

**Arms for Reforms: The Effectiveness of U.S. Military Assistance at
Encouraging Human Rights Reforms**

Arthur Gibb, III

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Approved by:
Mark Crescenzi
Tom Carsey
Navin Bapat

ABSTRACT

ARTHUR GIBB, III: Arms for Reforms: The Effectiveness of U.S. Military Assistance at Encouraging Human Rights Reforms
(Under the direction of Mark Crescenzi)

The United States provides billions of dollars in military assistance to foreign governments each year. Military assistance is intended primarily to improve the stability and security of strategic partners, but a stated purpose of these programs is also to influence the domestic policies of the recipient governments with respect to human rights. Given the importance of a modern military force to regimes, especially in the developing world, these large grants and loans should give U.S. policy makers significant leverage to force improvements in human rights practices by repressive regimes. However, an analysis of military aid and human rights records since 1976 reveals that the use and effectiveness of this leverage is mitigated by higher strategic priorities dictated by the structural dynamics of the international system, particularly the Cold War and the Global War on Terror.

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Introduction

Is American military aid to developing countries an effective means of improving respect for human rights? While critics of military aid might scoff at the question, it is an important one given that encouraging political liberalization is one of the stated objectives of U.S. security assistance policy. In fact, proponents of military aid argue that the training provided to foreign militaries is effective at spreading American values and ideals, and that the provision of arms and equipment provides leverage over domestic policies. Critics, on the other hand, have charged that military aid supports oppressive regimes and undermines efforts at liberalizing reform, and studies have found mixed results when looking at whether human rights are an important consideration for determining who receives U.S. military aid. Yet little has been done empirically to determine the effectiveness of military aid in inducing reforms in this particular area of domestic policy.

Literature review

Foreign aid, both military and economic, is seen as an important policy tool by American legislators and policy makers. Aid is routinely used to support an array of foreign policy goals, not the least of which is encouraging liberalizing political reforms in the recipient state. Whether it is effective at doing so, however, remains unclear. Proponents of aid's effect on political development argue that technical assistance helps to develop the political institutions and institutional capacity that are vital to good governance, and aid flows have been shown to have a positive and significant, albeit substantively small, effect on

levels of democracy and the institutionalization of rule of law (Goldsmith 2001; Knack 2004; Busse and Groning 2009). Aid can also be a powerful incentive for reform, and conditioning aid on political liberalization and human rights has increasingly become the norm since the mid-1990s. The “MCC effect” can already be seen in the efforts of governments to meet Millennium Challenge Corporation conditions for inclusion in that program (Siegle 2007; Knack 2004; Bourguignon and Sundberg 2007). Unlike conditions of “tied aid” that benefit the donor country and undermine aid effectiveness, conditioning aid on performance indicators related to good governance can help overcome the principal-agent problem that has plagued development aid in the past (Bourguignon and Sundberg 2007). Aid flows to less developed countries (LDCs) in transition can also provide societal benefits that give the new government the breathing room it needs while reforms take hold, and have been shown to cause a substantial increase in the rate of democratization in transitioning countries (Finkel, Pérez-Liñán, and Seligson 2007; Siegle 2007). Lastly, aid can facilitate the diffusion of democratic ideals through direct personal contact and technical assistance in establishing institutions (Goldsmith 2001).

Aid critics, however, counter that aid is actually detrimental to democratization and institutional development, and so, by extension, to improved human rights practices. One popular argument likens aid to the “resource curse” that seems to befall many LDCs that are rich in natural resources like oil, diamonds, or minerals. Proponents of this argument believe that the windfall of aid dollars relieves the government of the burden of collecting revenue from its people, thereby making the government less accountable to the people and less likely to provide public services (Harford and Klein 2005; Collier 2006; Djankov, Montalvo, and Reynal-querol 2006; Radelet 2006; Rajan and Subramanian 2007; Moyo 2009). It also

encourages rent-seeking behavior, patronage, and corruption, which undermine the institutions that do exist and inhibit the development of new ones designed to create transparency and accountability. These incentives cause those in power to try to limit access to decision making, rather than expand it, which usually means further centralization of power in the executive and undermining of institutional checks and balances (Djankov et al. 2006). A number of quantitative studies support this argument, finding a positive correlation between aid levels and decreasing levels of democracy and governance (Djankov, Montalvo, and Reynal-Querol 2008; Busse and Gröning 2009). A second criticism is that aid conditionality is ineffective because it presents donors with a “Samaritan’s dilemma,” putting responsibility for the poor’s suffering on the donor who withdraws aid from a regime that refuses to reform. This also creates a moral hazard problem, in that the regime does not bear the full cost of failing to enact reforms (Goldsmith 2001; Harford and Klein 2005; Radelet 2006). Lastly, in another parallel to the resource curse, aid and the potential it represents for corruption and patronage can provide a powerful incentive for conflict over control of the government, which inevitably results in widespread civilian casualties and human rights abuses (Harford and Klein 2005; Moyo 2009).

If there is little solid evidence that aid in general is effective at creating the liberal reforms that would encourage institutional development and improved human rights policies, what would cause policy makers to think that military aid could provide the leverage to do so? Security assistance represents a substantial portion of the overall U.S. aid budget, ranging from 20% to 60% in the years since 1946, and comprising about half in the aggregate (Clarke, O'Connor, and Ellis 1997, 11). In the mid-1970s, concern over human rights abuses committed by Latin American governments that were receiving significant amounts of

military aid prompted Congress to enact legislation requiring the president to certify that military aid recipients were complying with international norms of human rights protections. Given the large contribution military aid can make to the total aid package a country receives, its human rights conditionality should make it a strong influence on reforms. Yet, despite the congressional mandates, a large body of literature from the 1970s and 1980s found that human rights abuses were routinely ignored by U.S. policymakers when distributing military aid (as well as development aid), and in fact some studies found military aid to be correlated with higher levels of abuse (Fitch 1979; Berrigan, Hartung, and Heffel 2005; Hartung and Berrigan 2005). Critics have charged that, rather than supporting institutional development and influencing governments to improve their policies, military aid has instead facilitated and enabled oppressive governments to commit widespread human rights abuses, particularly in Latin America.

However, a number of (mostly) more recent studies have found substantial evidence to counter the worst criticisms of military aid. Several studies have found no significant relationship between U.S. military aid and militarism or coups in Latin America (Baines 1972; Gibler and Ruby 2010), and others have found that human rights records made a significant difference in the 1970s and 1980s with respect to who received military aid. These studies found that human rights abuses play a positive and significant “gatekeeper” role for both military and development aid (Poe 1991; Apodaca and Stohl 1999; Poe and Meernik 1995; Neumayer 2003; Gomez 2007). Human rights abuses have played a significant role in the decision to deny aid to repressive governments in Argentina, Brazil, and Bolivia, for example (Cingranelli and Pasquarello 1985). However, the studies reached varying conclusions with regard to the effect of human rights abuses on determining *levels of*

aid to those countries who passed the gatekeeper stage. Both Neumayer and Gomez looked at economic aid, and determined that levels of aid were unrelated to human rights abuses. Apodaca and Stohl looked at both Official Development Assistance (ODA) and military aid, and found that while human rights abuses had no effect on military aid once it started flowing to a regime, levels of ODA were affected by human rights policies. A related study also found that human rights played a gatekeeper role for military aid while being unrelated to levels, but found the inverse relationship existed for ODA – human rights did not appear to affect who got economic aid, but significantly affected levels of aid to recipients (Cingraneli and Pasquarello 1985).

These results raise an interesting puzzle. Why might human rights performance affect decisions regarding military and non-military aid differently? Decisions to allocate economic aid regardless of human rights abuses are likely related to need – denying aid to some countries on account of a repressive regime might do more harm than good to the poor and hungry. Military aid, on the other hand, does not suffer from this “Samaritan’s dilemma,” and so can be more effectively used in a carrot and stick role. However, since there is little evidence that levels of military aid are affected by human rights abuses, U.S. policymakers appear to use military aid as a carrot only in those cases where a country is of lesser strategic importance, and to refrain altogether from using it as a stick against those regimes that are receiving it.

Theory

The idea that military aid might be somehow related to human rights reforms is predicated on two important assumptions. The first is that human rights are in fact important

to American policymakers, and that encouraging reforms is an important objective of U.S. foreign policy. This is unquestionably a valid assumption, but it is also true that the protection of human rights abroad is only one of many important U.S. policy objectives, and the encouragement of reforms must often be balanced against other priorities. All foreign aid is governed by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and its numerous amendments. A 1974 amendment introduced language calling for the reduction or termination of security assistance, of which military aid is a substantial part, “to any government which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights (Library of Congress 1974).” This language was strengthened in the Arms Export Control Act of 1976 to prohibit security assistance to such countries, and similar language has been included in all subsequent foreign and security aid legislation (Clarke et al. 1997). However, these clauses have always been accompanied by language providing exceptions for extraordinary circumstances or the national interest of the United States, providing the executive with significant flexibility to distribute military aid to regimes regardless of their human rights practices. Although human rights play a prominent role in most, if not all, foreign policy statements and speeches, the reality is that they must be balanced with other policy goals that are frequently in conflict with liberalizing reforms, which can cause instability and unrest in the short and medium term (Van De Walle 2002; Pop-Eleches and Robertson 2009).

The second assumption is that military aid should provide U.S. policy makers with an effective lever with which to influence domestic and international policies of recipient states. This assumption underlay the use of military assistance as a primary tool of the policy of Containment during the Cold War, and continues to be an important justification for military

aid today (Mott 2002). There are two mechanisms by which U.S. military aid might influence domestic policies on human rights in recipient countries, one direct, the other indirect.

The indirect mechanism is the diffusion of liberal ideals and values to recipients of U.S training under International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs. A stated objective of these programs is to “increase the awareness of nationals of foreign countries participating in such [military education and training] activities of basic issues involving internationally recognized human rights (Cope 1995, 6).” This is especially true of the Professional Military Education (PME) program. Foreign mid- and senior-grade officers attending PME participate in an eight-week immersion course at American military staff colleges, during which time they live in American communities and work side by side with American officers. In addition to training on tactical and strategic military doctrine, participants are exposed by direct contact and by course content to American institutions and values, with an emphasis on the institutionalized respect for human rights in American society.

Under PME and other IMET programs, English language courses integrate human rights-related documents into course material and foster greater respect for the rule of law and civil authority. In 1991, the IMET program was expanded to include non-military government officials and increased the focus on military justice and human rights in both the in-residence programs and in the curricula utilized by mobile training and education teams that conduct one- to three-week courses in the host countries (Cope 1995). Close and sustained training of Colombia’s military in recent years has resulted in a visible emphasis on human rights in Colombia’s operational planning and indigenous training programs (Porch and Muller 2008).

Most military leaders and policy makers are convinced that the emphasis on human rights in these programs leaves a strong impression on the foreign students when they return to their home country. Since participants in the PME program are, almost by definition, front-running, career officers, the exposure to American values regarding human rights has the potential to alter military and regime policies as these personnel advance to the highest levels of their government (Clarke et al. 1997). Evidence of this is difficult to come by, of course. Still, program supporters and participants alike acknowledge that a related channel for influence is the establishment of personal connections that grant U.S. personnel access to and improved communications with senior leaders in recipient countries (Cope 1995; Clarke et al. 1997). These channels can allow for continuing reinforcement of American ideals over time and provide resources and support for foreign officers in the future.

A more direct mechanism for leverage provided by military aid is its importance to the recipient regime. Regimes in LDCs are generally concerned both about their internal stability and their security from external attack or incursion. Since their military is often used to ensure both internal and external security, the regime's longevity is directly related to the capacity of its military forces to control violent opposition and insurgencies within the country's borders. Latin American regimes throughout the 1970s and 1980s were highly dependent on the support of their militaries, as are many African regimes today. As a result, keeping the armed forces well trained and equipped is generally seen as a high priority.

A number of studies have shown that one of the most consistent predictors of conflict is the proximity of conflict in neighboring countries (Most and Starr 1980; Enterline 1998; Gleditsch 2007; Kathman 2008). Having a capable and well-equipped military helps a regime to insulate its borders from conflicts that might otherwise spill over. Being able to effectively

control one's territory means being able to deny its use to insurgent or criminal groups from neighboring country who would otherwise seek safety in the ungoverned spaces. Exercising effective territorial control also discourages domestic populations with ethnic or political ties to neighboring countries from trying to secede, and a strong military acts as a deterrent to potentially expansionist neighbors (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; Forsberg 2008; Gent 2008). In LDCs with resource wealth, the prevalence of criminal gangs, piracy and organized crime raises the stakes for control of sovereign territory and increases the importance of a capable military.

Another aspect of military aid that makes it important to the recipient government is its fungibility. Since military aid can be a substantial portion of a country's aid package, it represents a significant windfall to the government and can allow for a substantial budget redistribution to other, non-military programs. This fungibility is admittedly a double-edged sword, because it can also facilitate corruption and rent-seeking behavior or be channeled to the private sector (Khilji and Zampelli 1994). Counter-intuitively, however, this can make military aid even more desirable to autocratic regimes, and therefore increase the leverage that it provides the U.S. to try to encourage human rights reforms. Depending on the regime, the cost-benefit calculation may weigh in favor of complying with some human rights conditions in order to retain access to the personal enrichment and patronage facilitated by the fungibility of military aid.

American military aid is particularly desirable because of the superior quality of the equipment, training, and support packages that come with it (James and Imai 1996). Recipient countries are often willing to accept American conditions because they prefer American training and equipment to that they could receive elsewhere. Alternative sources,

particularly China and Russia, tend also to offer less in the form of aid. Arms exports and the training and support that come with them are an important source of revenue for these countries and they are less able to offer the kind of grants available from the United States (Klare and Anderson 1996; Kurlantzick, Shinn, and Pei 2006; Weitz 2007; Hanson 2008). Military aid from the U.S. also facilitates interoperability with U.S. and NATO forces, a factor which can be of substantial importance, especially to countries in Eastern Europe. Military aid may be seen as implying a degree of alignment with the U.S., which, while not a formal alliance, can carry with it a certain prestige as well as an implied security benefit.

Congress appropriates all foreign aid on an annual basis, so recipients who want to keep the flow of military aid have a strong incentive to remain in Congress' good graces by complying with the legislative human rights conditions. Congressional decisions to cut off military aid to Guatemala, Chile, and Argentina in the 1970s and 1980s were driven by public outcry over human rights abuses in those countries, and reflect the willingness of Congress to use military aid as a stick in some circumstances (Clarke et al. 1997). Given the gatekeeper role that human rights practices appear to play, military aid should also be a significant incentive for regimes in need of military aid to demonstrate a commitment to reform in order to get off of the Congressional bad-boy list and begin receiving aid. Although the studies cited above seem to indicate that Congress and policy makers do not react to minor changes in human rights practices by adjusting levels of military aid, anecdotal evidence also makes it clear that they are willing to shut it off entirely if abuses are severe enough to arouse public or Congressional ire. The threat of total denial of military aid to regimes that have become dependent on it should provide the U.S. with a powerful lever over domestic policies in the recipient state. This lever should actually increase with the supply of

U.S.-manufactured equipment, since the spare parts and support that are included in military aid packages are critical to maintain and operate them. Denial of military aid in such cases means that capabilities will deteriorate rapidly without a supply of replacement parts and technical assistance.

Military aid would appear, then, to be an extremely effective tool of U.S. foreign policy in terms of its ability to elicit domestic policy concessions from recipient governments. Yet the continued use of repression by numerous regimes that receive or received significant U.S. military aid – for example El Salvador, Honduras, and Iran in the 1970s and 1980s, Pakistan, and Indonesia more recently – poses a serious challenge to this assumption. What might be undermining the effectiveness of military aid at achieving a broad range of policy goals? Two possibilities exist. The first is that human rights are not really important to American foreign policy makers and so encouraging reforms abroad is not a true objective of U.S. policy, regardless of public statements to the contrary. This seems an unreasonable assumption given America's long history of promoting human rights and the integration of human rights training in all aspects of foreign military training. Furthermore, the evidence of the gatekeeper role played by human rights is an undeniable indicator that, under some circumstances, human rights is a determining factor for receipt of U.S. military aid.

The second possibility more effectively explains the inconsistencies in U.S. military aid distribution and the apparent lack of influence it commands over some recipients. The simple fact is that while human rights promotion is an important foreign policy objective for the U.S., it is often subordinated to higher priorities of strategic or national interest. This should come as no surprise – realist and neorealist scholars have long maintained that

countries act primarily in their own national self-interest (Waltz 1979; Gilpin 1981; Keohane 1984; Walt 1987; Mearsheimer 1990). More recent scholarship has stressed the importance of domestic politics and normative concerns on international relations, but even adherents to these schools of thought would acknowledge that these would rarely trump national security concerns.

Unfortunately, human rights reforms can often work counter to more strategic objectives. During the Cold War, U.S. fears of the spread of Communism and Soviet influence trumped other concerns. Military aid was used to strengthen and prop up regimes that were threatened internally by insurgency or that offered a counterweight to Soviet influence in other states in the region. In many cases, liberalizing reforms could have emboldened Communist opposition, potentially destabilizing the regime. Alternatively, withholding aid based on human rights abuses would have weakened friendly regimes and U.S. regional influence, neither of which were acceptable in the Cold War context. This would help explain why military aid to Kenya and Somalia in the 1980s, designed to counter growing Soviet influence in Ethiopia and Angola, was distributed generously despite increasingly poor human rights records (Clarke et al. 1997). This explanation is reinforced by the precipitous drop in military aid to Kenya and denial of military aid to Somalia after 1989; absent the Cold War dynamic, human rights abuses may have weighed much more heavily in the decision to grant military aid to these two countries (USAID 2009). The aforementioned denial of aid to several Latin American countries in the 1980s offers further support for this theory. Although the U.S. was actively supporting counter-insurgency efforts in El Salvador and Honduras, generally speaking the Communist threat was significantly less in the Western

Hemisphere, and so policy makers were willing to prioritize human rights over other concerns.

The dynamic of the Cold War could also undermine the effectiveness of military aid as a foreign policy tool by creating a reverse leverage that empowered the recipient state. Mott argues that the imperative of the ideological competition between the superpowers created a reverse leverage that allowed the recipient states to manipulate U.S. fears of “losing” states in a zero-sum game with the Soviet Union, ensuring a steady supply of U.S. arms and assistance while ignoring conditions placed on them. The ambivalence of many states to the grand ideological rivalry meant they were willing to seek military aid from alternate suppliers, including the Soviet Union (McKinlay and Mughan 1984; Mott 2002). The U.S. believed that any such defection would not only increase Soviet influence, but would be interpreted in Moscow and elsewhere as a sign of weakness that would encourage greater assertiveness by the Soviets and undermine confidence in America’s ability to counter it. Since defection was unacceptable, the U.S. was easily manipulated to support almost any state with military aid, and could only bluster about the importance of secondary concerns like domestic policies of the recipient regime. In LDCs where the U.S. and Soviet Union competed for influence, significant increases in trade or arms transfers were effective at swaying the foreign policy alignment of the state toward the provider of trade or arms, which would have nullified any efforts by the U.S. to extract concessions with regard to human rights (James and Imai 1996).

This same structural dynamic might also exist outside of the Cold War context. The importance to the United States of peace in the Middle East, both for the survival of Israel and the security of the flow of oil from the region, has provided both Egypt and Israel, the

two largest recipients of U.S. military aid (prior to 2001 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq), with a similar reverse leverage, while Saudi Arabia and Jordan have also received a steady flow of military aid despite widespread concerns about their human rights practices. The current imperative of the Global War on Terror has caused the reversal of a number of long-standing denial-of-aid policies. Despite questionable or even demonstrably bad human rights policies, countries like Pakistan, Indonesia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan have received large increases in military aid since the terror attacks of 9/11 (Stohl 2003; USAID 2009). Pakistan is the most glaring example of a country that has used this reverse leverage to demand more and more military assistance from the U.S. in the name of a mutual struggle against terrorism and radicalism, while continuing to employ repressive techniques against domestic opposition forces and consistently ignoring American calls for liberal reforms (Amnesty International 2010). In fact, Pakistan may reflect an extreme manipulation of reverse leverage, one in which the recipient country takes advantage of the overriding strategic imperative to increase its oppression of domestic opposition, knowing that the U.S. will be constrained from criticizing its actions. Ironically, under new President Asif Zadari, the administration has in fact appeared to be committed to human rights reforms, but the military has repeatedly undermined those attempts (Human Rights Watch 2010).

Given the existential threats perceived by the United States during the Cold War and in the aftermath of 9/11, it is perhaps not surprising that human rights are often subordinated to issues of national security, or that recipient countries who recognize these conflicting priorities can use them to their advantage. However, if human rights do, in fact, matter to U.S. policy makers, then, in the absence of such overriding strategic priorities, we should be able to see evidence of the leverage provided by military aid being used to improve human

rights. If the effectiveness of military aid is predominantly influenced by structural dynamics, then we ought to perceive some variance in the level of effectiveness over time as the international structure changes. This leads us to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: Higher levels of U.S. military aid will result in improvements in human rights practices by recipient regimes only in the absence of an overriding strategic threat to the U.S.

Testing this hypothesis will be the intent of the model described in the next section.

The Model

Dependent variable: To capture the effect of military aid on human rights policies in recipient countries, I will use two well-known measures of human rights. One is the Political Terror Scale (PTS), which takes the average of U.S. State Department and Amnesty International annual human rights scores for countries around the world (Wood and Gibney 2009). PTS scores range from one, for countries governed by an established rule of law and in which human rights abuses are extremely rare, to five, for countries in which violence and terror perpetuated by the government extends to the entire population. For ease of interpretation, I invert the PTS scale so that lower scores represent greater levels of abuse, and five represents an institutionalized respect for human rights. The second is the CIRI Human Rights Dataset, from which I use the Physical Integrity Rights Index. This index scores countries from 0 to 8 based on an additive measure of four indicators from the larger dataset – torture, extrajudicial killing, political imprisonment, and disappearance. A score of zero indicates a complete lack of respect for those rights; eight indicates an institutionalized respect for those rights (Cingranelli and Richards 2008). Both of these metrics capture the extent to which “personal integrity rights” are respected, as opposed to a broader measure of

“civil rights” (Gomez 2007). Because violation of personal integrity rights will almost always involve the military, this measure is more likely to show the effect of military aid on government-directed coercive practices through both the direct and indirect mechanisms discussed above. Indexes of human rights that include broader measures such as civil rights and an independent judiciary would tend to be affected more by levels of political and institutional development and less by the narrow influence of military aid.

Independent variable: The independent variable *MILAID* is derived from the U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) annual publication *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations*, commonly referred to as the “Greenbook.” The Greenbook details annual military aid to all recipient countries. Because theory tells us that military aid will create a dependency, its effectiveness as a lever over domestic policy will not appear immediately, but rather should become manifest over a period of a few years. For this reason, I use a moving average of military aid, in millions of U.S. dollars, in the five years preceding the year for each recorded PTS and CIRI score. I then take the natural log of this average in order to smooth out the dramatic differences in aid received by a few recipients – Israel, Egypt, Iraq, and Afghanistan particularly.¹ Military aid refers specifically to a number of programs that provide military training and equipment, either directly or through loans and grants to purchase them, but does not include Foreign Military Sales or Commercial Direct Sales, programs through which American military equipment is sold to foreign governments. The military aid figure used here is the aggregate of funds allocated for

¹ Because the levels of aid received by these countries are orders of magnitude larger than all other recipients, robustness checks were conducted by removing them from the dataset altogether. The results were substantively unchanged.

Foreign Military Finance, IMET, Military Assistance Program, counter-narcotics, anti-terror, peacekeeping, and transfers from excess stock (also called Excess Defense Articles).

Three controlling variables will be used to account for possible alternative explanations of human rights behavior:

Regime type: A substantial body of literature has demonstrated that democracies generally have better human rights records than non-democracies, so a measure of regime type needs to be included to account for this (Mitchell and McCormack 1988; Poe, Tate, and Keith 1999; Reiter 2001; Davenport and Armstrong 2004; Milner, Leblang, and Poe 2004). I code the variable *REGIME* using scores from the POLITY IV dataset to measure the democratic or non-democratic nature of the regime. The POLITY IV dataset scores regimes on a 21-point scale, from -21 for most autocratic, to 21 for most democratic. Higher POLITY scores should correlate with better human rights scores.

Level of development: Findings in the literature regarding the effects of economic development on human rights are more conflicted than those on democracy. A number of studies support the theory that higher economic growth is accompanied by greater political and institutional development that results in greater respect for human rights (Poe, Tate, and Keith 1999; Milner, Leblang, and Poe 2004; Doorenspleet 2005; Abouharb and Cingranelli 2006). However, conflicting studies find that economic growth can strengthen autocratic regimes and increase levels of repression against publics demanding a greater piece of the economic pie (Gupta, Madhavan, and Blee 1998; Bueno De Mesquita and Downs 2005). Other studies find a mixed effect, with economic growth having a lagged positive effect on long-term human rights protections, but a negative effect in the short and medium run (Feng

1997; Tang 2008), or differing effects on personal integrity rights than on civil liberties (Richards et al. 2001). A measure of GDP per capita (*GDPCAP*) is commonly used as a proxy for development and will be taken from the World Bank World Development Indicators. The natural log of GDP per capita is used to smooth out the results.

War: The presence of civil or interstate war generally precipitates greater human rights abuse. A dichotomous variable *WAR* for the presence of conflict will be derived from the Correlates of War dataset, with a 1 for a year in which a country was involved in civil or interstate war, and a 0 otherwise.

The dataset contains observations from 197 countries. Since the focus of the study is on improving human rights practices in developing nations, I dropped OECD countries with PTS scores that averaged 2 or less (4 or more in the transposed data) or CIRI scores that averaged 6 or higher for the years the data was available. Of the 30 OECD countries, this left only Mexico, South Korea, and Turkey in the dataset, and a total of 170 countries. The unit of observation is the country-year, of which there were 5380 observations.

A time series cross-sectional regression was used to test the above hypothesis using these variables. The basic model is

$$HR = \beta_0 + \beta_1MIL AID + \beta_2REGIME + \beta_3GDPCAP + \beta_4WAR + \mu \quad (1)$$

I use a fixed-effects model to correct for bias introduced by unit effects in pooled time series data. The model will be run using both PTS and CIRI human rights scores, and will be run for five time periods: 1981-2008 (Model 1); the Cold War years 1981-1989 (Model 2); the post-Cold War years 1990-2008 (Model 3); the post-9/11 years 2002-2007 (Model 4); and the interim years 1990-2001 (model 5). This will enable a test of the effect of different

structural conditions on military aid effectiveness as well as the effectiveness itself. Four possible results can be anticipated:

1. A positive and significant relationship across time between military aid and human rights practices in the recipient country, demonstrating the effectiveness of military aid at influencing domestic human rights policy.
2. A negative and/or insignificant relationship that changes to positive and significant over time (or vice versa) will provide evidence of structural effects and reverse leverage.
3. A negative and significant relationship across time will provide evidence that human rights are not important to the U.S., and/or that military aid facilitates oppressive regimes.
4. An insignificant relationship, regardless of time period will be an indication that military aid is ineffective at achieving human rights-related goals, or that human rights are not enough of a priority for the U.S. to use military aid leverage.

Results

The results of the regressions are shown in Tables 1 and 2, and the summary statistics in Table 3. Three characteristics of the results are interestingly consistent across all models. First, military aid had a negative effect on both measures of human rights across all time periods. Second, for all time periods except the post-9/11 years, military aid had a statistically significant result on both measures of human rights (or very nearly so in the case of the PTS score in Model 3). Third, in all models, the effect on the CIRI score reached a higher level of statistical significance than the effect on the PTS score.

Table 1: Pooled Time Series Analysis of the Effect of U.S. Military Aid on CIRI Physical Integrity Index

| | Model 1: Baseline (1976-2007) | | Model 2: Cold War | | Model 3: Post-Cold War | | Model 4: Post-9/11 | | Model 5: 1990s | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| | Coef. | Std. Err. | Coef. | Std. Err. | Coef. | Std. Err. | Coef. | Std. Err. | Coef. | Std. Err. |
| U.S. military aid | -0.018 | 0.007 *** | -0.041 | 0.015 *** | -0.019 | 0.008 ** | -0.022 | 0.016 | -0.040 | 0.011 *** |
| Regime | 0.037 | 0.007 *** | 0.069 | 0.016 *** | 0.086 | 0.010 *** | 0.105 | 0.022 *** | 0.071 | 0.013 *** |
| GDP per cap (log) | -0.157 | 0.074 ** | -0.211 | 0.239 | -0.136 | 0.088 | -0.660 | 0.119 *** | 0.366 | 0.167 ** |
| War | -1.713 | 0.110 *** | -0.937 | 0.248 *** | -1.112 | 0.124 *** | -0.883 | 0.176 *** | -0.889 | 0.165 *** |
| _cons | 5.587 | 0.521 *** | 6.101 | 1.607 *** | 5.162 | 0.630 *** | 8.907 | 0.870 *** | 1.601 | 1.164 |
| R-sq: | | | | | | | | | | |
| within | 0.095 | | 0.057 | | 0.082 | | 0.096 | | 0.063 | |
| between | 0.289 | | 0.118 | | 0.200 | | 0.002 | | 0.262 | |
| overall | 0.181 | | 0.108 | | 0.152 | | 0.000 | | 0.213 | |
| Countries | 129 | | 92 | | 129 | | 128 | | 125 | |
| Obs | 2771 | | 776 | | 1995 | | 866 | | 1253 | |

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$ U.S. military aid data from USAID 2009 publication *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, 1945-2008*.**Table 2: Pooled Time Series Analysis of the Effect of U.S. Military Aid on Political Terror Scale Index**

| | Model 1: Baseline (1976-2007) | | Model 2: Cold War | | Model 3: Post-Cold War | | Model 4: Post-9/11 | | Model 5: 1990s | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|------------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| | Coef. | Std. Err. | Coef. | Std. Err. | Coef. | Std. Err. | Coef. | Std. Err. | Coef. | Std. Err. |
| U.S. military aid | -0.005 | 0.003 * | -0.013 | 0.006 ** | -0.006 | 0.004 | -0.006 | 0.007 | -0.015 | 0.005 *** |
| Regime | 0.009 | 0.003 *** | 0.030 | 0.007 *** | 0.025 | 0.004 *** | 0.050 | 0.010 *** | 0.023 | 0.005 *** |
| GDP per cap (log) | -0.020 | 0.031 | -0.108 | 0.103 | 0.008 | 0.036 | -0.149 | 0.054 *** | 0.383 | 0.068 ** |
| War | -0.932 | 0.048 *** | -0.667 | 0.108 *** | -0.685 | 0.053 *** | -0.338 | 0.080 *** | -0.612 | 0.067 *** |
| _cons | 3.468 | 0.220 *** | 4.179 | 0.693 *** | 3.161 | 0.258 *** | 4.157 | 0.397 *** | 0.571 | 0.468 |
| R-sq: | | | | | | | | | | |
| within | 0.128 | | 0.082 | | 0.101 | | 0.067 | | 0.114 | |
| between | 0.448 | | 0.255 | | 0.427 | | 0.005 | | 0.290 | |
| overall | 0.274 | | 0.199 | | 0.283 | | 0.014 | | 0.227 | |
| Countries | 128 | | 96 | | 128 | | 127 | | 124 | |
| Obs | 2848 | | 796 | | 2052 | | 866 | | 1309 | |

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$ U.S. military aid data from USAID 2009 publication *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants: Obligations and Loan Authorizations, 1945-2008*.

In the baseline and Cold War models, military aid had a negative and statistically significant effect on both measures of human rights. Comparing the results of these two models, the negative effect on both CIRI and PTS scores appears greater during the Cold War years (-.041 and -.013, respectively) than it was over the entire four-decade period (-.018 and -.005). This is not surprising, since the overriding strategic context of the Cold War could be expected to trump human rights concerns during this period, and the U.S. provided extensive military aid both to regimes involved in conflict and to autocratic regimes which aligned with the West. The results of these two models support the contention of our

hypothesis that structural conditions affect the ability or willingness of the U.S. to use military aid to influence domestic policy.

It might be inferred from the comparison of Models 1 and 2 that the effect during the post-Cold War years was positive, resulting in a smaller negative effect overall. However, the results from Model 3 indicate that the negative effect continued even after the Cold War. In fact, the coefficients for both the CIRI and PTS scores in Model 3, -.019 and -.006, respectively, match very closely those of the baseline model. The CIRI coefficient is significant at better than the .05 level, and the PTS coefficient barely fails to meet the .1 level of significance. Although the coefficients in Models 1 and 3 are roughly half the size of those in Model 2, the consistent negative effect indicates that human rights remained subordinate to other considerations even in a less competitive post-Cold War environment.

Table 3: Summary Statistics

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>Obs</u> | <u>Mean</u> | <u>Std. Dev.</u> | <u>Min</u> | <u>Max</u> |
|-------------------|------------|-------------|------------------|------------|------------|
| CIRI | 1533 | 4.314 | 2.28 | 0.00 | 8.00 |
| PTS | 1769 | 3.345 | 1.16 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| U.S. military aid | 1738 | -4.810 | 6.05 | -13.82 | 7.95 |
| Regime | 1686 | 7.057 | 1.24 | 4.38 | 10.21 |
| GDP per cap (log) | 1609 | 0.946 | 6.65 | -10.00 | 10.00 |
| War | 2016 | 0.109 | 0.31 | 0.00 | 1.00 |

The results from Model 4 indicate that the greater strategic priorities of fighting a global war on terror may indeed have trumped human rights concerns, as they did during the Cold War, but these results failed to reach normally accepted levels of statistical significance. Given the statistical significance in all other models, the lack of statistical significance in Model 4 is likely attributable to the shorter time period for which data was available.

The most surprising results come from Model 5. During the 1990s, when military aid was predicted to have been most effective at inducing human rights reforms, the effect is

nearly indistinguishable from that during the Cold War. The coefficients on both human rights measures are nearly identical to those in Model 2, and both are statistically significant at greater than the .01 level. Given the congressional mandate that military aid both support and reward human rights reforms, it is somewhat shocking to find a negative relationship between the two during a period which was seen as a new age of liberalism and democratic freedoms. This result appears to reject our hypothesis regarding the effectiveness of military aid as a lever over recipient governments' domestic policies. The absence of any overarching strategic threat to the U.S. and the instability facing new and transitioning regimes worldwide should have made American military aid an extremely effective tool for inducing liberal reforms during this decade, and yet it appears to have been correlated with human rights abuses by recipient governments at the same level that it was during the Cold War.

With respect to the control variables, the coefficient for regime type was in the predicted direction and statistically significant at better than the .01 level in all models, reflecting the well-established tendency for more democratic regimes to demonstrate more respect for human rights. The coefficient for war was also highly statistically significant and in the predicted negative direction.

The effect of GDP per capita was somewhat mixed. For the baseline model, it had a negative and statistically significant effect on the CIRI score. Its effect on the PTS score was also negative, but it did not approach traditional levels of significance. It was also negative in five out of six cases in Models 2, 3, and 4, but only reached an accepted level of statistical significance in the years following 9/11, during which it was negative on both measures. Model 5, however, indicates that GDP per capita was positively related to human rights

performance during the 1990s, and was statistically significant at better than the .05 level on both the CIRI and the PTS scores.

One possible explanation for the mixed results is the exclusion of the OECD countries, all of which have high per capita GDP and high human rights scores. However, running all models again, this time with the OECD countries, made no significant difference in the results. These results mirror the divergent results found elsewhere in the literature on the relationship between development and human rights.

Conclusions

This study began from the premises that human rights practices of foreign governments matter to U.S. policy makers, and that American military aid was of sufficient importance to recipient governments to provide the U.S. with leverage to influence domestic policies related to human rights. However, it is generally understood that strategic imperatives will trump human rights and other values-related foreign policy objectives when they come in conflict, and the U.S. has often been criticized for its military support of repressive regimes and its failure to pressure those regimes for liberal reforms. This study attempted to determine whether the U.S. does, in effect, put its money where its mouth is with regards to human rights promotion, and whether military aid is an effective tool to use to that end. If so, then sustained military aid should be correlated with improvements in recipient regimes' human rights performance. Although this effect could be expected to be overshadowed by greater strategic priorities, such as during the Cold War or the post-9/11 Global War on Terror, it should have been observable in the interim years when the U.S. enjoyed an unusual political, economic, and military hegemony.

The findings of the study, however, are disappointing for those who are seeking evidence of American policy makers' commitment to the promotion of human rights. Across all time periods evaluated, except for the years following 9/11, military aid demonstrated a consistent and statistically significant negative effect on human rights in recipient countries. While the smaller negative effect of military aid on human rights after 1989 compared to the Cold War years lends some support to our hypothesis and the greater importance of human rights outside of a competitive structural dynamic, the lack of a positive relationship even in the 1990s indicates either that military aid is an ineffective tool to influence human rights policy, or that policy makers do not use it as such even at times when it should be effective.

There are at least three possible inferences to be drawn from the statistical results. The first is that U.S. military aid actually encourages human rights abuses by recipient regimes. During the Cold War, this can be understood in the context of American support for regimes fighting communist or socialist insurgencies, regimes whose abusive practices were overlooked by the U.S. in light of the policy of Containment and fear of the spread of communism. The negative results in the post-Cold War era are troubling, however. Given the emphasis placed on human rights practices by both the legislation governing military aid and the military aid programs themselves, the fact that recipients of military aid still appear to get worse rather than better after receiving American equipment and training provides strong ammunition for critics of military aid.

The second implication is that military aid is simply an ineffective tool for influencing domestic policies. Weak or fledgling regimes trying to consolidate power or stabilize internal turmoil may be unwilling to adopt more humane policies that might strengthen the opposition, regardless of U.S. desires. Regimes that have a tighter grip on

power and security, possibly because of their repressive policies, may be in a stronger bargaining position with the U.S., seeing American military aid as a desirable good but not a necessity. Policy makers and the military leadership may justify continued American support of both types of regimes by a strong belief in the normative effect of exposure to American values through military training programs and in the increased possibility of influencing domestic policies through sustained interaction and trust-building. They may also be supported in their judgment by anecdotal evidence of the positive normative effects of military cooperation and assistance, despite the apparent inability of military aid to effect positive systemic change.

Finally, these results provide strong confirmatory evidence of the subordination of human rights to other foreign policy objectives. Not only does military aid not respond to changes in human rights behavior, as demonstrated elsewhere in the literature, but these results imply that policy makers are not inclined to use whatever leverage military aid might convey. The consistent negative effect across time demonstrates that human rights concerns are superseded not only by strategic imperatives like the Cold War, but also by other political concerns. These might include the influence of domestic political interests, commercial priorities, or other objectives not addressed by this study. This also means that existing legislative requirements for compliance with international human rights norms, while used to justify denial of military aid when there are no greater competing priorities, are ineffective at restricting military aid to oppressive regimes once they have passed the gatekeeper phase. If human rights concerns are not important enough to deny aid in the first place, they will receive no more than token attention from policymakers when considering continued

provision of aid, and recipient regimes will recognize that they face no penalty for continuing repressive policies.

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