression is defined as increased belligerence or the more aggressive pursuit of goals in pre-existing disputes or in pursuit of previously defined interests. Nuclear weapons may reduce the price of this behavior: by adding an additional layer of military capability that can be called upon, or that might be used inadvertently by leaders enveloped by the fog of war, nuclear weapons raise the risk of escalation for the state's opponents in responding to aggression, since they now have to 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 opportunities to escalate a conflict or attempt to revise the status quo, that had previously been too dangerous for the state to undertake, more attractive.

However, nuclear weapons should only be expected to reduce the costs of aggression if they are not used as a substitute for existing conventional forces that the state possesses. 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 and might even be increased. This is because if a state uses nuclear weapons to substitute for its conventional forces, the state has *fewer* conventional forces with which to engage in aggression after acquiring nuclear weapons.

It is not hard to see that a range of states may find acquiring nuclear weapons to facilitate aggression to be attractive. For example, states facing severe threats would often like to be able to tolerate higher levels of escalation in their political and military interactions with the source of the threat, both so that they can more easily hold onto what they have but also so that they can improve their position to the greatest extent possible. Aggression might be identified by a range of behaviors, including: a) the issuance of new or more demanding compellant threats in an ongoing dispute; b) the dedication of larger conventional forces to missions associated with a particular dispute; c) more belligerent rhetoric being used by government officials and political leaders towards a particular country; d) the vertical escalation of a dispute through the use of new tactics, forces or military doctrines; e) a greater tolerance for escalation and risk-taking behavior in an existing dispute.

Pakistan provides the most dramatic example of a state using nuclear weapons to facilitate this behavior. Nuclear weapons have acted as a shield behind which Pakistan has been able to pursue more aggressively its foreign policy goals in Kashmir and against India more broadly, most notably during the 1999 Kargil War and in the use of subconventional attacks against Indian cities.²⁴ Nuclear weapons “increase the cost of Indian action” against Pakistan, which facilitates “risk-seeking behavior as part of [Pakistan’s] effort to change the status quo.”²⁵ South Africa may also have responded to nuclear acquisition in 1979 by becoming more aggressive in the conflict in Angola. Nuclear weapons were viewed by South African political and military elites as a tool that could be used to control escalation and force the U.S. to intervene on South Africa’s behalf, thus reducing the risks associated with aggression.²⁶ And had Iraq succeeded in acquiring nuclear weapons, documentary evidence suggests that Saddam Hussein planned to use nuclear weapons to facilitate conventional aggression against Israel.²⁷

Expansion

Second, nuclear weapons can reduce the costs of *expansion*. 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 not itself a dyadic foreign policy behavior, but it is primarily composed of two dyadic behaviors: the formation of new dyadic alliance relationships, and the initiation of new dyadic adversarial relationships.

Nuclear weapons may reduce the costs associated with expansion. Nuclear weapons may allow states to free up conventional military and political resources that were previously dedicated to military tasks or missions that 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. As with aggression, we should only expect that nuclear weapons reduce the costs associated with expansion when nuclear

24. Kapur, *Dangerous Deterrent*; Narang, “Posturing for Peace?”; C. Christine Fair, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army’s Way of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

25. Fair, *Fighting to the End*, 203.

26. Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era*, ch. 8; author interview with Maj. Gen. Gert Opperman (ret.), Pretoria, 23 June 2014; author interview with André Buys, Pretoria, 1 July 2014; author interview with Amb. Victor Zazeraj, Johannesburg, 4 July 2014.

27. Hal Brands and David Palkki, “Saddam, Israel, and the Bomb: Nuclear Alarmism Justified?,” *International Security* 36, no. 1 (2011): 133–166.

weapons are not used as a substitute for conventional forces, i.e. if the state does not reduce its conventional forces in response to nuclear acquisition. 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 will not be reduced by nuclear acquisition.

A range of states might be interested in using nuclear weapons to facilitate expansion. For example, rising powers frequently seek to expand their influence and reach in international politics as their power position improves, and may find that nuclear weapons offer them a tool that facilitates such behavior.²⁸ Actions indicative of expansion might include a state a) broadening its declared interests in world politics; b) forming alliances with, or offering extended deterrence to, new states; c) developing greater power projection capabilities; d) providing support for insurgents, proxies, or rebel groups in new countries; e) participating in disputes with states with whom the state has no previous history of conflict; f) taking a more active role in multilateral or international institutions.

The U.S. provides an example of a state that was able to expand its interests in world politics 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, and nuclear weapons facilitated a semi-permanent military presence in Europe, allowed the U.S. to extend nuclear deterrence to a range of new allies, and thus permitted the U.S. to pursue a more expansive grand strategy than the U.S. had ever previously considered in its history.²⁹ Similarly, after acquiring nuclear weapons, the Soviet Union did not appear to become more aggressive in Europe but did seem to expand its interests in Asia. The USSR reversed its previously cautious attitude towards the Chinese revolution, signing an alliance treaty with the PRC that included a commitment to assist China “by all means at its disposal,” a phrase that invoked the use of nuclear weapons.³⁰ More dramatically, Stalin

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

29. On the role played by nuclear weapons in U.S. grand strategy in the aftermath of World War II, see Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford University Press, 1992); Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton: 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 Edition* (Oxford University Press, 2005); Mearsheimer, “Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence in Europe”; Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 156.

30. David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 276.

authorized the transfer of substantial military capabilities to the North Korean army, and reversed his previous opposition to Kim Il Sung's plan to attack South Korea. More broadly, and consistent with the idea that states expand their interests after nuclear acquisition, quantitative research has found that states possessing nuclear weapons tend to be more likely to initiate military disputes with countries with whom they have no history of conflict.³¹

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 taking actions that an ally either opposes or does not support the state taking. How might nuclear weapons affect the price of independence? By providing an internal source of security that the state previously lacked, nuclear weapons can provide a state with less need to rely on external sources of security (alliances).³² The alliance therefore becomes somewhat less valuable than it previously was.³³ As a result, the costs of acting independently of the ally, or in ways contrary to the wishes of the ally are reduced because the ally's support is no longer required to the degree it was prior to nuclear acquisition. In short, nuclear weapons can provide a substitute for an alliance. As Coe and Vaynman argue, "nuclear weapons are a substitute for [an] alliance with a superpower, and thus have powerful effects on intra- rather than inter-alliance politics. A state with nuclear weapons sees less value in an alliance than one without, and so is less willing to compromise its own interests to suit the superpower's in exchange for the latter's protection."³⁴

It is not hard to see why certain states would seek to use nuclear weapons to facilitate independence. For example, states with senior allies who provide for their security are likely to find using nuclear weapons to pursue independence particularly attractive, because such states are constrained if they wish to engage in behaviors that the senior ally does not support. By providing a source of internal military capacity, nuclear weapons reduce the importance of the material and

31. Bell and Miller, "Questioning the Effect of Nuclear Weapons on Conflict."

32. While I use the language of "alliance," this theoretical mechanism is not dependent on the alliance being formal or codified in any way: a state may implicitly provide for the security of another state, and the value of that security may be changed by nuclear acquisition, even if the relationship is not codified in an alliance.

33. This is not to say that the alliance becomes of no value to the state; indeed, it may still be extremely valuable. It is just to say that its value is reduced upon nuclear acquisition.

34. Andrew Coe and Jane Vaynman, *Superpower Collusion and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty*, 2013, 13.

military support the state gets from its senior alliance partner. This in turn reduces the fear in the junior state of having that support withdrawn or reduced, and thus makes actions that the senior ally opposes less costly to pursue. Actions indicating an increased independence from an ally might include: a) an increased willingness to criticize an ally; b) an increased willingness to co-operate with an adversary of an ally; c) an increased willingness to engage in foreign policy behaviors opposed by the ally; d) a reduced inclination to inform an ally in advance of taking particular action; e) an increased willingness to take military actions in the absence of support from an ally; f) withdrawing from an alliance. Importantly, therefore, 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 both via the mechanisms identified above, *or* because a state previously refrained from aggression for fear of invoking the displeasure of an ally.

France provides an example of independence in the aftermath of nuclear acquisition. France obtained nuclear weapons partly to reduce its dependence on the U.S. for its security. Upon acquiring a deliverable capability in 1964, France became more comfortable acting independently of the U.S. France took a series of actions despite U.S. opposition, including criticizing the Bretton Woods monetary system, pursuing détente with the Soviet Union, recognizing China and, most notably, by withdrawing from NATO's command structure.³⁵ To take a second example, observers have argued that North Korean nuclear weapons have allowed Pyongyang to defy its Chinese patron at lower risk. Pollack argues that "the desire to be answerable to no external power" was a key driver of the North Korean nuclear program, and that "North Korean leaders have concluded that its nascent nuclear weapons capabilities...inhibit the Chinese," both in terms of controlling North Korean behavior, and in limiting its ability to jettison its ties with Pyongyang despite Chinese leaders becoming "increasingly perturbed" by North Korean behavior.³⁶

35. Philip H. Gordon, "Charles de Gaulle and the Nuclear Revolution," in *Cold War Statesmen Confront the Bomb: Nuclear Diplomacy Since 1945*, ed. John Lewis Gaddis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 234; Wilfrid L. Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

36. Dick K. Nanto and Mark E. Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations," *North Korean Review* 7, no. 2 (2011): 97; Jonathan D. Pollack, "China's North Korea Conundrum: How to Balance a Three Legged Stool," *Yale Global Online* (2009); Jonathan D. Pollack, *No Exit: North Korea, Nuclear Weapons, and International Security* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2011), 105.

Bolstering

Fourth, nuclear weapons may reduce the costs associated with *bolstering*. Bolstering is defined as taking actions to increase the strength of an alliance, alliance partner or friend.³⁷ Nuclear weapons can reduce the costs associated with bolstering in several ways. First, nuclear weapons provide a state with resources that it can choose to offer to the ally. For example, a state can transfer sensitive nuclear technologies to the state.³⁸ Second, nuclear weapons may offer a lower cost way to defend an alliance partner than 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.³⁹ In short, nuclear weapons can be used to augment rather than substitute for an alliance, and can thus reduce the costs associated with bolstering an ally.

Using nuclear weapons to bolster allies might be attractive for a range of states. Rising powers seeking greater influence over other states may seek to bolster existing alliances in order to gain greater leverage over those states. But equally, because nuclear forces are relatively cheap, declining powers may also seek to use nuclear commitments to bolster junior allies, if existing conventional commitments to the ally are becoming increasingly unaffordable. Actions indicating bolstering might include a state: a) offering a firmer defense commitment than had previously been offered to an ally; b) stationing new forces or weapons systems on the territory of the ally; c) institutionalizing or formalizing a previously informal co-operative relationship; d) providing additional resources to the state (including nuclear technologies).

A range of states have used nuclear weapons to bolster their allies. For example, China provided Pakistan with enough highly enriched uranium to build several nuclear weapons, along with a nuclear weapon design, in order to bolster Pakistan against their common adversary, India.⁴⁰ Indeed, research suggests that the transfer of sensitive nuclear technologies is often

37. As in the discussion of independence, the alliance does not need to be formalized or codified. Nuclear weapons can facilitate the bolstering of another state even if that state is not a formal ally.

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

39. Matthew Fuhrmann and Todd S. Sechser, "Signaling Alliance Commitments: Hand-Tying and Sunk Costs in Extended Nuclear Deterrence," *American Journal of Political Science* (2014); Matthew Fuhrmann and Todd S. Sechser, "Nuclear Strategy, Nonproliferation, and the Causes of Foreign Nuclear Deployments," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58, no. 3 (2014): 455–480.

40. Khan, *Eating Grass*, 188.

undertaken to bolster allies against common enemies.⁴¹ The United States has also used nuclear weapons to bolster alliances in the post-1945 era. In addition to using nuclear weapons to underpin new alliances (see above), the U.S. has also used nuclear weapons to strengthen existing and long-standing relationships that existed before the U.S. acquired nuclear weapons, such as its relationship with the U.K.

Steadfastness

Finally, nuclear weapons may reduce 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 thus reducing the danger for the nuclear state of refusing to back down in a crisis. 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. However, we might not *observe* greater steadfastness in response to nuclear acquisition if the state is already sufficiently powerful to be able to deal comfortably with all challenges to its position without nuclear weapons, or if the state is sufficiently secure that it faces very few such challenges. Unlike with 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 it reduces the conventional capabilities that it previously possessed). The risk of escalation to the nuclear level therefore grows for any state challenging the nuclear state. Because the nuclear state has fewer conventional military options, the nuclear option becomes more attractive, and so escalation is more dangerous for the challenging state. As a result, the nuclear state should be better able to hold firm in defending what it has, even if it

41. Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb*.

has used nuclear weapons as a substitute for conventional forces.

Actions indicating steadfastness might include a state a) issuing more explicit deterrent threats to opponents; b) more quickly mobilizing forces in response to aggression; c) using more belligerent rhetoric during disputes and crises; d) responding to military provocations at higher rates. For example, Pakistani elites viewed the various India-Pakistan crises of the 1980s as “validat[ing] Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto’s decision to acquire a nuclear weapons capability...[a] nuclear capability ensures defense against physical external aggression and coercion from adversaries, and deters infringement of national sovereignty.”⁴² In short, 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. Below, I argue that Britain also experienced a greater willingness to defend the status quo in the face of challenges to its position after acquiring a nuclear capability.

Importantly, these five behaviors are not mutually exclusive because a state may respond to nuclear acquisition by engaging in increasing quantities of more than one of these behaviors. Similarly, because of the dyadic nature of foreign policy, a state may engage in greater quantities of different behaviors towards 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 junior allies, and was more steadfast in responding to challenges to the status quo. This typology therefore allows for state responses to nuclear acquisition to vary both between states and across an individual state’s foreign policies towards different states. And as discussed above, these five foreign policy behaviors may not be exhaustive. It is possible that nuclear weapons may reduce the costs associated with other foreign policy behaviors, and nuclear weapons may also raise the costs associated with certain behaviors. Nonetheless, this typology advances existing work by providing an initial disaggregation of the concept of “emboldenment” that future work can build on, and shows theoretically how nuclear weapons may facilitate each of these behaviors.

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

Assessing the typology using the case of Britain

I examine the utility of the typology using the case of Britain. I choose the British case because it provides a hard case with which to identify the effects of nuclear weapons on foreign policy. First, Britain provides a case in which it would be expected that nuclear weapons would have a relatively small impact on foreign policy. Britain was a conventionally powerful, liberal, democratic state with status quo preferences when it acquired nuclear weapons. Britain also benefited from both a powerful and nuclear-armed protector (the U.S.), and a substantial buffer provided by the English Channel and western Europe between it and its primary adversary, the Soviet Union.⁴³ All of these factors would suggest that Britain would have relatively low desire or need to emphasize nuclear weapons within its grand strategy. As a result, if the typology can nonetheless detect and identify the effects of British nuclear acquisition, the typology is likely to be at least as useful in other cases where the effects of nuclear weapons would be expected to be larger and more easily identifiable.

Within the case, I aim to assess whether it is possible to empirically observe and distinguish between the different effects 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. In doing so, I focus on the narrow five-year period before and after British nuclear acquisition, and look for discontinuities in British foreign policy behavior caused by nuclear acquisition. By focusing on a short window before and after nuclear acquisition, internal validity is enhanced because we reduce the likelihood of bias caused by other variables that are stable or change only slowly over the period studied.⁴⁴ Focusing on a short period of time also allows for more detailed analysis and process tracing of particular policy decisions than would be possible in the analysis of a longer time period. I particularly look for speech evidence to suggest that nuclear weapons *caused* any discontinuity in British behavior that we observe. While “smoking gun” evidence is hard to find in every case,

43. Sebastian Rosato, *Europe United: Power Politics and the Making of the European Community* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 83-87.

44. One variable that does change in 1955 is the replacement of Winston Churchill by Anthony Eden as Prime Minister in April 1955. However, given that Eden and Churchill came from the same party, shared a similar outlook on most matters of foreign policy, and that Eden was intimately involved in foreign policy making as Foreign Secretary immediately prior to becoming Prime Minister, there are reasons to doubt that this could have caused any discontinuity in British behavior observed.

we can look to see whether changes in British behavior correspond to British beliefs both before and after nuclear acquisition about what nuclear weapons allowed Britain to do. For example, if British elites stated that nuclear weapons were needed to allow them to act more independently of the U.S., and then displayed greater independence from the U.S. upon acquiring nuclear weapons, that would suggest that nuclear weapons did indeed facilitate that foreign policy behavior.

I focus on 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 we should expect that nuclear weapons would begin to affect British foreign policy calculations, because Britain's envisioned use of nuclear weapons was against the cities of the Soviet Union. 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 prior to 1955 were capable of (though had not been designed for) 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, and it was not until 1960 that British Bomber Command had its full planned complement of V-bomber squadrons, the Valiants provided Britain with a delivery capability from 1955.⁴⁷ As Humphrey Wynn's secret (now declassified) internal RAF history of the development of the strategic nuclear deterrent argues, it was in 1955 that "an A-bomb could have been deployed operationally by the RAF."⁴⁸

I examine whether Britain engaged in greater quantities of each of the five behaviors in the aftermath of acquiring a deliverable capability in 1955. I first examine whether Britain engaged in aggression or expansion, and show that Britain used nuclear weapons as a substitute for its conventional forces. As a result, we should not expect that aggression or expansion would be

45. Humphrey Wynn, *The RAF Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Forces: Their Origins, Roles and Deployment 1946-1969* (Ministry of Defence Air Historical Branch, RAF: UKNA AIR 41/87, 1991), 41-42, 62; Christopher J. Bartlett, *The Long Retreat: A Short History of British Defence Policy, 1945-70* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1972), 99.

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

47. Andrew Pierre, *Nuclear Politics: The British Experience with an Independent Strategic Force 1939-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 155; A.J.R. Groom, *British Thinking About Nuclear Weapons* (London: Pinter, 1974), 122; William P. Snyder, *The Politics of British Defense Policy, 1945-1962* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964), 26; Peden, *Arms, Economics and British Strategy*, 238; Wynn, *The RAF Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Forces*, 76, 95-98.

48. Wynn, *The RAF Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Forces*, 98.

incentivized, and indeed, I show that British elites viewed their nuclear weapons as facilitating only the maintenance of the British position. Second, I examine whether Britain engaged in bolstering, and show that Britain did indeed use nuclear weapons to bolster its junior allies. Third, I examine whether Britain engaged in greater independence and steadfastness. I show that in responding to a series of challenges to its position in the Middle East, Britain demonstrated greater independence from the United States and steadfastness in responding to provocations in the post-1955 period.

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 avoid retrenchment and maintain, but not expand, its position in international politics. As discussed above, when a state uses nuclear weapons as a substitute for conventional forces, we should not expect that expansion or aggression would be incentivized because the state has fewer conventional forces with which to engage in such behaviors. This section shows that Britain did indeed substitute nuclear weapons for conventional forces; that this substitution began to occur in 1955 once nuclear weapons could be delivered to the Soviet Union; and that British leaders viewed nuclear weapons as facilitating only the maintenance of the British position, and thus did not engage in greater quantities of either aggression or expansion.

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: “a classic among military documents” that made Britain “the first nation to base its national security planning...upon a declaratory policy of nuclear deterrence.”⁴⁹ British elites were under no illusions about the increasing economic difficulties facing the country, concerns that were exacerbated by the perceived unsustainability of the force build-up that had occurred after the outbreak of the Korean War. The

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

Strategy Paper therefore aimed to find a way to reduce defense expenditures without damaging Britain's strategic position.⁵⁰ These concerns continued throughout the 1950s, with incoming Prime Minister Eden told by his Minister of Defence 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."⁵¹ Eden agreed that this was unsustainable as he initiated a major reappraisal of British defence policy, stating: "We must now cut our coat according to our cloth. There is not much cloth."⁵²

Nuclear weapons were seen as providing a solution to this problem because of their relatively low cost. Starting in 1955, nuclear weapons began to alter Britain's conventional posture. Although the 1952 Global Strategy Paper had articulated a doctrine of substituting nuclear weapons for conventional forces, the 1952 paper ultimately "failed to make the shift from theory to practice with little alteration resulting in Britain's force posture."⁵³ Despite its successful nuclear test, Britain lacked a deliverable nuclear capability. As Sir John Slessor argued, it was Britain's "ability to put those bombs down where we want to" that would allow British strategy to change.⁵⁴

Instead, it was in 1955, as Britain obtained a deliverable nuclear capability, that the concepts articulated in the 1952 Strategy Paper began to be reflected in Britain's conventional posture.⁵⁵ British conventional manpower stayed around 850,000 between 1952 and 1954, but beginning in 1955, British manpower began to decrease, reaching 700,000 in 1957 and falling close to 500,000 by the end of the 1950s. Defense expenditure was held constant in 1956 (a decline in real terms and as a percentage of GNP), and subsequently fell as British planners placed greater "reliance upon the nuclear deterrent."⁵⁶ British elites were clear that this substitution was occurring. As Eden stated explicitly in 1956, it is on "the atomic weapons that we now rely, not only to deter aggression but to deal with aggression if it should be launched...we are spending too much on forces of

50. John Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence: British Nuclear Strategy 1945-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 130-133.

51. Rosecrance, *Defence of the Realm*, 188.

52. T. C. G. James, *Defence Policy and the Royal Air Force 1956-1963* (Ministry of Defence Air Historical Branch, RAF: UKNA AIR 41/86, 1987), 11; Groom, *British Thinking About Nuclear Weapons*, 108-109.

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

54. Groom, *British Thinking About Nuclear Weapons*, 62-63. Bureaucratic politics also played a role in preventing the 1952 Strategy Paper from influencing British posture, with the army and navy demanding the conventional forces required to fight "broken-backed" conventional warfare in the aftermath of a nuclear exchange.

55. Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning*, 5.

56. Rosecrance, *Defence of the Realm*, 190.

types which are no longer of primary importance.”⁵⁷ To avoid Britain’s defence commitments further damaging the British economy, he believed it essential to “continue the trend towards greater reliance on nuclear weapons.”⁵⁸ Official white papers echoed this position: “successive Defence White Papers from 1955 on assumed that any major aggression would be met with nuclear weapons.”⁵⁹

The 1957 Defence White Paper ossified these trends. The new Minister of Defence, Duncan Sandys, had had his powers relative to the Service Chiefs substantially strengthened by the Prime Minister in order that he be able to succeed in his “first goal”: securing substantial further reductions in military expenditure and manpower.⁶⁰ Sandys aimed to reduce annual expenditure from around £1,600m to around £1,300m and proposed further deep cuts in the size of the armed forces from 690,000 to 375,000, a development Macmillan explicitly stated “must depend on the acceptance of nuclear weapons.”⁶¹

Because Britain used its nuclear weapons as a substitute for conventional forces, British elites appear to have given little thought to the idea that nuclear acquisition would facilitate aggression or expansion. British planners did, however, believe that nuclear weapons would allow Britain to reduce expenditure *without changing* Britain’s political commitments or overall strategic position. Nuclear weapons, in short, were viewed by the British as a tool for maintaining Britain’s increasingly precarious position rather than a tool for aggression or expansion. As James’ secret (now declassified) internal history stated: “The nuclear dimension of defence...was seen as providing the opportunity for economies in defence...*without any sacrifices* in national security or international influence.”⁶² As a result, “the period [from 1956] was one which saw little change in the objectives of British defence commitments outside Europe. What changed was the resources to meet those commitments.”⁶³

Britain no longer had the capacity to “hold the ring [with conventional forces] as it had done in

57. Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, 206.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Pierre, *Nuclear Politics*, 106-107.

60. Bartlett, *The Long Retreat*, 129; Lawrence Freedman, *Britain and Nuclear Weapons* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1980), 4; Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning*, 139.

61. Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, 246-247.

62. James, *Defence Policy and the Royal Air Force*, xv-xvi, emphasis added.

63. *Ibid.*, xiv.

the nineteenth century," and nuclear weapons therefore represented a path to continued status.⁶⁴ Indeed, Churchill had been advised by his scientific advisor Lord Cherwell that "if we are unable to make bombs ourselves...we will sink to the rank of a second class nation."⁶⁵ Sir John Slessor, the Chief of the Air Staff explicitly connected the use of nuclear weapons as a substitute for conventional forces with the maintenance of the British position. Arguing against retrenchment, he argued that "It would be fatal to 'call the legions back to Rome'." Avoiding this fate despite the "economic crisis" facing Britain would require, Slessor believed, "preserving and increasing the main deterrent—atomic air power."⁶⁶ James' secret internal history also explicitly states: "Overall, no overseas commitments had been dropped, but reductions in the level of military support were in prospect and the RAF [the service with the ability to deliver nuclear weapons] was seen as having a major part to play in offsetting their effect."⁶⁷

Britain therefore reduced its conventional forces after acquiring a deliverable capability in 1955, but used nuclear weapons to allow the maintenance of Britain's overall strategic position. Unsurprisingly, no thought was given to expanding Britain's interests in world politics: holding onto what Britain had presented a sufficient challenge.

Bolstering

Despite the effort to pursue security at lower cost, Britain simultaneously used nuclear weapons to bolster its junior allies. As Baylis puts it, "at a time when the government was putting more emphasis...on nuclear deterrence, a range of alliance commitments were entered into" to bolster existing relationships⁶⁸ Britain explicitly sought to use its nuclear weapons to strengthen existing relationships in Europe, the Middle East and in Asia, while simultaneously reducing the costs (but not the extent) of the political commitments associated with them.

The Middle East was an area of crucial importance to Britain but in which British conventional capabilities were increasingly stretched and economically unsustainable. A 1950 report for the Chiefs of Staff acknowledged "the little the United Kingdom can actually do to protect the Middle

64. Groom, *British Thinking About Nuclear Weapons*, 23.

65. Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, 128.

66. UKNA AIR 75/119, *Private Papers of Sir John Slessor*, "Defense Policy in Economic Crisis," Oct. 20, 1952.

67. James, *Defence Policy and the Royal Air Force*, 44.

68. Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, 227.

East,⁶⁹ and in 1952, the cabinet was told by the Chiefs of Staff that “we are faced with the fact that the United Kingdom cannot afford to maintain its present forces [in the Middle East].”⁷⁰ In 1955, as Britain acquired a deliverable capability, Britain sought to bolster its existing relationships in the Middle East. First, Britain promoted and then joined a defence pact between Turkey and Iraq (the Baghdad Pact). This alliance served multiple ends in assisting the broader goal of maintaining the British position: to protect the Northern limits of the Middle East against the Soviet Union; to limit Nasser’s influence throughout the Middle East; to put the brakes on increasing American influence in Iraq; and protect British oil investments in Iraq and the Persian Gulf.⁷¹ In short, the Baghdad Pact was viewed as a “vehicle for the maintenance of [British] influence throughout the area.”⁷² Indeed, the extent to which Britain hoped to use the Pact as tool for pursuing its economic and political goals in the Middle East irritated the United States, who ultimately declined to join for that reason. As Dulles noted, “the British have taken it over and run it as an instrument of British policy.”⁷³

Nuclear weapons facilitated this bolstering behavior because Britain could not afford to contribute large numbers of conventional forces to the alliance. Nuclear weapons provided the solution, allowing Britain to avoid retrenchment in the Middle East. As both Navias and 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.”⁷⁴ James’ secret internal history is clear that “nuclear strike was seen as the main component of the assistance which could be offered [to the Baghdad Pact].”⁷⁵ There was ambiguity about exactly how and under what circumstances Britain would conduct nuclear operations in support of the Baghdad Pact.⁷⁶ However, Britain was not squeamish about deploying British

69. UKNA CAB 21/2088, COS(50) 363, Chiefs of Staff Committee, 15th September, 1950, Appendix II, 13

70. UKNA CAB 129/23, D(52) 26, Defence Policy and Global Strategy, 17th June 1952, 19.

71. John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat From Empire in the Post-War World* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc, 1988), 210; Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 58-62.

72. Nigel John Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser: Anglo-American Relations and Arab Nationalism, 1955-59* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1996), 59; Simon C. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East: Britain, the United States and Post-War Decolonization* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 39.

73. “Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation Between the President and the Secretary of State, Washington, April 7, 1956,” *FRUS, 1955-1957*, Vol. XII, 270. Quoted in Steven G. Galpern, *Money, Oil, and Empire in the Middle East: Sterling and Postwar Imperialism, 1944-1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 152.

74. Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning*, 40; Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, 229.

75. James, *Defence Policy and the Royal Air Force*, 12.

76. *Ibid.*, 20.

nuclear assets close to the Middle East. As early as November 1955, Wynn's secret internal history states that "the plans were for two [British] Canberra B2 squadrons" to be deployed in the Middle East Air Force, and "it was considered that they would then, or shortly afterwards, be capable of carrying nuclear weapons." Although initially their role was intended to be a conventional one (though whether or not the Soviet Union was aware of this is unclear), by 1960 Canberra squadrons based in Cyprus had an unambiguous nuclear strike capability.⁷⁷ In short, nuclear weapons allowed Britain to bolster its alliances in the Middle East and maintain influence "on the cheap."⁷⁸

There is evidence that similar dynamics also occurred in Asia. After the establishment of SEATO in 1954, a number of attempts were made by South-East Asian states to persuade British planners to confirm the details of British conventional deployments to the alliance. This created "something of a dilemma" for British planners.⁷⁹ The alliance was perceived to serve an important strategic and political purpose but Eden and other senior leaders were unable to commit large numbers of conventional forces to the region beyond those fighting in Malaysia. Nuclear weapons provided a solution once Britain possessed the capability to deliver them. The Joint Planning Staff emphasized the need to avoid "undue emphasis being placed on the land campaign in the development of a strategic concept for the region." Instead, tactical nuclear air power would allow Britain to retain its influence in Asia at lower cost, with the Chiefs of Staff cheerfully assessing in 1956 that: "We do not consider...that the use of nuclear weapons in the Far East [would] necessarily lead to global war."⁸⁰

Even in NATO, Britain's most important alliance, Baylis argues that "the same pattern can be discerned...in the mid-1950s."⁸¹ Britain argued that its nuclear weapons allowed it to place less emphasis on its conventional forces. Indeed, Britain sought to encourage NATO as a whole to change its posture during the Annual Review process, with Eden arguing in a letter to Eisenhower in July 1956 that: "A 'shield' of conventional forces is still required: but it is no longer our principal military protection. Need it be capable of fighting a major land battle? Its primary military function

77. Wynn, *The RAF Strategic Nuclear Deterrent Forces*, 125-126.

78. Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, 229.

79. *Ibid.*, 228.

80. *Ibid.*, 229.

81. *Ibid.*, 230.

seems now to be to deal with any local infiltration, to prevent external intimidation and to enable aggression to be identified.”⁸² Eden’s vision, shared by the Joint Planning Staff to the Chiefs of Staff Committee, was that conventional forces would not be expected to fight a major war, but to “meet limited incursions and identify aggression.” Similarly, Defence Secretary Monckton “rejected the idea that the West needed to build up conventional forces large enough to hold an all-out attack by the Soviet Union.”⁸³ The British therefore sought to use nuclear weapons to strengthen the deterrent power of the alliance, while nonetheless reducing the costs associated with the alliance. This desire for a major change in NATO’s strategy was rejected by the Americans, but Britain did reduce its own conventional commitment at the NATO Council meeting in December of 1956.⁸⁴ Further reductions were made over the next few years, with Britain gaining NATO acceptance for a reduction of 31,500 men (leaving around 63,000) in BAOR by April 1958.⁸⁵ Again, Britain’s strategic ambition and political commitments did not change, but its conventional commitment did: “The Army’s tasks, within and outside Europe, remained; it simply had less with which to meet them.”⁸⁶

In short, the same pattern was observed across Britain’s most important alliances in Asia, the Middle East and Europe. In 1955, as Britain came into possession of a deliverable nuclear capability, Britain sought to use its nuclear weapons as a bedrock upon which to maintain or bolster existing alliances, while simultaneously reducing its conventional military and financial commitment to those alliances. This allowed Britain to maintain its position in international politics at lower economic cost, and delay political retrenchment for longer than would have otherwise been possible.

Independence and steadfastness

To assess whether Britain exhibited greater independence from its senior ally (the U.S.), and steadfastness in responding to challenges, I examine British responses to crises in the Middle East in the period before and after 1955. The Middle East was the area of the world in which

82. Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Sir Anthony Eden* (London: Cassell & Co., 1960), 372-373; Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, 230.

83. Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence*, 231.

84. *Ibid.*

85. Navias, *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic Planning*, 184.

86. James, *Defence Policy and the Royal Air Force*, 1.

British and American interests diverged most dramatically, and the area in which the British position was repeatedly challenged immediately before and after Britain acquired a deliverable nuclear deterrent in 1955.⁸⁷ I examine seven British responses to challenges to its position: the British response to the nationalization of Anglo-Iranian oil in 1951, the British response to the Saudi occupation of Buraimi from 1952 to 1955, British negotiations over its withdrawal from Suez, Britain's response to the Saudi occupation of Buraimi in 1955, the British response to the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956, and British responses to requests for military assistance in Oman in 1957 and Jordan in 1958. In each of the three cases prior to 1955, British behavior was characterized by acquiescence to American policy preferences. In the four cases after 1955, British behavior was characterized by unilateral action with little regard for U.S. preferences.

After acquiring a deliverable nuclear capability in 1955, Britain thus displayed both greater *steadfastness* in its adversarial relationships, and *independence* from the United States. This does not prove that the acquisition of a deliverable capability *caused* this change in behavior. However, I also show speech evidence that demonstrates that British elites had long intended to use nuclear weapons to provide it with greater freedom of action and less dependence on the U.S.

Anglo-Iranian Oil, 1951

Prior to British nuclear acquisition, Britain was extremely wary of responding to challenges with force without the support of the United States. The response to the nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) by Mohammad Mossadeq in 1951 provides an example.

For three months after the nationalization of the AIOC Britain gave serious consideration to a military response.⁸⁸ The ultimate decision to eschew a military response was not made because AIOC was of limited importance to the British. On the contrary, the facility at Abadan was the world's largest oil refinery, Britain's largest single overseas investment, and had played a critical role in supporting the British war effort.⁸⁹ As Britain sought to recover economically in the

87. Eden was blunt about the divergence between British and American interests in the Middle East in a cabinet meeting in October 1955: "Our interests in the Middle East were greater than those of the United States...and our experience in the area was greater than theirs." Tore T. Petersen, *The Middle East Between the Great Powers: Anglo-American Conflict and Cooperation, 1952-7* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000), 52.

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

89. Galpern, *Money, Oil, and Empire in the Middle East*, 1; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 525; Petersen, *The Middle East Between*

aftermath of the war, “sterling” or “dollar-free” oil extracted from British concessions was viewed as critically important in reducing the British dollar deficit.⁹⁰ As early as 1949, the British had sought to substitute sterling oil for dollar oil, with the aim of allowing Britain to increase crude oil imports (which increased by a factor of six between 1946 and 1955) without further exacerbating the dollar deficit on oil.⁹¹ Although there was some disagreement between the Foreign Office and Treasury as to how much the protection of sterling should shape Britain’s overall foreign policy, there was a general consensus across the British government that the status of sterling was critical to Britain’s international position, and that the dollar deficit on oil posed an important threat.⁹²

Anglo-Iranian oil was at the center of this strategy to preserve the status of sterling. This was not only because AIOC was an entirely British entity, but also because the government itself had a 51 percent stake in the company (unlike other partly British companies such as Royal Dutch-Shell). As a Treasury official wrote, “We can always rely on the respect of AIOC for the national interests, it is at least doubtful whether even the British directors of Shell would be prepared to put the interests of the UK balance of payments above the commercial interests of the Group.”⁹³ The money that Britain received from Iranian oil amounted to 4% of Britain’s entire balance of payments.⁹⁴ How Britain responded to the nationalization of Anglo-Iranian Oil was also seen by British officials as setting a critical precedent for how Britain would respond to violations of contracts around the world.⁹⁵ British officials in both the Treasury and at the Bank of England believed that the status of the pound as an international currency and Britain’s position in the international system more broadly depended in important ways on British control over the production of Iranian oil.⁹⁶ As Chancellor R.A. Butler stated in a meeting in November 1951, America needed to understand that Britain’s “economic viability was at stake.”⁹⁷ In short, the lack of a British military response to the nationalization of AIOC cannot be attributed of the limited importance of the Abadan facility.

the Great Powers, 19.

90. Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 556-557; Galpern, *Money, Oil, and Empire in the Middle East*, 2.

91. Galpern, *Money, Oil, and Empire in the Middle East*, 7, 59.

92. *Ibid.*, 71.

93. Flett to Brittain and Rowan, January 31, 1952. UKNA T 236/5874, quoted in *ibid.*, 72.

94. *Ibid.*, 107.

95. *Ibid.*, 113.

96. *Ibid.*, 19, 67, 81.

97. Minutes of meeting, November 1, 1951. UKNA FO 371/91608. Quoted in *ibid.*, 127.

Nor was British reticence due to a lack of military options. While the British concluded that securing and holding Iran's inland oil fields would be too challenging and beyond their capabilities to sustain, a more limited plan—known as Plan Y—to occupy Abadan Island and thus retake control of the refinery was viewed as within British capabilities, although it would likely have involved some casualties. Indeed, plans were sufficiently advanced that Britain was in a position to launch an operation to seize Abadan Island within twelve hours of a decision to do so.⁹⁸

Instead, the decision to eschew a military response occurred because the United States was strongly opposed to the use of force. For the U.S., the dispute over AIOC was subordinate to the broader goal of keeping Iran out of the Soviet sphere, but in 1951 the U.S. felt too weak to provoke a dispute that might risk war with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and Iranians had signed a friendship pact in 1921 that gave them the authority to intervene if Iran suffered an invasion, and the Americans therefore worried that British military action might trigger Soviet intervention.⁹⁹

Potential British military action was therefore seen as inimical to American interests, and the U.S. sought to prevent it.¹⁰⁰ Secretary of State Acheson wrote that: "Only 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." The British ambassador was told that the U.S. "would be opposed to the adoption of 'strong measures' by the British...such as the manipulation into office of an Iranian Premier of UK choosing or the introduction of force or the threat of force."¹⁰¹ Despite the fact that a diplomatic solution appeared unlikely, the Americans insisted that Britain abandon the military option.

Ultimately, for all the British huffing and puffing at the U.S. reticence to assist them, Britain was not prepared to act alone. Attlee told the Cabinet that U.S. opposition to British action was decisive: "in 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." Attlee's argument carried

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

99. Francis J. Gavin, "Politics, Power, and U.S. Policy in Iran, 1950–1953," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999): 68.

100. *Ibid.*, 65–68.

101. Paper presented to the British Ambassador on 17 April 1951, in *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1951–1954, Vol. 10, p.36. Quoted in *ibid.*, 71

the day, with the Cabinet concluding that “in light of the United States attitude...force could not be used...We could not afford to break with the United States on an issue of this kind.”¹⁰² This decision was tantamount to accepting “a U.S. veto on British military action...in a region that Britain regarded as its postwar overseas stronghold.”¹⁰³ On September 25, Mossadeq instructed the remaining British employees at Abadan one week to leave, and on October 4 the British cruiser *Mauritius* evacuated workers to Iraq.¹⁰⁴

In the absence of U.S. support for military action, Britain was forced to pursue a purely economic approach to dealing with Iran. In particular, Britain threatened to sue anyone who purchased Iranian oil, claiming that they were buying stolen goods.¹⁰⁵ Britain did however, continue their efforts to persuade America to act throughout 1952, with Truman again rejecting British proposals to topple Mossadeq on the grounds that his ouster risked provoking a communist takeover in Iran.¹⁰⁶ It was only with an increasingly favorable balance of power resulting from U.S. rearmament, combined with Eisenhower’s accession to the White House, that U.S. policy changed, with John Foster Dulles and Allen Dulles informing their British counterparts in early 1953 that the U.S. was ready to take action against Mossadeq.¹⁰⁷ The British did not play a crucial role in the coup: MI6 followed the lead of the CIA, and Britain’s primary contribution was in the area of intelligence gathering. Thus, although Britain was finally able to take part in covert action to remove Mossadeq, the episode demonstrated Britain’s reliance on the U.S. as it responded to challenges to its position.¹⁰⁸

Egypt, 1945-1954

Britain also sought assistance from the U.S. to support the British position in Egypt. After 1945, as it had been prior to 1939, Egypt lay at the center of British strategy in the Middle East. The network of bases in the Suez Canal Zone constituted a huge military investment with the ability

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

103. Steve Marsh, *Anglo-American Relations and Cold War Oil: Crisis in Iran* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 78; Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 29.

104. Yergin, *The Prize*, 447.

105. Petersen, *The Middle East Between the Great Powers*, 19.

106. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 30.

107. Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and The Roots of Middle East Terror*, 4; Gavin, “Politics, Power and U.S. Policy in Iran” The relative importance of changes in the balance of power versus the change in presidential administrations in changing American policy is contested. See Gavin, “Politics, Power and U.S. Policy in Iran.”

108. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 30-31.

to service and maintain an army of half a million men.¹⁰⁹ As soon as the war ended, however, Egypt requested negotiations to end Britain's military presence in the country. Britain was willing to withdraw significant forces from Suez, but only if British influence could be preserved and British access to the base during war could be guaranteed, something Nasser was unwilling to grant. Egyptian nationalism remained insufficient to compel British withdrawal, but Britain was increasingly forced to expend manpower and money defending the bases and protecting its own soldiers and civilians.¹¹⁰

Despite Britain's continued military strength in the Middle East and the continued centrality of Egypt within British strategic thinking, however, British strategy was to rely on the U.S. for support. Churchill pursued the "continued bombardment of [Eisenhower with] letters and telegrams pleading for American aid and support," and his briefing papers argued for the necessity of "an agreed Anglo-U.S. policy...lack of positive support and affectation of impartiality by either Power will be...exploited to the detriment of both."¹¹¹ Britain pursued this strategy despite increasing awareness that the United States was moving away from the British position, and increasingly viewed supporting the British as inimical to American goals in the region. British leaders blamed Egyptian intransigence on the lack of American support they were receiving, but were ultimately unable to act independently of the U.S.¹¹² Ultimately, between 1953 and 1954 Britain was forced to make serious concessions to Egypt—agreeing to end British rule in the Sudan and ultimately agreeing to withdraw British troops from the Canal Zone.¹¹³

Buraimi, 1952-1954

Buraimi, a small and sparsely populated oasis located at the south-eastern tip of the Arabian peninsula, had few inhabitants but was of strategic significance to the British. Buraimi offered the possibility of new oil reserves, and its location represented a strategically valuable crossroads: whoever controlled it controlled approaches to both Muscat and Oman.¹¹⁴ Saudi leaders, including

109. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 113.

110. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 121; Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 564.

111. Petersen, *The Middle East Between the Great Powers*, 3.

112. Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 596.

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

114. Tore T. Petersen, "Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East: The Struggle for the Buraimi Oasis, 1952-1957," *International History Review* 14, no. 1 (1992): 71.

the King, Ibn Saud, were well aware of the benefits associated with controlling Buraimi, and in 1952 sent Saudi forces to occupy the oasis with the support of the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO). This was viewed by British officials as a significant challenge to their position in the Persian Gulf. Particularly in the aftermath of the nationalization of AIOC, the Saudi occupation of Buraimi represented a further nail in the coffin of Britain's position in the Middle East. Worse still, Saudi actions had the implicit approval of the United States.¹¹⁵

Despite this, Britain encouraged caution. The Sultan of Muscat and Oman raised a substantial force with which to evict the Saudis, but the British persuaded him to pursue a diplomatic solution in persuading the Saudis to leave Buraimi.¹¹⁶ In doing so, the British sought American support, with one of Churchill's briefing papers emphasizing the extent to which the British saw themselves as ineluctably tied to the Americans, "each power [the U.K. and U.S.] 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 to the detriment of both."¹¹⁷ As the British tried to bring U.S. political and diplomatic support to bear against the Saudis, they agreed a "Standstill Agreement" with the Saudis, by which both sides would remain in their current positions and avoid taking actions that might threaten each other or prejudice a future settlement over the status of the oasis.¹¹⁸

The Standstill Agreement did not last long, with Britain unilaterally abrogating it in response to perceived Saudi violations. Encouraged by the United States, Britain and Saudi Arabia re-opened negotiations on an arbitration agreement that yielded little progress.¹¹⁹ 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 had been reluctant to use force while they required American support in Egypt and Iran.¹²⁰ As with Iran and Egypt, the British ability to take action was therefore constrained by the need for U.S. support.

The disagreement continued, however. Britain insisted that British companies continue their

115. Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser*, 75; Petersen, "Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East," 71.

116. Petersen, *The Middle East Between the Great Powers*, 38; Petersen, "Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East," 74.

117. Petersen, "Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East," 73.

118. *Ibid.*, 74.

119. *Ibid.*, 76.

120. Petersen, *The Middle East Between the Great Powers*, 42.

operations in the disputed area, while Saudi Arabia (backed by ARAMCO, and thus, implicitly, by the U.S.), demanded that Britain cease any actions until the case was settled.¹²¹ As tensions rose through 1954, ARAMCO decided to enter the disputed area in order to lay claim to the territory. Dulles requested that the British ignore the incursion, which did not occur close to British operations, but the British refused to do so and ARAMCO pulled its personnel out of the contested area on 8 June 1954. The following month, Churchill travelled to Washington over Eden's objections with the aim of securing an agreement. Ultimately, Eden announced that Britain and Saudi Arabia would solve the dispute via arbitration, a commitment also made by Churchill in a meeting with Eisenhower.¹²² A neutral zone was established to avoid clashes between ARAMCO and British companies, and Saudi forces left Buraimi in August 1954.¹²³

Buraimi, 1955

This pattern of British acquiescence to American preferences changed in 1955 once Britain acquired a deliverable nuclear capability. As described above, 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 arbitration process to which both sides had agreed in 1954. For example, the Saudi representative on the commission attempted to instruct witnesses appearing before the commission, leading the British member to resign, followed by the two neutral members.¹²⁴ With the arbitration commission disbanded, Britain dramatically shifted their approach. In contrast to the British strategy since 1952 of seeking American political and diplomatic assistance and pursuing a diplomatic solution, Britain instead pursued a unilateral, military approach aimed at changing the facts on the ground in a fait accompli. Thus, despite the Foreign Office telling Eden two years earlier that Britain could not take military action in Buraimi because of American opposition, British forces quickly evicted the Saudis from Buraimi and unilaterally returned the boundaries to their pre-1952 positions.¹²⁵

This action represented a significant change in strategy. However, even more notable than the

121. Petersen, "Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East," 77.

122. Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser*, 75; Petersen, *The Middle East Between the Great Powers*, 47.

123. Petersen, "Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East," 83.

124. *Ibid.*, 84.

125. Petersen, *The Middle East Between the Great Powers*, 53.

fact that British military action occurred was that Britain undertook it without consulting or even bothering to inform the Americans. This “brazen piece of unilateralism” caused “considerable consternation” in Washington, with Under Secretary of State Hoover “berating the British ambassador for the lack of consultation.”¹²⁶ Dulles also vociferously protested the reoccupation of Buraimi to the British foreign office, with the British officer in charge of the Middle East section of the Foreign Office writing in his diary that: “Today we...receiv[ed] two notes or messages [from the Americans]—one telling us that we better go back to arbitration on Buraimi...and the other practically ordering us to call off the Sultan of Muscat’s impending clear-up of the rebellious Imam of Oman...[Under Secretary of State] Kirkpatrick is breathing fire.”¹²⁷ Indeed, U.S. displeasure was sufficient that Eisenhower raised the issue personally with Eden during a state visit to Washington in early 1956, acknowledging Britain’s legal claims to Buraimi but arguing that world public opinion thought “that the whole Arab peninsula belonged, or ought to belong, to King Saud.”¹²⁸ Despite this pressure, Eden refused to give ground.¹²⁹

Suez, 1956

It was during the Suez Crisis of 1956, however, that Britain’s newfound independence was most dramatically demonstrated. As in the case of Anglo-Iranian oil, the Suez Crisis involved the nationalization of an asset viewed as critical to Britain’s economic and political status. Unlike in the case of the AIOC, however, Britain was prepared to act militarily without the support of (and, indeed, despite the opposition of) the United States.

As discussed above, the Suez Canal had long been viewed as critical to British security. Negotiations over the status of the Canal had been a major problem for post-war British foreign policy, and a hard-fought settlement was negotiated with Nasser in 1954.¹³⁰ This settlement did not last long, with Nasser nationalizing the Canal in July 1956 in order to raise funds for the Aswan High Dam. As with the case of Anglo-Iranian oil, the nationalization of the Suez Canal was viewed as a crucial challenge to British interests. Although the strategic value of the Canal

126. Petersen, *The Middle East Between the Great Powers*, 53; Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 37.

127. Petersen, “Anglo-American Rivalry in the Middle East,” 85.

128. *Ibid.*

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

130. Galpern, *Money, Oil, and Empire in the Middle East*, 142-143.

as a base for launching attacks on the Soviet Union had been lessened by the development of the hydrogen bomb, its economic and symbolic importance remained. 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 decade a frightening possibility, while senior policymakers feared that Nasser's rising power and anti-British nationalism would lead him to turn other Middle East oil producing states against Britain and use the Suez Canal to control the supply of oil to Western Europe.¹³¹

In many ways the British interests at stake over the Suez Canal were similar to those at stake over Anglo-Iranian oil. Both posed challenges to the British position that would potentially undermine British standing and prestige; both threatened access to British oil holdings and thus threatened the British balance of payments and the status of sterling; and both threatened to set a precedent for how Britain would respond to future nationalist challenges to its position.¹³²

As in the case of Anglo-Iranian oil, the U.S. strongly opposed military action by Britain to force Nasser to give up the canal. Dulles had 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 direct action than strategies likely to succeed.¹³³ Eisenhower had communicated to Eden as early as July 31st 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 our two countries."¹³⁴ The Americans were concerned that military action would play into the hands of both the Soviet Union and Nasser: turning Nasser into an anti-imperialist hero throughout the Arab world and pushing him into the hands of the Soviet Union.¹³⁵ Britain was under no illusions about U.S. opposition: as a memorandum to Foreign Secretary Lloyd made clear, "Britain would have little or no international support...[and] military force would cause a tremendous strain on the British economy." Chancellor of the Exchequer Macmillan also warned of the danger of taking

131. Yergin, *The Prize*, 467.

132. Yergin makes this comparison explicitly, arguing that "a Nasser victory in Egypt might have had the same kind of repercussions as a Mossadegh victory in Iran would have had." *ibid.*

133. *Ibid.*, 466.

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

135. Yergin, *The Prize*, 466.

military action and warned that in an extended crisis, the British currency would come under significant strain due to limited British reserves.¹³⁶

Despite a full awareness of these challenges, and in contrast to British behavior regarding Anglo-Iranian oil, Britain quickly committed to military action. At a meeting in 10 Downing Street shortly after Nasser's announcement of nationalization, Eden made it "clear that military action would have to be taken and that Nasser would have to go. Nasser could not be allowed 'to have his hand on our windpipe'," and Eden subsequently informed US Under Secretary of State Robert Murphy that Suez was a test that "could be met only by the use of force."¹³⁷ On October 24, 1956, senior British, French and Israeli officials (including the British and French foreign Ministers, and the Israeli Prime Minister) met secretly outside Paris. Agreement was reached for Israel to 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. The goal was to seize the Canal and hopefully supplant Nasser as a side effect.¹³⁸

On October 29, the Israelis launched their invasion, with Britain and France issuing their ultimatum the following day. On October 31, Britain began bombing Egyptian airfields, and on November 5 British and French forces began their assault on the Canal Zone. The invasion surprised the Americans. Indeed, Eisenhower was sufficiently enraged by the British betrayal that he berated on the phone one of Eden's aides thinking it was the Prime Minister and then hung up before the mistake could be corrected.¹³⁹ By November 6, however, the British goal of unrestricted use of the Canal had already been lost: Nasser had obstructed the Canal by sinking ships filled with rocks and cement. Britain and France agreed to a ceasefire, but the Americans now demanded a complete withdrawal of forces. The end result was a disastrous operation curtailed by American economic coercion, including the large-scale selling of sterling by the Federal Reserve, and Soviet threats.¹⁴⁰

Existing histories have argued that nuclear weapons played no role in explaining British behavior in the Suez crisis of 1956. In particular, it is argued that because the British use of nuclear

136. Petersen, *The Middle East Between the Great Powers*, 82.

137. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 46-47; Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser*, 85.

138. Yergin, *The Prize*, 471.

139. *Ibid.*, 472.

140. Pierre, *Nuclear Politics*, 97; Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 62-63; Petersen, *The Middle East Between the Great Powers*, 94.

weapons was not credible against Nasser, they could have played no role in explaining British behavior. Pierre argues that “nuclear weapons [did not] seem relevant to the problem of dealing with Nasser. A Western government is not likely to initiate the use of nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear country...Thus the possession of nuclear weapons was seemingly irrelevant to British objectives and interests at the time of Suez.”¹⁴¹ It is certainly true that Britain did not consider using nuclear weapons during the Suez crisis. But this ignores the indirect role that nuclear weapons may have played in the crisis. First, because nuclear weapons increased the British ability to operate independently of the United States, Britain was able to respond to a challenge to its position in a way that it had not been able to do prior to 1955. Second, as discussed above, because nuclear weapons facilitated the maintenance of a forward position, nuclear weapons made retrenchment a less attractive option and thus disinclined the British from walking away from Suez and accepting a reduced stature in the Middle East.

Post-Suez: Oman and Jordan

In the aftermath of Suez, the conventional wisdom is that Britain shrunk, humiliated, away from the world stage and what remained of its empire. *The Times'* obituary of Eden in 1977 described him as “the last Prime Minister to believe that Britain was a great power and the first to confront a crisis which proved she was not.”¹⁴² This position has been echoed in a body of historical scholarship depicting the Suez crisis as a decisive turning point in British history.¹⁴³

In truth, however, Britain continued to respond aggressively to challenges to its position and was “prepared neither to relinquish its residual interests in the region, nor become subservient to the United States.”¹⁴⁴ As Ashton argues, “the British were resolved to pursue the promotion of their interests through the Baghdad Pact with even greater vigour after the Suez debacle, and were certainly not ready to cast off any mantle.”¹⁴⁵ And, indeed, Britain continued to act

141. Pierre, *Nuclear Politics*, 97.

142. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 67.

143. For example, W. Scott Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the United States, and the Suez Crisis* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991); Rosecrance, *Defence of the Realm*; John Charmley, *Churchill's Grand Alliance: The Anglo-American Special Relationship, 1940-1957* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995); Keith Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2003); Peter L. Hahn, *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

144. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 67.

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

unilaterally in the region when it felt its interests were challenged, often “with little regard for American policy.”¹⁴⁶ First, Britain intervened unilaterally in Oman in 1957 in response to a request from Sultan Said, who was battling the Saudi-backed Ghalib bin Ali. Despite concern that the operation “could not be quickly wound up,” the U.S. did not actively oppose the British intervention. Nonetheless, the U.S. was far from enthusiastic about the operation. Dulles was irritated by the lack of consultation with the U.S., with the deployment of British forces coming days after receiving assurances that there “was no question of using British forces.”¹⁴⁷ Second, Britain intervened in Jordan in the aftermath of the July 1958 coup in Iraq by pro-Nasser elements of the Iraqi army that brought down the Hashemite Royal Family. The coup was viewed as a significant blow to the British position in the Middle East, because Iraq stood at the heart of the Baghdad Pact, because the revolution appeared to threaten oil interests in Iraq, Kuwait and the Persian Gulf more broadly, and because of the possibility that the revolution might presage region-wide instability instigated by Nasser.¹⁴⁸ Britain did much to encourage American intervention in Lebanon, but were excluded from the planning for the operation by Eisenhower, who refused to make the operation a joint Anglo-American one.¹⁴⁹ Instead, Britain sent its forces in Jordan in response to a Jordanian request for assistance.¹⁵⁰ Again, while the Americans did not actively oppose the British intervention, they were not enthusiastic and refused to commit U.S. forces to the operation, with Eisenhower stating that the U.S. should not “support Kings against their people.”¹⁵¹ British intervention in Jordan thus further demonstrates Britain’s continued willingness to intervene militarily in countries without American assistance.

In sum, across a series of crises, the period following the British acquisition of a deliverable nuclear capability was characterized by a relative disregard for American policy preferences, and a willingness to take unilateral action in response to challenges. The fact that such a change in behavior occurred does not itself prove that nuclear weapons acquisition caused the change. However, the behavioral evidence is certainly consistent with the idea that states with senior allies who provide for their security are likely to find using nuclear weapons to facilitate independence

146. Petersen, *The Middle East Between the Great Powers*, 216.

147. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 81.

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

149. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 84.

150. Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser*, 9,189.

151. Smith, *Ending Empire in the Middle East*, 85.

attractive. And, indeed, the desire to reduce British dependence on the United States had been one of the core drivers behind British nuclear acquisition. As Churchill's Science Advisor Lord Cherwell had put it when considering whether Britain should co-operate 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."¹⁵² After the U.S. curtailed nuclear co-operation in the aftermath of the war with the passage of the McMahon Act, the desire to operate independently of the United States was a key reason for pursuing an independent program. As Groom puts it, "there were certain areas where U.S. and British policies diverged and where it was conceivable that what the British considered their vital interests would not be guaranteed by the United States."¹⁵³ Attlee himself made the same point, saying that "we couldn't allow ourselves to be wholly in their hands."¹⁵⁴ The change in British behavior is therefore consistent with how we might expect junior allies to act in the aftermath of nuclear acquisition; and consistent with British elites' stated intentions regarding what nuclear weapons would allow them to do.

Conclusion

The evidence suggests that nuclear acquisition affected British foreign policy. Britain used its nuclear weapons to enable it to maintain (but not expand) its forward strategic posture; bolster existing junior allies; and respond more independently of the U.S. and with greater steadfastness to challenges to its position than it had previously been able to. Britain engaged in greater quantities of some, but not all, of the behaviors identified in the typology, thus demonstrating the value of disaggregating the concept of "emboldenment." The case also demonstrates that the categories identified are empirically distinguishable in an actual case. I here lay out some implications for scholars and practitioners.

First, substantial traction on the political effects of nuclear weapons can be gained by using a more discriminating conceptual language than that previously employed. "Emboldenment" may be a convenient catch-all term, but it conflates a range of conceptually distinct phenomena. These distinctions are important because not all "emboldening" effects are equally concerning to

152. Groom, *British Thinking About Nuclear Weapons*, 3.

153. *Ibid.*, 44.

154. Groom, *British Thinking About Nuclear Weapons*, 33-34; Pierre, *Nuclear Politics*, 77.

policymakers. Both expansion and steadfastness might be considered emboldening effects, but, for example, a nuclear Iran that displays greater steadfastness is likely a less concerning prospect than one that pursues expansion. A more discriminating conceptual language allows policymakers to more precisely specify the concerns associated with particular potential proliferants, as well as the possibility of anticipating which effects are likely to occur in certain cases.

Second, nuclear weapons are not simply “weapons of the weak” or “the great equalizer.”¹⁵⁵ It is true that conventionally weak states gain from the acquisition of nuclear weapons because of their limited conventional ability. Nonetheless, powerful states have consistently sought and benefited from the acquisition of nuclear weapons. The typology offered here allows us to understand this, by showing how nuclear weapons can affect the foreign policies of strong as well as weak states. For example, nuclear weapons allow strong but declining states such as Britain to substitute nuclear weapons for conventional forces, and thus reduce the costs of maintaining their position in international politics. Given this, it is unsurprising that nuclear weapons have often been considered “status symbols” in international politics, nor that powerful states have regularly sought them.

Third, and more broadly, the analysis points to the need to more fully theorize the links between nuclear acquisition and a state’s conventional military posture. Many current theories of the political impact of nuclear weapons assume that nuclear acquisition occurs in a vacuum. To take one example, Sechser and Fuhrmann argue that nuclear weapons are poor tools of compellence because they not useful for taking territory and because states would suffer significant costs if they used nuclear weapons other than for self-defense.¹⁵⁶ The analysis above suggests that theories of this sort may be incomplete because they ignore indirect effects that nuclear weapons may have. For example, if states alter their conventional postures after acquiring nuclear weapons in ways that make their compellent threats more credible, then nuclear weapons may indirectly increase a state’s ability to compel even if nuclear weapons themselves are not useful tools of compellence. A better understanding of the ways in which states adjust their conventional forces and postures in response to acquiring nuclear weapons would allow us to more thoroughly theorize about the

155. Richard K. Betts, “The New Threat of Mass Destruction,” *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 1 (1998): 27; T.V. Paul, “Great Equalizers or Agents of Chaos? Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Emerging International Order,” in *International Order and the Future of World Politics*, ed. T.V. Paul and John A. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

156. Sechser and Fuhrmann, “Crisis Bargaining and Nuclear Blackmail,” 174.

political effects of nuclear acquisition.

Fourth and finally, the analysis demonstrates the importance of looking beyond the simple possession of nuclear weapons in understanding their political effects. While 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, both policymakers and political scientists put substantial weight on a country's first nuclear test as indicating the point at which the effects of nuclear weapons should be observed.¹⁵⁷ Political scientists who code nuclear possession as occurring from the date of the first test may generate misleading inferences about the effects of nuclear weapons, because nuclear weapons may not influence foreign policy immediately upon testing a device.¹⁵⁸ 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 may have on the behavior of new nuclear states.

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157. Ori Rabinowitz, *Bargaining on Nuclear Tests: Washington and its Cold War Deals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Jacques E.C. Hymans, "When Does A State Become A "Nuclear Weapon State"? An Exercise In Measurement Validation," *The Nonproliferation Review* 17, no. 1 (2010): 161–180.

158. For similar points, see Alexander H. Montgomery and Scott D. Sagan, "The Perils of Predicting Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 2 (2009): 304.

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