

The Caliber Cost Contingency: How American SALW Exports test Democratic Peace Theory by Proxy

Abridged with New Policy Extensions from the Original 2023 Article

Adam Rose

School of Politics, Economics, and Global Affairs and Business School , IE University, Madrid, Spain.

Bachelor of Business Administration and Bachelor of International Relations, 2023.

E-mail: arose.ieu2017@alumni.ie.edu

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Abstract

Originally presented in July 2023, this paper condenses the article *The Caliber Cost Contingency: How American SALW Exports tests Democratic Peace Theory by Proxy* and adds to the literature proposals for congruent policy adjustments. The article showed how dyadic democratic peace theory may fail to account for proxy conflicts and the material support of weapons supplied by democratic regimes, specifically small arms and light weapons (SALW). The article reviews democratic peace theory, SALW trade's historical aspects in the contemporary era, and the normative and legal frameworks vis-a-vis reporting protocols and treaties. Establishing a case study of US SALW exports from 2017 to 2020, the article confirmed prior research of weak but statistically significant correlations between US SALW exports and Democracy Scores when examining by quantity; however when examining by estimated value of the weapons exported, no such correlation, statistically significant or otherwise, exists. Furthermore, non-democratic regimes accounted for sizable amounts of the quantity of SALW exported from the US, and between approximately 15-20% of the estimated value of said exports annually during the entire period. The case studies then present a challenge for dyadic democratic peace theory as potentially having failed to take into account proxy conflicts advertently or inadvertently endorsed by democratic states through material support by weapon supplying conducted by said democratic states. In addition to the article, this paper recommends SALW-exporting nations (namely democracies) adjust 'synergy doctrines,' including SALW estimated value with previous quantitative considerations and weight accordingly for strategic alignment.

Keywords: Arms Trade, Dyadic Democratic Peace Theory, Small Arms and Light Weapons / SALW, Section 655 Annual Military Assistance Reports

1. Introduction

In the little over two years since it was first presented, the article *The Caliber Cost Contingency: How American SALW Exports tests Democratic Peace Theory by Proxy* remains no less relevant for land-based warfare and national security; in the current age, with the immediacy and devastation posed by nuclear missiles, autonomous drones, and artificial intelligence, the handgun may seem like an obsolete tool in the armories and arsenals of a nation's defences. On the grandest of scales, it may certainly be reduced to such insignificances; the damage a single gunshot can cause is incomparable to the havoc of contemporary weapons of mass destruction. However, while WMDs may have clear supremacy in the dimension of capacity of weapons usage, they are not the dominant form of usage. According to the Small Arms Survey Database, as of 2017, over one billion firearms are held globally, with several millions in active use, from live battlefields to law enforcement carry to civilian usage for sport, game, and self-defence.¹ Compare that to approximately 12.5 thousand nuclear warheads held by nine countries, with the first and last use spanning only three days back in 1945. The historic hesitancy and precedence set by the aptly coined strategy of 'Mutually-Assured Destruction' has ensured that only in the gravest of circumstances are states willing to exert such force - the deployment of armed security forces such as police, however, is a rather routine occurrence.

The same is true in comparison when reviewing alongside heavy weaponry and vehicular assets. The advent of field guns, artillery, rocketry, even when attached to modern marvels like planes, helicopters, or drones, have not completely eradicated the potency or even success of handheld armaments. History again is rife with examples: despite clear technological advantages, Vietnam held against France in the 1940s and 50s, the Taliban held against US coalition forces throughout the 2000s and 2010s, and Ukraine held against the Russian Federation in early 2022, and continues to hold to the present day. Now, a multitude of other factors contribute to these strategic successes, but are nonetheless aided by the use of small arms and light weapons (SALW).

It can therefore quite easily be determined that, despite the various technical advancements in warfare and weaponry, SALW remain viable tools of nations and parties. The global firearms holdings are not mere attachments to antiquated relics, but formidable arsenals ready to be called upon and used, as they are so readily in current high-conflict from the Sahel to Gaza to Ukraine. There should be no doubt then, that they remain capable in their functionality as a hard power. But what if there exists another dimension of application?

In that same determination that SALW are useful in the modern world, one must find plausibly they are valuable. Thus, rather than merely viewing SALW by their offensive capabilities, the article builds upon the work of Killicoat and other researchers in analyzing the capacity of such weapons as tradable commodities - as economic tools at a

¹ SAS, *Global Firearms Holdings*, Small Arms Survey, 2020.

nation's commercial disposal within the international system.² Moreover, it strikes at the heart of the school of liberalism within international relations: beyond being simply tools of power and coercion, can SALW can be used within the global marketplace to the peaceful mutual benefit and cooperation of the international system? Or instead, as this author finds more likely, does the trade of SALW by democratic states to other states challenge the notion of democratic peace theory by materially supporting other states and their conflicts with and among democratic states?

To that end, the article intends to review the SALW international market, their transfers, and their possible consequences within the dimensions of democratic peace theory. It shall analyze if the global sale of SALW by democratic states to other states are in alignment with the peaceful and cooperative measures espoused by the theory, or if democratic states instead are, advertently or inadvertently, supporting conflict and supplying the means to conduct active warfare by proxy. In doing so, the article also elaborates on the extent states may be doing so, and the potential severity of such consequential material endorsements.

Ultimately, the article answers the question: does the trade of SALW by democratic states to other states challenge the notion of democratic peace theory by materially supporting other states and their conflicts with and among democratic states?

² Killicoat, Peter. "Weaponomics: The Global Market for Assault Rifles." *Policy Research Working Papers* (2007). ; et al.

2. Background Analysis

2.1 Democratic Peace Theory

In understanding three different interpretations of democratic peace theory, it can be quickly summarized that though all have quantitative and qualitative support, that support is not displayed equally; monadic and systemic theories of democratic peace, while provisionally important for greater context and understanding, have not shown themselves to be as consistently significant under statistical analyses, nor does this author find their underlying logic to be as compelling as a dyadic interpretation of democratic peace theory.³ Having found no substantiating reason then to choose an alternative when visiting upon these interpretations, dyadic democratic peace theory appears to be the most appropriate means of interpretable measurement when testing a new metric where no specifications to clarify are present.

2.2 SALW History - Cold War Onwards

Modern SALW proliferation and trade would begin alongside the arms race of the Cold War,⁴ with the US and

³ Placek, K. "The Democratic Peace Theory." *E-International Relations*, 2021; Lektzian, David, and Mark Souva. "A Comparative Theory Test of Democratic Peace Arguments, 1946–2000." *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 1 (2009); et al.

⁴ Kennan, George F. "511 The Charge in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State SECRET (The Long Telegram)." National Archives and Records Administration, Department of State Records (Record Group 59), 1945–1949. Reprinted in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VI, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1969); Macdonald, Douglas J. "Communist Bloc Expansion in the Early Cold War: Challenging Realism, Refuting Revisionism." *International Security* 20, no. 3 (1995): 152–176.

USSR becoming the two largest arms exporters in the world, at times by a factor of six or more, for the next four decades according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.⁵ “Between 55 and 72 million rapid-fire assault rifles were produced” during the Cold War Era from 1945 to 1990⁶. All the same, the collapse of the USSR would become an indisputable watershed moment in SALW trade.

It was a new era for weapons - an era of insurgencies and non-state actors.⁷ With established systems fallen, the floodgates opened old soviet stockpiles and weapon caches to black and gray markets as former Warsaw Pact nations “shed aggressively” their arsenals.⁸ Between 1990 to 1996, 46 out of 49 major conflicts used only light weapons, and only the 1991 Gulf War was dominated by heavy

weapons.⁹ The trend would be inflamed by responses to the 9/11 terror attacks, into the 2000s,¹⁰ with SALW proliferation being recognized as a global security threat, one in need of establishing universal criteria for arms transfers.¹¹

It was Phillip Killicoat’s bombshell 2007 paper *Weaponomics: The Global Market for Assault Rifles* that ultimately stirred greater holistic interest.¹² Disturbingly, Killicoat found that of the “estimated 500 million firearms worldwide, approximately 100 million belong to the Kalashnikov family”.¹³ Further reviewing the price index of the AKs, the collapse of the Soviet Union did not seem to be a statistically significant supply shock to the illicit weapons market, and that market prices remained in the \$300 range or lower for most of the 15 year period in the Middle Eastern and African region.¹⁴ Similar ideas denoting the ‘diffusion’ of small arms over the strict ‘proliferation’ following the fall of the USSR have been theorized.¹⁵

⁵ UNODC. *Firearms Module 3 Key Issues: History of Legitimate Arms Market*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023.

⁶ ICRC. *Arms Availability and the Situation of Civilians in Armed Conflict: A Study Presented by the ICRC*. 1999, p. 6.

⁷ Saldner, Susanne. *Stopping Destructive Arms Proliferation: How the Arms Trade Treaty Can Improve Peace and Security by Introducing the First International Regulations on Transfers of Conventional Arms*. Department of Global Political Studies Peace and Conflict Studies, 2013.

⁸ Bolton, Matthew, Emile E. Sakamoto, and Hugh Griffiths. “Globalization and the Kalashnikov: Public-Private Networks in the Trafficking and Control of Small Arms.” *Global Policy* 3, no. 3 (2012): 303–313; Clarke, Colin P. “Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Trafficking, Smuggling, and Use for Criminality by Terrorists and Insurgents: A Brief Historical Overview.” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism* (2020); Niccol, Andrew, director. *Lord of War*. United States: Lions Gate Films, 2005.; Lock, Peter. “Armed Conflicts and Small Arms Proliferation: Refocusing the Research Agenda.” *Policy Sciences* 30, no. 3 (1997), p. 119.

⁹ Rotfeld, Arthur D., ed. *1996 Yearbook of the Stockholm International Peace and Research Institute*. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 1996.

¹⁰ Clarke, “SALW Trafficking,” 2020; Human Rights Watch. *Small Arms and Human Rights: The Need for Global Action. A Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper for the U.N. Biennial Meeting on Small Arms*. Human Rights Watch, 2003.; Saldner, *Stopping Proliferation*, 2013.

¹¹ Bolton et al., “Globalization and Kalashnikovs,” 2012; Killicoat, “Weaponomics,” 2007; et al.

¹² Killicoat, “Weaponomics,” 2007.

¹³ Killicoat, “Weaponomics,” 2007, p. 3; UNODC, *Module 3*, 2023.

¹⁴ Killicoat, “Weaponomics,” 2007, pp. 15-23.

¹⁵ Bolton, et al., “Globalization and Kalashnikovs,” 2012; Chivers, C.J. “Small Arms, Big Problems: The Fallout of the Global Gun Trade.” In *Foreign Affairs*, 1st ed., 110–121. Council on Foreign Relations, 2011.

Moving to the modern 2020s,, the Small Arms Survey published its Global Firearms Holdings report in March of 2020 on the amount of firearms in global circulation in 2017. It found that of the over one billion, “857 million (85%) are in civilian hands, 133 million (13%) are in military arsenals, and 23 million (2%) are owned by law enforcement agencies.”¹⁶ As also stated early, approximately 40% of those billion firearms were/are being held in the US.¹⁷ The Small Arms Survey also released a “transparency barometer,” reviewing the top 50 small arms exporters in 2021 based off of 2018 information: for major exporters, it ranked Germany and the UK in the top 5 most transparent, the US at 11th, Russia at 39th, and China at 45th.¹⁸

Presently and historically, the permanent five members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany are the top six arms exporters;¹⁹ between 2018 and 2022, they accounted for approximately 79.6% of global arms exports. Again standing in a league of its own seemingly, the US accounted for more than half of those figures.²⁰ While these statistics do not represent SALW exports specifically, they are representative of SALW trade trends if historical similarities of fractional composition follow.

¹⁶ Hainard, Elodie, and Olga Shumska. *The 2021 Small Arms Trade Transparency Barometer*. Small Arms Survey, 2021.

¹⁷ SAS, *Global Holdings*, 2020.

¹⁸ Hainard and Shumska, *Transparency Barometer*, 2021.

¹⁹ Wezeman, Pieter D., Justine Gadon, and Siemon T. Wezeman. *Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2022*. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2023.; Woolcott, Peter. “Arms Trade Treaty.” Audiovisual Library of International Law, United Nations, 2013.

²⁰ Wezeman et al., *Trends in Transfers*, 2023.

2.3 Key Regulatory Frameworks

2.3.1 1976 Section 655 and Other US National Reports

The Section 655 Annual Military Assistance Reports, or simply Section 655 Reports, are arms export reports created jointly by the US State Department and the US Department of Defense/War.²¹ Established in accordance with Section 38 of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), 22 USC 2778 and as per the conditions of Section 655(b)(3) of the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961 (last amended 2017), the reports “specif[y] the aggregate dollar value and quantity of defence articles and defence services, authorised to each foreign country and international organization during the fiscal year, as well as data on the actual shipments of those licensed transactions. The actual shipment data shows the total dollar value of all shipments that were authorised and exported during the fiscal year to each destination”.²² It is this ability to view value, manufacturing details, and other information in addition to quantity that sets these reports apart from international standards and regimes.

2.3.2 1991 UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA)

The UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) was established as part of the UN General Assembly Resolution 46/36L in 1991 as part of its ‘Transparency in Armaments’ program²³. Since then, it has acted as the

²¹ DOS. “Section 655 Annual Military Assistance - United States Department of State.” U.S. Department of State, 2022; SIPRI. “National Reports: United States of America.” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2023a.

²² DOS, “Section 655,” 2022.

²³ UNODA. “Small Arms: Trade and Brokering.” United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2023b.

primary international reporting mechanism for arms trade,²⁴ with reports from over 170 nations.²⁵ Prior to 2006 however, no SALW arms transfers were included in these reports. Additionally, extremely low (>20%) reporting participation by nations party to the agreement, combined with the US, Russia, China, and other major arms importers and exporters providing partial disclosures or none whatsoever from 2006 and 2022, make it poor for the purpose of a case study review.²⁶

2.3.3 2001 Programme for Action (PoA)

Adopted by all UN member states in 2001, Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA) established a global framework for SALW regulations, denomination and classifications, storage and stockpile management, and both regional and international mechanisms and guidelines for collaboration and cooperation²⁷. Within its framework, the UN General Assembly also adopted the ‘International Tracing Instrument’ as a means of cooperatively tracing weapons in 2005. Though the PoA has been criticized for the limits of its scope by focusing primarily on illicit SALW²⁸ and that it lacks any true enforceability mechanism by being a

non-binding agreement²⁹, it nonetheless showed important developments from the UNROCA, and would encourage the creation of the ATT.

2.3.4 2014 Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

“The Arms Trade Treaty is the first legally-binding instrument ever negotiated in the United Nations to establish common standards for the international transfer of conventional weapons”³⁰. Officially entering into force on December 24th, 2014³¹, the treaty presently has 130 signatories and 113 party members³². Of those party members, there are notable dissenters or discrepancies from basic formatting to filing, again among the major SALW and arms exporting nations, namely the UNSC P5 nations³³.

3. Discussion of Findings

3.1 Theory and Methodology

In wishing to test dyadic democratic peace theory in regards to the operable use of SALW as tradable commodities, it will do so in a few manners: first, it will revert to case studies, namely reviewing the US and its Section 655 Reports, as the exporting nation; second, cases reviewed shall examine trade as reported between the years 2017 and 2020; third, it will review volume and estimated

²⁴ Saldner, *Stopping Proliferation*, 2013; UNROCA. *Participating Statistics*. United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, 2023.; et al.

²⁵ UNROCA, *Participating Statistics*, 2023.

²⁶ UNROCA, *Participating Statistics*, 2023.

²⁷ UNODA. *Report of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects*. United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2001.; UNODA. “Small Arms and Light Weapons.” United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2023a.

²⁸ Bolton et al., “Globalization and Kalashnikovs,” 2012.

²⁹ Bolton et al., “Globalization and Kalashnikovs,” 2012; Saldner, *Stopping Proliferation*, 2013.

³⁰ Woolcott, “ATT,” 2013.

³¹ ATT (Arms Trade Treaty). *Annual Reports*. 2023; United Nations. General Assembly (76th sess.: 2021–2022). *A/RES/76/232 The Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects*. United Nations, 2021., UNOLA. *UN Treaties*. United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, 2023.

³² UNOLA, *Treaties*, 2023.

³³ ATT, *Annual Reports*, 2023; UNOLA, *Treaties*, 2023.

value of bilateral SALW trade; fourth, it will review relations between the volume and estimated value of the SALW trade to the political regime denomination via the Economic Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index metrics of the receiving state engaged in bilateral trade; fifth, it will review relations between the volume and estimated value of the SALW trade to there are any conflicts the receiving state is involved with via the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, specifically the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (version 23.1); lastly, it will review relations between the volume and estimated value of the SALW trade to the estimated deaths as a result of said conflicts, again via the UCDP, specifically the UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset (version 23.1).

As explained in greater detail in the article, if dyadic democratic peace theory is correct even when examining the trade of weapons such as SALW, it can be postulated that a democratic state like the US is more likely to trade SALW with other democratic states. It can also be postulated that, regardless of the state's regime, US SALW importers should be less likely to be engaged in conflict, lest the US be – advertently or inadvertently – supporting a conflict by proxy. If those states are engaged in conflicts, they should be less likely to have higher fatalities, lest yet again the US be – advertently or inadvertently – supporting the worsening of said conflicts by proxy. Thus, the following hypotheses are established:

Hypothesis 1: US SALW exports by units have a strong positive (0.6 or greater) correlation with democratic states.

Hypothesis 2: US SALW exports by estimated value have a strong positive (0.6 or greater) correlation with democratic states.

Hypothesis 3: US SALW exports by units have a strong negative (-0.6 or less) correlation with non-democratic states in active armed conflicts.

Hypothesis 4: US SALW exports by estimated value have a strong negative (-0.6 or less) correlation with non-democratic states in active armed conflicts.

Hypothesis 5: US SALW exports by units have a strong negative (-0.6 or less) correlation with total fatalities of non-democratic states in active armed conflicts.

Hypothesis 6: US SALW exports by estimated value have a strong negative (-0.6 or less) correlation with total fatalities of non-democratic states in active armed conflicts.

Should hypothesis 1 or 2 fail, then there exists an argument that the US is supporting non-democratic regimes by supplying them with force. Should hypotheses 3-6 fail, then there exists additional arguments that the US is tacitly endorsing conflict between these importing states and other states. Failure of any of these hypotheses would challenge the notions of dyadic democratic peace theory as failing to account for the sponsorship of warring activities by democratic states through proxy conflicts. As a believer in realist schools of thought for international relations, it is expected that all hypotheses will fail.

3.2 US Case Study: 2017-2020 Contextual Summary

It is useful to give a brief summary of the US and the characteristics that will be analyzed and tested. Between 2017 and 2020, the US was consistently ranked as a Flawed Democracy by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Democracy Index, averaging a 7.96 score annually as a result of slight declines in the overall scoring from 7.98 in 2017 to 7.92 in 2020.³⁴ The US was engaged in two active conflicts according to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, in 2017 and 2019 respectively, both against the terrorist group al-Qaeda. Each conflict had one respective battle with fatalities recorded, with best estimates of 111 and 37 dead, respectively.³⁵

On a global level, between 2017 and 2020, the average Democracy Index score for the 167 countries of the world was 5.44. Each year during that period, at least 90 countries (approximately 55%) ranked as Non-democratic Regimes.³⁶ The UCDP counted 215 conflicts globally over the four year period - note, these are not unique conflicts, as conflicts may continue from one year's period into the next. The UCDP best estimates of the combined fatalities of all conflicts it recorded globally over this period amount to 232,945 deaths—the vast majority (approximately 70+%) of these deaths were attributable to conflicts in or related to three countries: Afghanistan, Syria, and Yemen.³⁷

³⁴ EIU. *Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index Reports, 2017–2020*. London, Gurgaon, Hong Kong, New York, Dubai: Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021.

³⁵ Davies, Shawn, et al. *UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset Version 23.1*. Uppsala University, 2023.

³⁶ EIU, *Democracy Reports*, 2021.

³⁷ Davies, et al., *Conflict Datasets*, 2023.

3.3 US Case Study: Section 655 Review

As shown in Figure 1, over the period, average Democracy scores of SALW importing nations declined, dropping just below the Non-democratic Regime 6.00 threshold in 2020.³⁸ While the average Non-democratic Regime score improved, the full range increase over the period is less than 0.20. During the first two years, Non-democratic Regimes accounted for sizable amounts of the quantity of SALW exported from the US, at approximately 40% and 50% in 2017 and 2018 respectively, and between approximately 15-20% of the estimated value of said exports during the entire period. Throughout the time period, approximately 15% of all importing states were engaged in at least one active conflict.

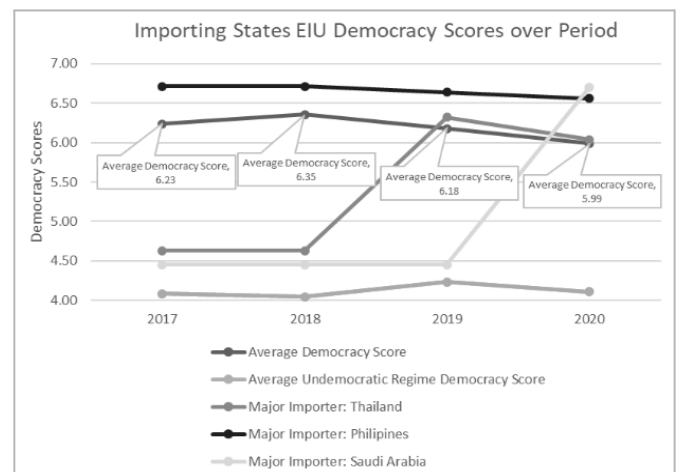


Figure 1, Importing States EIU Democracy Scores over Period: 2017-2020

Thus far, each and every hypothesis has failed in each and every case study, as expected. This extends to using averages and aggregates: for Hypotheses 1 and 2, all correlation values are less than ± 0.13 when running correlations over all 489 compiled recorded SALW entries

³⁸ Granular reviews by year inspected in the original article.

and when using annual averages, respectively; for Hypotheses 3 through 6, all correlation values are less than ± 0.09 (see original article for full tables); thus, all hypotheses fail, regardless of segmentation by year, averaging by year, or collectively compiled and calculated.

Even beyond the failing of each hypothesis, there is evidence to suspect that dyadic democratic peace theory may fail to account for proxy conflicts, weaponry supplying and the material support of said proxy conflicts. Repeat examples were shown that the US is supplying SALW to potentially anti-democratic conflicts: supplying both sides of conflicts between India and Pakistan throughout the time period; supplying Cameroon against Ambazonian secessionist forces in 2017 and 2018; supplying Indonesia against the Free Papua Movement in 2018; etc.³⁹

Furthermore, though there is a weak negative correlation between US SALW exports and fatalities within active armed conflicts over the period, that 15% of all importing states were engaged in one or more active armed conflicts with definitive casualties should give one pause. Of similar importance is understanding the information somewhat more contextually through the lens of three major importers: Thailand, the Philippines, and Saudi Arabia, as seen in Figure 1.

Thailand's Democracy score grew, allowing it to cross the threshold from Non-democratic Regime to a Flawed Democracy - though just barely. During the entirety of the

period, Thailand purchased an estimated 300+ million USD in SALW from the US; Thailand was engaged in an active armed conflict each year, though said conflict resulted in only a few dozen fatalities each year.

The Philippines score dropped fairly consistently, though it is still ranked as a Flawed Democracy. Though the Philippines was not involved in any conflicts in 2017, it made an enormous purchase of 894,570,627 USD worth of SALW—seventy times the average. Each of the following years in the period, it was involved in three separate active armed conflicts resulting in hundreds of deaths per year. It also continued to import higher-than-average amounts and estimated values of SALW.

Saudi Arabia consistently held Democracy scores below 2.1, putting it well within the Non-democratic Regimes and strongly into Authoritarian Regime status. Saudi Arabia was not listed as being involved in any active armed conflicts, and thus had no fatalities associated with the state. Nonetheless, it purchased an estimated 325+ million SALW during the four year period. Just as the US within this analysis is being shown as capable of supplying active armed conflicts with fatalities by proxy through the supplying of weapons, it would not be a far reach to imagine the same could apply to the universally known proxy war between the Saudis and the Iranians taking place in Yemen - during the four year period, approximately 16.5 thousand deaths were attributed to the conflict.⁴⁰ It is not unrealistic to believe this may then be a case of second-tier

³⁹ Davies, et al., *Conflict Datasets*, 2023.

⁴⁰ Davies, et al., *Conflict Datasets*, 2023.

proxy conflicts with the US effectively supplying SALW to Yemen through Saudi Arabia, though again, this is only speculation.

All the same, the three major importers show evidence to support two definite arguments: the first, that the US supplies democratic regimes in active armed conflicts with fatalities; the second, that the US supplies non-democratic regimes. Taken into consideration with the universe of data reviewed and hypotheses tested, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the US as a case study presents a legitimate argument against dyadic democratic peace theory as failing to account for proxy conflicts and the material support of weapon supplying. It is shown there is weak but statistically significant correlation between US SALW Exports and the Democracy Score of the importing nation, which does give credence that the evaluations of democratic principles and practices within a regime are noted during SALW trades.

3.4 Limitations

There are various limitations that must be noted before finalising this analysis: first, the case study approach does not review other SALW exporters, notably Non-democratic Regime SALW exporters; second, there are various factors within the US that the case study does not address; third, likewise, the case study does not account for factors such as contextual changes within the global SALW market or the conditions that give rise to importation over the period; fourth, the limitations of a short-period correlation-based test. Those limitations and their potential impacts will be briefly addressed here, and

though such a list is not fully exhaustive, it should remain sufficient in its summary of any major implications.

4. Policy Recommendation

4.1 Case Study: US SALW Risks - The Estimated Value Void and Proxy Failures

Though international SALW trade and transfers are a naturally “opaque” matter⁴¹, having reviewed the US SALW exports from 2017 to 2020, the case studies present legitimate arguments against dyadic democratic peace theory. Regardless of case study, averaging, or aggregation, all hypotheses tested failed. This provides considerable evidence to suggest that: the US supplies democratic regimes that are in active armed conflicts with casualties and fatalities with SALW; the US supplies non-democratic regimes with SALW; and the US supplies non-democratic regimes that are in active conflicts with casualties and fatalities with SALW with democratic regimes.

The case studies findings additionally add an asterisk to Blanton’s findings on US arms export decision making regarding democracy and human rights, within the context of SALW - though perhaps on a macro level “democracy [is an] important determinant[] of the eligibility of a country to receive arms”⁴². Analysis showed that there is a weak but statistically significant correlation between US SALW exports by quantity and the Democracy Score of importing nations. There exist no such correlation,

⁴¹ Bolton et al., “Globalization and Kalashnikovs,” 2012, p. 305.

⁴² Blanton, Shannon L. “Promoting Human Rights and Democracy in the Developing World: U.S. Rhetoric versus U.S. Arms Exports.” *American Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 1 (2000): 123–131, abstract.

statistically significant or otherwise, however, when examining US SALW exports by estimated value.

Taken cumulatively, the US case studies present a challenge for dyadic democratic peace theory as potentially having failed to take into account proxy conflicts advertently or inadvertently endorsed by democratic states through material support by weapon supplying conducted by said democratic states. As shown through the analysis case study, this potential failure applies to both a normative and a positive analysis; first, as considerable SALW exports by both quantity and estimated value can be regularly made to non-democratic regimes on an annual basis, which according to previous research, arms supplying has been linked to halting the systemic democratization of said regimes,⁴³ and second, similarly sizable quantities and estimated values can be routinely sent to states, democratic or non-democratic, that are in active armed conflicts on an annual basis.

4.2 Existing Global Regulatory Frameworks - A Perforated Patchwork

As noted in 2.3 Key Regulatory Frameworks, many of the existing international systems for SALW trade and transfer tracking have numerous issues: limited scope and participation, lacking enforcement, and severe variance in report filings.⁴⁴ Each iteration, from the UNROCA to the

PoA to the ATT has gradually attempted to address issues of their immediate predecessor, notably adding finer-detailed SALW categorization and legally-binding instrumentation.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, as glaringly pointed out, most do not capture the vast majority of SALW trade via the globe's major exporters, and troublingly, absolutely none account for the financial value of said trade.

4.3 Proposed Recommendations - Adjusting Democratic Synergy Doctrines by Estimated Value

It is here that deviations will be made from the original article; the initial scope of the article when it was presented in July of 2023 ended with its analysis, remarking on regulatory incongruence, and propositioning further research. Specifically, the article proposed China, Russia, and European case studies by quantity and value with modern data sets as they become available should international SALW reporting regime change.

The next immediate question becomes one of two then: first, what policy changes can be made to the existing patchwork of reporting metrics to enrich the purposes of that reporting; and second, what policy changes, either national or international, can be introduced so as to correct the proxy gaps and threats to peace, democratic, dyadic, or otherwise? The first seems somewhat trivial to the greater issue of the latter, and historical precedent suggests minor improvements to the finer points of uniform filings with greater participation are likely to develop with time. The

⁴³ Blanton, "Promoting Human Rights," 2000; Dufek, Petr, and Martin Mochtak. "A Case for Global Democracy? Arms Exports and Conflicting Goals in Democracy Promotion." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 22, no. 3 (2017): 610–639; et al.

⁴⁴ Bolton et. al, "Globalization and Kalashnikovs," 2012; Saldner, *Stopping Proliferation*, 2013.

⁴⁵ ATT, *Annual Reports*, 2023; UNODA, *Illicit Trade*, 2001; UNODA, "SALW," 2023a; Woolcott, "ATT," 2013.

second, however, proves far more captivatingly important and intriguingly complex.

The security threat presented in proxy conflicts amongst democratic states is naturally troublesome, regardless of liberal or realist views; conflicts with states with similar systems of governance (eg, democracies) can breed internal and external criticisms of those very systems, hence it is in states' best interest to naturally support regimes structures like their own. This is doubly the case with proxy conflicts, where possibilities exist to materially support conflict amongst two nations of similar structures to the exporter.

It is in the opinion of this author that the armories and arsenals of a nation will only fall with the fall of the nation itself, and will not be surrendered to the regulation of an international authority without force. Therefore meaningful policy - at least at first - shall not flow hegemonically from some central international reporting regime. Rather, it will rely on a collection of nationalistic doctrines that support the material transfer of weapons in concordance with both appropriate quantity and value to militaristic allies of similar governing structures or ideals.

Policymakers then, in designing national doctrines for SALW trade, must better realize the economics at play - in the case of the US specifically, a doctrine of democratic synergism in governance should be implemented in calculating appropriate appropriations of weaponry supplied and traded. 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend' sentiment is tenuous at best, as can be seen time and again in US paramilitary-history in Panama, Vietnam, and across countries in the Greater Middle East. This is clear in how

the US has begun to modestly adjust its policies to show weak but statistically significant correlations between US SALW exports and Democracy Scores when examining by quantity; this should clearly be readjusted and fine-tuned to the issues of definitively greater importance, i.e. the estimated value of the SALW's themselves.

A simple review of the facts would find non-democratic regimes accounted for between 15-20% of US SALW exports by estimated value during the case study; coincidentally, approximately 15% of all importing states engaged in at least one active conflict with fatalities, with conflicts against democratic regimes found. Should such a doctrine of democratic synergism account for the estimated value along the same determinations presently made along quantitative SALW values, one should reasonably expect a small but statistically significant correlation in a respective drop in conflicts with fatalities observed if dyadic democratic peace theory holds, *ceteris paribus*, with US purported ideals and, more importantly, strategic values held. SALW exporting countries should similarly better calibrate their trades by estimated value as opposed to quantity for similar desired results.

5. Conclusion

The original article built upon the existing literature and studies of SALW, specifically with the US case study from 2017-2020, noting implications with importing countries such as Thailand, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, Cameroon, and Indonesia among others. Critically, it highlighted the differences in quantity versus the estimated value of US SALW exports, adding an

asterisk to Blanton's findings on US arms export decision making regarding democracy and human rights, within the context of SALW - though perhaps on a macro level "democracy [is an] important determinant[] of the eligibility of a country to receives arms".⁴⁶ Namely, that while there is a weak but statistically significant correlation between US SALW exports by quantity and the Democracy Score of importing nations, there exist no such correlation, statistically significant or otherwise, however, when examining US SALW exports by estimated value.

Taken cumulatively, the US case studies present a challenge for dyadic democratic peace theory as potentially having failed to take into account proxy conflicts advertently or inadvertently endorsed by democratic states through material support by weapon supplying conducted by said democratic states. This potential failure applies to both a normative and a positive analysis; first, as considerable SALW exports by both quantity and estimated value can be regularly made to non-democratic regimes on an annual basis, which according to previous research, arms supplying has been linked to halting the systemic democratization of said regimes;⁴⁷ and second, similarly sizable quantities and estimated values can be routinely sent to states, democratic or non-democratic, that are in active armed conflicts on an annual basis.

In the modern context of an increasingly polarized and combustive world, it becomes that much more critical to understand and apply the findings and recommendations

of the article. SALW continue to be the most prominent and proliferated weapon-types throughout the globe. From local militia and police forces to the standing armies of the world's superpowers, tactical and strategic implementation of these key platforms is necessary for maintaining order and peace-keeping operations, national security, and conducting - or better yet deterring - warfare. In maintaining and arming militaristic allies, SALW exporting nations must therefore adopt doctrines to better align regime synergy with both the qualitative and estimated value of the arms they ship to importing nations.

Ciceronian thought on the sinews of war can particularly serve democracies well, should dyadic peace theories continue to show resiliency. By incorporating a more robust materialistic understanding of weaponry cost and the presence of democratic synergy, SALW-exporting democratic nations can better account for possible proxy conflicts that would have otherwise been left underanalysed. It is with reasonable suspicion this author believes the implementations of such doctrines will yield both militaristic and economic boons.

⁴⁶ Blanton, "Promoting Human Rights," 2000, abstract.

⁴⁷ Blanton, "Promoting Human Rights," 2000; Dufek and Mochtak, "Global Democracy," 2017; et al.

Acknowledgements

I hereby dedicate this work to my mother and father, Michelle and Patrick Rose, and to the other victims of the October 1st Harvest Festival Shooting in 2017 in my hometown of Las Vegas, Nevada. It is my sincerest hope that with enough research and analysis, the nuances of and possible solutions to gun violence - not only in the US, but throughout the world – will be revealed, and that someday significant strides towards greater peace and betterment can be made.

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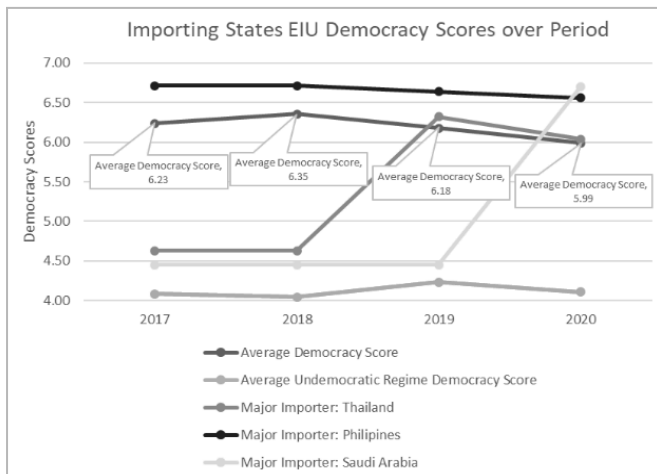


Figure 1, Importing States EIU Democracy Scores over Period: 2017-2020

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