

The Client's Principles: Explaining Israel and Taiwan's Defense Ties with Central America

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ABSTRACT

Although foreign policy between great power patrons and their client states is often studied, those of client states and third states within the context of patron-client relations receive little attention. We address this gap through a comparative historical analysis of Israel and Taiwan's defense ties with Central American states from the 1970s until 2019. We argue that clients' initially make decisions based on the preferences of their patrons, but subsequent defense relations with third states depend on how they benefit clients, which may not align with the patron's preferences. Our study, besides adding further theoretical and empirical context to the existing scholarship, compares Israel and Taiwan's long running defense ties with Central American countries, to reveal that both client states began supplying arms and training as surrogates of their patron U.S., but the type of defense goods they subsequently supplied and whether they institutionalised ties were contingent on their expected gains, be it economic, diplomatic, or security.

KEYWORDS: Great power rivalry; foreign policy; arms transfers; Central America; Israel; Taiwan; United States

The Russo-Ukrainian War has severely curtailed Russia's capacity to supply the global weapons market for affordable lower technology weapons bought by low- and middle-income countries due to the demonstration of such weapons' weak performance, the attrition of Russia's own stocks for self-defense, and financial barriers imposed by sanctions (Banerjee and Tkach 2022; Kavanagh and Wehrey 2022). Such a supply vacuum could be filled by China, the second largest supplier to this segment of the arms market, which in turn will yield China a major boost in international influence (Banerjee and Tkach 2022). Given United States and China's intensifying great power competition, and high production costs of weapons in the United States, only a joint effort by the United States and its partners and allies could prevent Chinese domination (Banerjee and Tkach 2022). Thus, it becomes important for scholars and policymakers to know the possible behaviour of such partners and allies toward the third countries who receive these weapons.

Research on hierarchical relations between states studies whether they are based on mutual benefits accrued by both great powers and dependents (Cooley and Spruyt 2009; Lake 2009b, 2009a; Womack 2015), costs and risks associated with such ties (Donnelly 2006, 2009;

Sharman 2013), and the appropriateness of their roles within these relationships (Sharman 2013). Despite differing explanations about the nature of these relationships, these approaches assume that such relationships are dyadic (Musgrave 2019), which ignores the reality that super- and subordinate states also maintain ties with third states within the context of their roles as clients and patrons.¹

We problematise the dyadic assumption by investigating why and how client states of great powers transfer defense goods to third states? “Arms sales are foreign policy writ large” (Pierre 2014, 3), consequently, comprehending the patron-client context of transfers of defense goods to third countries helps explain the foreign policy behaviour of client states and their great power patrons, in their roles as patrons and clients, with other states.

We compare the defense ties of two clients of the United States – Israel and Taiwan – with Central American states² based on information from secondary sources and contemporaneous news reports, supplemented by primary documents from U.S. archives, including those of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Departments of State and Defense, and the National Security Agency.

The above sources account for the transfers of small arms, counter-insurgency training, non-lethal equipment, cooperation with regional organisations, and shed light on decision making. Thus, providing a more comprehensive portrayal and evaluation of the defense ties than databases like the SIPRI Arms Database, which records transfers of major weapons systems like fighter jets, armoured personnel carriers, and heavy mortars. Thus, Table A1 in the Appendix – based on the SIPRI Arms Database – shows Israel transferred most defense goods (fourteen instances) in the 1970s; one more instance in the 1980s; another in the 2000s; and two transfers in the 2010s. Taiwan appears to have begun supplying in the late 1990s, supplied twice in the 2000s, and twice in the 2010s.

The studies show that Israel and Taiwan initiated defense ties when the United States was willing and either able or unable to deliver these itself. However, Taiwan and Israel were not mere surrogates for the United States but acted based on their own interests. Israel’s defense goods supply jeopardised U.S. interests in the region in the 1970s. Also, despite U.S. encouragement in the 1980s, Israel’s official commitment waned, concomitant to improvements in its security and diplomatic situation, and it became afraid of reputational costs. Conversely, Taiwan’s supplies and official commitments increased after the Cold War, paralleled by a worsening of its security and diplomatic situation.

These findings suggest a sequential explanation of defense ties between patrons, clients, and third states, which confirm and refine the insight that patrons do not fully control their clients’ foreign policy (Womack 2015). Specifically, we find client states’ initial decision to supply defense goods depends on whether their great power patron is willing and able to supply these goods itself. Subsequently, the type of defense goods the clients supply and their desire to institutionalise relations with recipients – with formal agreements as opposed to exports by private companies – depends on their own expected gains, be it diplomatic, security, and/or economic.

Finally, we acknowledge that religious factors, such as the long-standing presence of Jewish immigrants in Latin America (Kacowicz 2017), and recent upswing in evangelical voters and political leaders in regional states like Guatemala and Brazil (Kacowicz, Lacovsky, and Wajner 2021) may have affected Israel’s ties with Latin American states. On the other hand, Israel’s defense ties are the deepest in the sub-region of Central America, despite the diaspora communities being the smallest in size (Roniger 2010). Perhaps because the Jewish community has been economically important as “manufacturers and merchants” with wealth and networks to shape policy or, more pertinent to this paper, because they are perceived as

capable of influencing U.S. foreign policy via their ties with the Jewish community in the U.S. (Kaufman, Shapira, and Barroni 1979). Although we did not include diaspora communities as a causal factor, our research found no evidence of Jewish citizens of Central American states acting as informal representatives or lobbyists for Israel. Our statement does not imply that individual business owners who happen to be Jewish did not profit from Israeli defense imports, but that they did not systematically represent (or oppose) Israeli defense ties across Central America. Rather, Israel's foreign policies may have affected the diaspora community (Kacowicz 2011).

The following section evaluates existing research on client states' foreign policies and the nature of arms transfers before presenting an explanation of their defense ties. The third section justifies why Israel and Taiwan were suitable for comparative analysis and explains the research design. The historical studies – organized into four time periods – show why and when the U.S. was willing and able to supply defense goods to regional states, as well as Taiwan and Israel's ties in that context. The conclusion summarises the paper and presents implications for the contemporary foreign policy of two client states, North Korea and Pakistan.

Client states and defense goods: a theory

Patron-client relations in foreign policy have three primary characteristics: first, a major asymmetry between the patron and the client in the patron's favour, wherein the client state's security depends on the patron; second, the client plays a critical role vis-à-vis the patron's other rivals, consequently, the greater the benefit provided by the client in such competition, the greater its leverage with the patron; and, third, the relationship should be perceived as such by the patron, client, and other observers (Shoemaker and Spanier 1984, 13–14).

Besides security, the client's dependence on the patron is also economic and political. Yet, the client state's importance for its patron means that the client is not fully controlled by the patron, and can "refuse diplomatic initiatives that it feels are not in its interest, engage in military adventures that the patron disapproves of and interfere in the domestic politics of the patron" (Fry, Goldstein, and Langhorne 2002, 9–10). Thus, although foreign relations between patron and client states are characterised by asymmetry as the "smaller side is significantly more exposed to interactions than the larger side because of the disparity" of their capabilities, "the larger side is unable to unilaterally set the terms of the relationship" (Womack 2015).

Potential recipient states are small and/or weak akin to clients. The recipient too may depend for economic and security reasons on a great power, sometimes the same one as the client. However, recipient states do not enjoy special ties and benefits of patronage like client states. Recipients' motives for acquiring defense goods include security against domestic and foreign threats, national pride, enhancing the military establishment's power, increasing the recipients' bargaining position with other states on boundary disputes and offshore assets, acquiring modern technology and industrial knowhow, and even making the supplier acquire a stake in the recipient's survival (Klare 2014, 29–32). Other motivations may include a desire to conform to international norms and emulate other states when it comes to defense acquisition and strategy (Suchman and Eyre 1992; Farrell 2005).

Our explanation of how clients calibrate the provision of defense goods to third countries makes three assumptions. First, states make rational decisions to maximise diplomatic, military, and economic benefits. Second, the decision to transfer defense goods depends on the suppliers – client states and great power patrons – preferences and *not* that of the consumer (third state), although preferences may converge. Third, there exist "a set of alternative modes of response by which decision makers could deal with some situation" (Starr 2000), that is, different "substitutable" ways to achieve the same policy objectives (McGinnis 2000; Palmer, Wohlander, and Morgan 2002).

Based on these assumptions, we argue transfers of defense goods to third states by client states of great powers is determined by two distinct but related mechanisms. First, the patron state's willingness to provide the defense goods to third party recipients. Specifically, domestic or international factors that make patrons *willing* to pursue the transfer of defense goods to the recipient state. For example, patrons enjoy good relations with recipients, garner domestic political support for transferring defense goods, or fending off foreign threats to recipients are compatible with the patrons' security goals.

Within the category of security goals, patrons seek to transfer defense goods in order to: make the recipient responsible for their own security; increase the patron's leverage over the recipients' behaviour; enhance the patron's power relative to great power rivals (like the Soviet Union and China vis-à-vis the U.S.); acquire access to military bases in recipient states; establish relationships with military elites of recipient states; and/or, simply enhance the recipients' internal security (Klare 2014, 29–32).

On occasion, the patron is unwilling to offer defense goods. For example, the patron decides its capacity and commitments, such as a formal alliance to provide extended deterrence to the potential recipient, should ameliorate threats and, consequently, be unwilling to provide any further assistance (Huth 1988).

At other times, the patron is willing but unable to supply because of domestic opposition and international opprobrium about supporting the recipient due to its human rights abuses or threats to neighbouring states. However, the patron's willingness to transfer may remain unaffected by such concerns (Johnson and Willardson 2018). It is in this scenario that client states become useful alternatives to supply defense goods. Thus, the patron permits clients to supply the potential receiver to achieve its goals sans culpability, as explained by the theory of foreign policy substitutability.

Table 1 illustrates the predicted variations in the patron's willingness and ability and the consequent preferences of the client. If the patron is willing and able to supply the third country, then the client may also supply defense goods. If the patron is willing but unable to supply such goods, the client provides these goods. If the patron is unwilling to supply defense goods, regardless of its ability to do so, then it is not in the client's interest to supply these goods because it would antagonise the patron. Thus, neither the patron nor the client supply defense goods under these circumstances.

Table 1. The client's initial decision to supply.

	If patron is willing	If patron is unwilling
If patron is able	Patron and client supply	Neither patron nor client supplies
If patron is unable	Client and others supply	Neither patron nor client supplies

Whereas Table 1 illustrates how the patron's preferences affect the client's decision to supply, it reduces the client's self-interest to satisfying the patron. Thus, whether the client considers it beneficial to supply defense goods, other than at the patron's behest, remains unaccounted for. Table 2 illustrates the second mechanism affecting the transfer of defense goods by client states to third states. Specifically, it accounts for the client's benefits – be it security, diplomatic standing, or wealth – from supplying the defense goods, and provides the client's preferences regarding the type of relationship and goods supplied.

Table 2. The client's subsequent decisions about types of goods and institutionalisation.

	If patron is willing and able	If patron is willing but unable
If ties benefit client	Patron and client supply. Client institutionalises ties and offers sophisticated and/or large quantities of goods	Client and others supply. Client institutionalises ties and offers sophisticated and/or large quantities of goods
If ties do not benefit client	Patron and others supply.	Others supply.

If the patron is willing and able to deliver the goods, and such deliveries also benefit the client, then the patron and client compete. In terms of policies, the client seeks to institutionalise the relationship with the recipient via inter-governmental agreements and offer sophisticated defense goods. If the patron is willing and able to supply, but supplying does not benefit the client, then the patron and other countries supply the potential recipient. If the patron is willing but unable to supply, and the client benefits from supplying, then the client alone or along with other states supply these goods. If the client alone supplies, its monopoly position precludes a need for institutionalising the relationship with the recipient, but if it competes then it will offer sophisticated defense goods and want to institutionalise the relationship. If the patron is willing but unable to supply, and the client does not benefit from supplying, then other states fulfil the recipient's demands.

As illustrated in Tables 1 and 2, the client's initial decision to supply depends on its patron's willingness and ability to do so. However, whether it offers sophisticated defense goods and institutionalises the relationship with the receiving country depends on the client's expected benefits from the relationship, which can overlap with or be distinct from a patron.

Finally, institutionalisation of defense ties is observable by inter-governmental agreements, as opposed to agreements between private firms in two countries. Sophisticated defense goods can be offensive or defensive. Whereas offensive goods favour mobility and power projection, defensive ones favour static defenses and fire power. Consequently, the client (and the recipient's) preferences may not coincide with the patron. For example, the patron may prefer its client to deliver surveillance equipment to the potential recipient for counter-insurgency operations, while the potential recipient seeks offensive weapons like fighter jets to deter regional rivals.

Are Israel and Taiwan appropriate for this study? research design and case selection

In terms of the research design, Israel and Taiwan are greatly different in the control variables of political institutions and culture, they also vary in their capacity to manufacture defense goods, but both transferred defense goods to Central American states and had the same great power patron, the United States'. Consequently, the studies better focus on how the client's behaviour (revealing its preferences) influences the three outcome factors: (a) the initiation of supplying defense goods ties by clients to recipients; (b) the types of weapons and equipment clients supply to recipients; and (c) if clients institutionalise ties with recipients.

Israel and Taiwan are classifiable as U.S. clients based on foreign assistance, the stationing of U.S. troops, and their strategic value as clients to the U.S. (Fisher 2011). Yet, they have little in common with regards to their domestic politics and society. Israel was founded by the Zionist movement spearheaded by European Ashkenazi Jews and acquired international support as a Jewish homeland. It has been a democracy since its independence from Britain, which controlled it as a League of Nations Mandate, in May 1948. In contrast, founded in 1949 by the losing party of the Chinese civil war, Taiwanese politics was dominated by General Chiang Kai-shek until his death in 1975, with his Kuomintang party retaining control. Taiwan

fully democratised after the Democratic Progressive Party won the presidential elections in 2000.

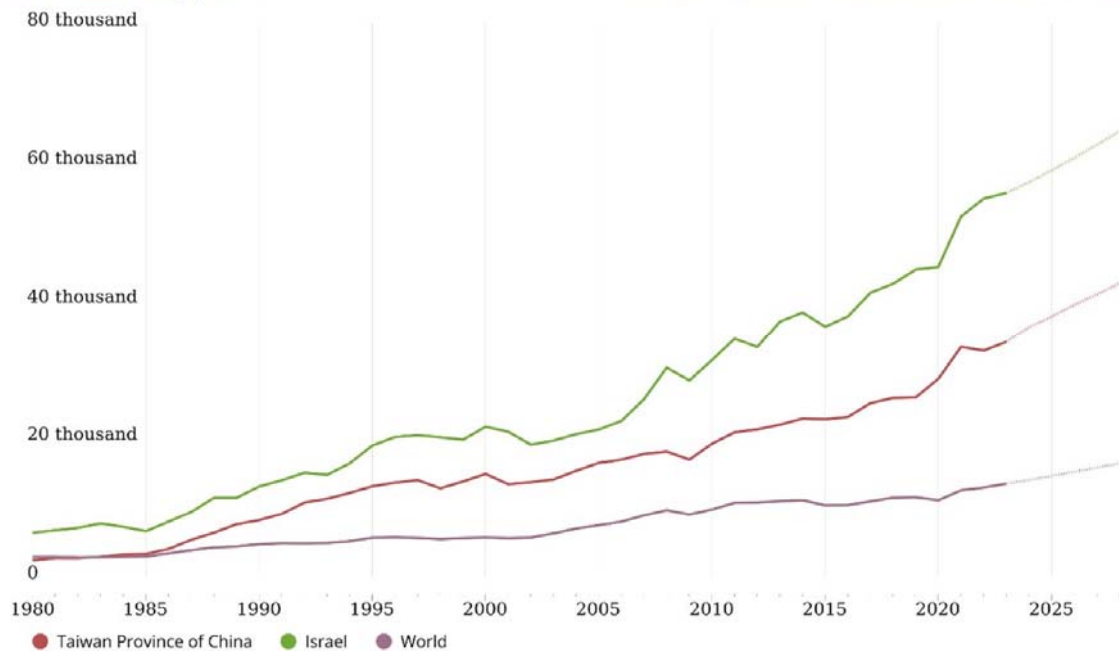
Israel's diplomatic dependence on the U.S. arises because, until the recently concluded Abraham Accords, aside from Egypt, Jordan and Turkey, no other Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) state recognises it. While the durability of the Abraham Accords will be tested, Israel continues to be engaged in rivalries with its MENA neighbours making its diplomatic relations with the U.S. strategically vital. Historically, various coalitions of MENA states have fought conventional wars with Israel, and it faces near continuous terror attacks from pro-Palestinian insurgent groups like Fatah and Hamas.

Israel's arms exports – in terms of the military value of the transfer based on a standardisation of major weapons systems – have increased from \$5 Million in 1964 to \$1.263 Billion in 2017, (Arms exports (SIPRI trend indicator values) | Data n.d.) making it the world's eighth biggest arms exporter in 2018 (Trends in international arms transfers 2018 | SIPRI 2019). Despite Israel's recent self-sufficiency in weapons manufacturing, the United State continues to be the greatest supplier of major weapons systems to Israel, as illustrated in Figure A1 in the Appendix.

Taiwan's diplomatic dependence on the U.S. stems from the "One China" policy pursued by China and Taiwan, which prohibits dual recognition: countries must choose between recognising either China or Taiwan. Although the U.S. guarantees Taiwanese autonomy by the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, it too does not diplomatically recognise Taiwan. Out of the thirteen states, including the Holy See of Vatican City, that maintain formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan, two are in Central America: Belize, and Guatemala. However, Costa Rica switched to recognising China in 2007, Panama switched in 2017, El Salvador in 2018, and Honduras in 2023.

Unlike Israel, Taiwan has never achieved self-sufficiency in defense production. Despite successful efforts in indigenously manufacturing sophisticated weapons (An, Schrader, and Collins-Chase 2018), the United States continues to be its greatest supplier of major weapons systems, as illustrated in Figure A2 in the Appendix. Therefore, the profile of the two client states are similar in some ways and yet are different in important ways. Available data shows that both are prosperous countries with a well-developed economy. Figure 1 shows that Israel and Taiwan have managed to achieve higher levels of GDP per capita compared to the global average, indicating a higher standard of living and a relatively sophisticated economy. Their reasonably well-developed technological sectors and political proximity to the United States gives them the ability to become the intermediaries between the patrons – major powers – and recipient states.

Israel and Taiwan's threat environment are substantively different as well. Israel is a sovereign state that has historically had many rivals in its region. At its peak, Israel was engaged in strategic rivalries with Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iran, and Iraq (Thompson, Sakuwa, and Hosur Suhas 2022). Israel's economic development has in large measure been motivated by its intense threat environment. The Israel-Palestinian issue only made Israel's threat environment deadlier (Maoz 2009). Taiwan's threat environment is substantially different. Its political status itself is the source of contest between Taiwan and China. Taiwan has one principal rival – China – which is significantly more powerful and influential in the world. The vast asymmetry in resources coupled with close geographic proximity to China makes Taiwan strategically vulnerable. The repeated Chinese aggressive military maneuvers that violates Taiwanese airspace at regular intervals is a grim reminder of Taiwan's strategic vulnerability (Oshin 2022). In response, the United States has reaffirmed its support for Taiwan in recent months with multiple official visits involving senior political leaders from the United States visiting the island nation (Associated Press 2022).



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Figure 1. GDP Per Capita, Israel and Taiwan. Source: IMF Data Mapper.

To that end, both Israel and Taiwan have faced acute strategic vulnerabilities, although the nature of their threat environment is different and has varied in intensity over time. Israel's challengers were regional powers with regional ambitions unlike China that sees itself as a global power with global ambitions. Despite these notable differences, acute strategic vulnerability due to their respective threat environments have been drivers of Israeli and Taiwanese foreign policy, and both states have developed a reasonably sophisticated military and technological sector to address their own security vulnerabilities and, in the process, have proven to be useful intermediaries between super power patrons and arms recipients in Central America.

Taiwan's status is also central to the development of close US-Taiwanese relations and is a point of contention between the United States and China. Figure 2 shows the level of affinity between the United States-Taiwan, United States-Israel, and United States-Russia. We show the higher levels of disagreement between the United States and Russia/USSR as a reference point to assess how close Taiwan (until 1971) and Israel have been to the United States based on United Nations General Assembly voting patterns. Although Taiwan lost its seat in the UN in 1971, data until then indicates the similarity of voting patterns of Israel and Taiwan. This does not mean that the qualitative nature of their relationships with the United States are exactly the same. Israel's relationship with the United States has come under scrutiny from time to time. For instance, Mearsheimer and Walt (2007) argued that the Israeli lobby was far more powerful in influencing American foreign policy in the Middle East than other lobby group in other regions of the world. However, despite differences, Israel and Taiwan share close political ties with the United States.

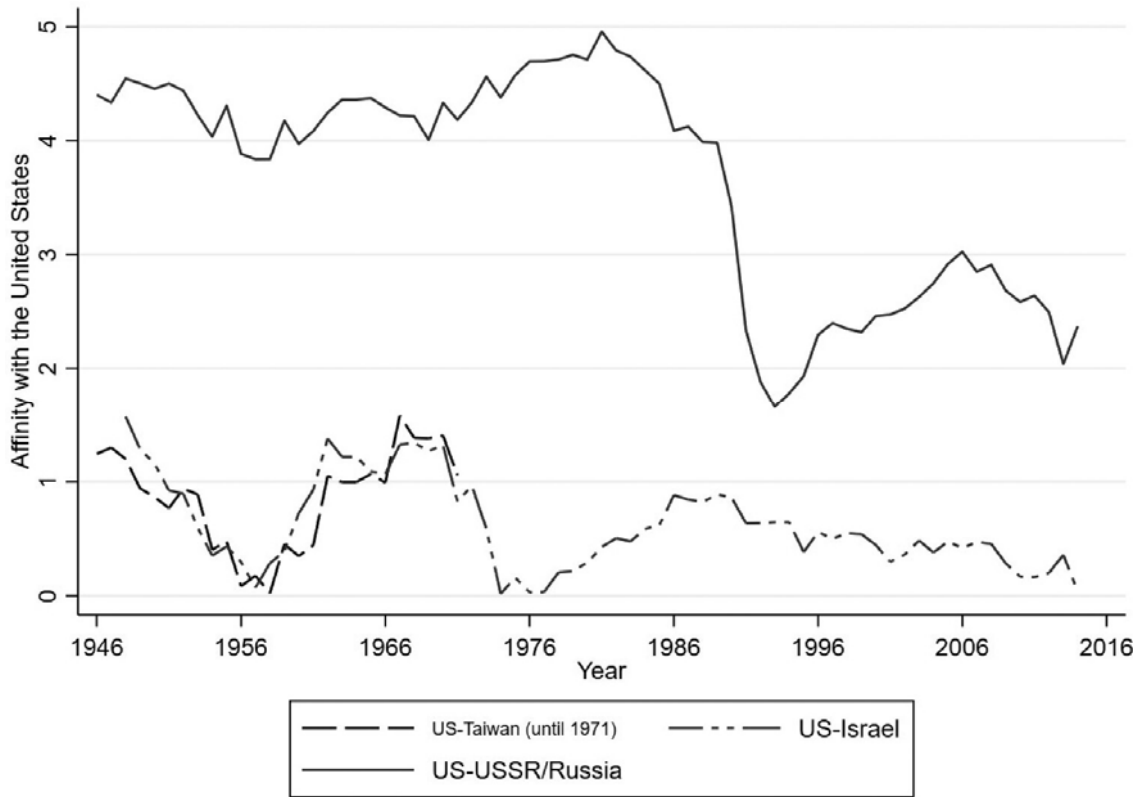


Figure 2. UNGA affinity. Source: Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten (2017).

Finally, a look at the export profile of Taiwan and Israel also indicates some substantive differences. Figure 3 shows that Taiwan’s export profile is far more modest than Israel’s. Taiwan mostly exports aircrafts around the world. Israel on the other hand exports a diverse set of weapons platforms covering a much longer time-period. By the early 1970s, Israel substantially increased its exports of artillery, aircrafts, and missiles. Israel over the last two decades, has substantially increased its weapons exports profile to include naval weapons, sensors, armoured vehicles, and air defense systems. Yet, despite their differences, we seek to demonstrate that the both states show the tendency to behave like clients that benefit their patron, and yet, under specific circumstances, also pursue autonomous foreign policy that is not always aligned with their patron.

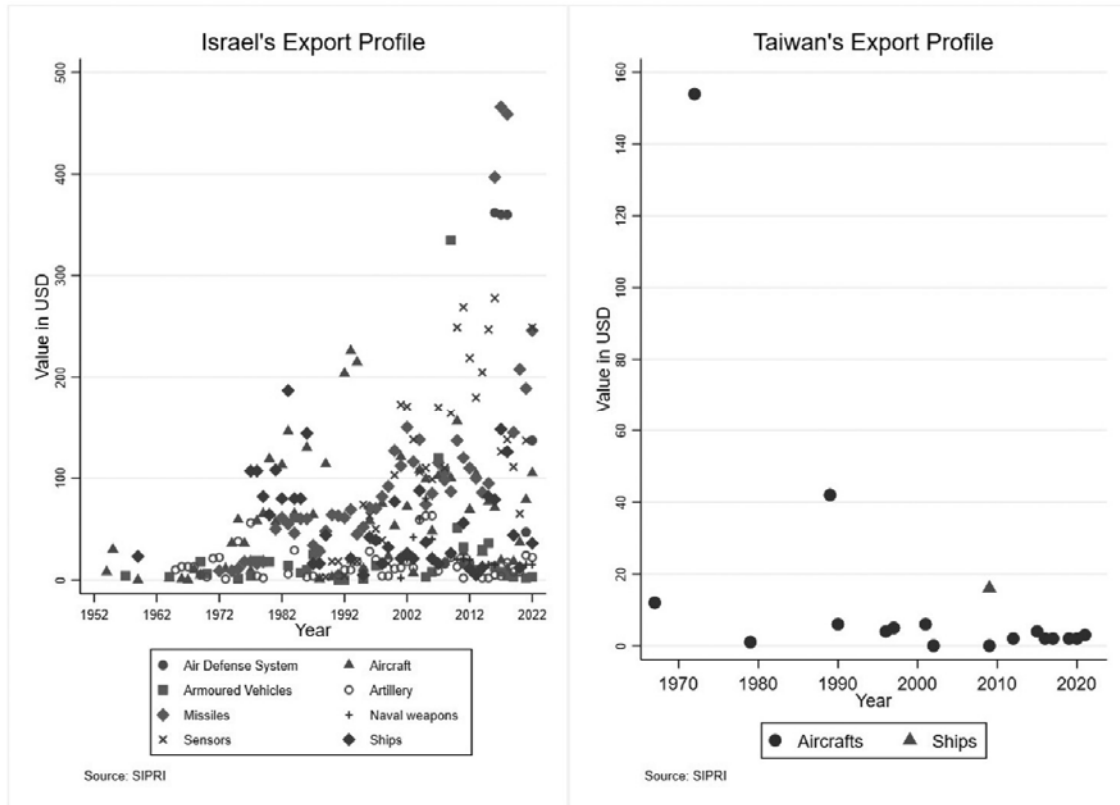


Figure 3. Israel and Taiwan's Export Profiles.

1960s–1970s: the United States is willing but unable, and ties benefit Israel and Taiwan

Under the Kennedy Administration's Alliance for Progress doctrine in the early 1960s, the U.S. began to focus on (a) maintaining ideologically aligned Central American regimes' by accelerating socio-economic modernisation and (b) on strengthening the region's counter-insurgency capabilities (Pierre 2014, 233–34). The U.S. also supported the creation of a regional security organisation called the *Consejo de Defensa Centro Americana* (CONDECA) in 1963, which influenced the training and coordination of regional armed forces (Etchison 1975, 64–65). The subsequent Johnson administration's 1964 Mann Doctrine continued existing policies (Etchison 1975, 78).

Despite enhancing defense cooperation, the U.S. viewed offensive weapons acquisitions like fighter jets and tanks by Central American states as taking away from scarce resources needed for development (Pierre 2014, 233–34). Furthermore, U.S. defense policy toward Central America sought to maintain a regional balance of power (Bahbah and Butler 1986, 146), which such weapons were considered as threatening.

From the mid-1960s and through the 1970s, the U.S. became increasingly unable to provide defense goods despite being intermittently willing. As the costs of the Vietnam War and domestic opposition mounted in the U.S. after 1966, both presidential requests to send arms via the Military Assistance Programme (MAP) and the Congress' willingness to fund such transfers declined (Hammond 1983, 46–47). In 1967, Congress passed legislation specifically aimed to curtail arms supplies to Latin American states: imposing a ceiling of \$10 million on

MAP transfers; and limiting sales to Latin American states to \$75 million under Section 33 of the amended Foreign Military Sales Act (Etchison 1975, 80). Yet, a clause permitted the President to disregard these limits if it involved the national security of the U.S., which President Nixon subsequently used as a loophole to skirt these restrictions (Etchison 1975, 80).

During the more hawkish Nixon-Ford administrations, from 1969 until early 1977, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua faced intensifying civil wars. El Salvador also fought a conventional war with Honduras in 1969, while Guatemala had escalating tensions with Britain over the decolonisation of Belize (then British Honduras). Thus, to maintain regional peace, the Nixon-Ford administrations refused to sell El Salvador offensive weapons systems, specifically fighter jets, to maintain a “balanced and coordinated combat aircraft acquisition program in Central America” (Moskowitz 1973). A National Security Council memo from 1975 noted that the U.S. had prevented Honduras from purchasing F-86 Sabre jets on two different occasions since 1973 because it would give Honduras an air-to-air combat capability that El Salvador lacked (Low 1975).

President Carter’s focus on human rights led to further curtailment of military aid to El Salvador and Guatemala (Clarke, O’Connor, and Ellis 1997, 71), until the Nicaraguan Revolution in 1979. An assessment by the C.I.A. from the Carter administration, however, revealed that the U.S. also feared losing lucrative markets (Impact of US Arms Sales Restraint Policy 1978). Indeed, by the 1970s, Western European states had stepped in to meet these states’ demands: they sold \$1.3 Billion in arms to Latin America from 1968 to 1972, making up 84 percent of total Latin American purchases, except for Cuba (Pierre 2014).

Counter-insurgency training: Taiwan initiates defense ties

Taiwan’s Cold War era ties to Central America centred on the World Anti-Communist League, a non-governmental organisation backed by the South Korean and Taiwanese governments, as well as U.S. intelligence agencies. During the 1970s, the League funded trips to Taiwan for Central American officers to learn “political warfare” (Anderson and Spear 1986).

Taiwan cultivated economic ties with the Somoza regime in Nicaragua during the 1970s, (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan) 1974a, 1974b) and supplied it with ammunition and small arms when the U.S. was unable to do so during the Carter administration (Harter n.d., 203). As an aside, although their defense ties ceased in the 1980s, Taiwan unexpectedly continued to enjoy diplomatic recognition from Sandinista Nicaragua because its ties with Cuba and the Soviet Union precluded strong ties with China, which had a rivalrous relationship with the Soviets (China’s Active Diplomacy in Latin America 1985).

Taiwan’s deepest defense related connections during the 1970s were with Guatemala and El Salvador. The 1977 U.S. Congressional ban on military aid to Guatemala, due to the military dominated regime’s human rights violations in the escalating civil war, was actively supported by the Carter administration. Nevertheless, senior officials in the Defense Department continued to maintain ties with Guatemalan security forces, and delivered \$2.25 million in previously allocated funds to Guatemala, although Carter had stopped new military credits (Colby 2010, 572–73). The C.I.A. also continued to support the military regime (Colby 2010, 572–73). Thus, the Guatemalan security forces began acquiring defense goods from Israel and Taiwan, with tacit U.S. approval (Colby 2010, 572–73; Dunkerley and Sieder 1996, 85). Specifically, Taiwan began training Guatemalan officers in “political warfare” against leftwing insurgents (Schirmer 1998, 172).

The primary goal of Taiwanese training was to meld political approaches with counterinsurgency operations in order to simultaneously repress insurgents and co-opt their

civilian sympathisers (Marks 1998, 226–28). Among the most prominent Salvadoran officers who received Taiwanese training was Lt. Col. Domingo Monterrosa of the Atlacatl battalion, which carried out the El Mozote and El Cabazo massacres among other human rights violations and extra-judicial killings (From Madness to Hope 1993, 114–21, 125–26). Monterrosa received training in Taiwan's Fu Hsing Kang College, better known as the Political Warfare Cadres Academy (PWCA), and marvelled at the Kuomintang government's total control over the Taiwanese populace (Kaplan 2002, 216).

The most prominent Taiwanese trained Salvadoran political figure was ex-military officer and subsequent para-military death-squad commander Roberto D'Aubuisson, who created the rightwing *Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* (ARENA) party and ordered the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero in March 1980 (Marks 1998, 28, 115–131, 226–228). D'Aubuisson declared that he learned the effectiveness of combining a para-military force with a political party during his training in Taiwan (Martínez and Sanz 2010), as well as the need to organise rightwing civic groups for outreach to civilians (Baron 2017).

From fighter jets to small arms: Israel initiates defense ties

The origins of Israel's closeness to Central America can be attributed to the critical role played by Guatemalan representative Jorge García-Granados in the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine in 1947 in recommending the partition of the British mandate of Palestine (Rubenberg 1986; Bahbah and Butler 1986, 63). There are many reasons for why the Central American states subsequently voted for Israel at the UN in 1947. García-Granados (1948) own book indicated an ideological affinity with Jewish settlers' shared identity and the role of British imperialism. An early study by Glick (1959), in line with García-Granados (1948) explanation, shows that UN representatives of Central American countries – particularly Guatemala and Honduras – had personal leeway to choose between the Israeli and Arab side in 1947. Glick (1959, 215) also notes that Guatemala shared anti-British sentiments with Irgun and Haganah leaders because of its own territorial dispute about Belize (then British Honduras). He mentions that Panama supported Israel because its vital interests were not involved (Glick 1959, 222). Rubenberg (1986) work on Israel-Central American relations of the period also supports the role of García-Granados in the UN.

However, Klich (1988) uses archival evidence to show that the voting was determined by both Jewish special interest groups, but also pressure from the United States. Specifically, Israeli leaders considered the United Fruit Company a key player in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, and Costa Rica (Klich 1988, 394). Furthermore, the Truman administration facilitated the recognition of Nicaragua's Somoza regime based on its voting for Israel (Klich 1988, 401), while Nicaragua wanted to acquire arms via the network set up by Israel for the 1948 war (Klich 1988, 428). Indeed, Israel first supplied defense goods to Central America in 1957 when it sold refurbished World War II era Staghound armed cars to Nicaragua (Wilson 2016, 152–153); Shimon Peres, then a senior official in Israel's defense ministry justifying it as a return for Nicaraguan help in transferring arms in 1947–1948 (Klich 1988, 398–399).

Israel's defense ties with Central America intensified significantly in the 1970s (Beit-Hallahmi 1987; Haapiseva-Hunter 1987), as the U.S. became unable to deliver defense goods to the region. During the 1970s, the Latin American defense goods market was the most competitive in the world (Pierre 2014, 232–33). Israel's motivation for sales across the world centred on acquiring funds to finance its own weapons programmes: its sales increased from below \$100 million in 1973 to more than \$1 billion by 1980 (Pierre 2014, 125).

In terms of Latin America's diplomatic importance to Israel during the 1960s–1970s, scholarship remains divided, but that division paradoxically underscores the salience of the

Central American sub-region. On the one hand, Bahbah and Butler (1986, 63–69) explains that Latin America gained prominence in Israel's foreign policy from the 1960s when regional states became the largest pro-Israeli voting block at the UN, surpassing western supporters. A position confirmed after the 1973 Yom Kippur War because most Asian and African states switched to supporting the Palestinian cause (Kaufman 1976, 94). On the other hand, Sharif's (1977) analysis of UNGA voting from 1973 till 1976 indicates a more mixed record for Latin America as a whole, with Brazil and Mexico voting against Israel on critical resolutions equating Zionism with Racism. Bahbah and Butler (1986, 85–86) also mentions the shifting of Latin American states to the Non-Aligned Movement and pro-Arab voting patterns in the 1970s and early 1980s: arguing that it showed UN voting was not an important factor in determining Israel's delivery of weapons.

Whether or not UN votes represented Latin American states' actual preferences or were important to Israel's ties to Latin America as a whole, Central American states mostly voted in favour of Israel or abstained: Nicaragua and Panama casting the highest number of pro-Israel votes, while Panama the lowest number. In fact, Sharif cites Israel's supplying of weapons and developmental aid to Central America, as well as propaganda as the causal factors for such support (Sharif 1977, 120–122). So close were the ties that some prominent Israeli weapons sales to Central American states contravened U.S. foreign policy goals vis-à-vis Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, although U.S. ability to control what Israel sold and to whom was limited (Third World Arms Industries 1987).

Israel's relationship with Honduras began after the El Salvador-Honduras "Soccer War" of 1969. Israeli sales to Honduras included the Arava Short Takeoff and Landing (STOL) transport aircraft, armoured personnel carriers, Galil rifles and UZI submachine guns (Haapiseva-Hunter 1987, 166). However, the most controversial sale – for U.S.-Israeli relations – was that of 12 refurbished Dassault Super-Mystere B-2 fighter-jets in 1977.

The sale of 12 refurbished Dassault Super-Mystere fighter-interceptors to Honduras in early January 1977 gave Honduras "the first supersonic bombers in Central America ... In addition to the fighter jets, Honduras purchased from Israel three Arava transport planes, a Westwind jet, Galil automatic rifles, Uzi submachine guns, 14 RBY Mk armoured cars, 106 mm mortars and five rapid patrol boats over the course of the 1970s (Jamail and Gutierrez 1986).

Although the U.S. did not object to sales of most defense goods, it was reluctant to provide Honduras and El Salvador jet fighter and bomber aircraft that could disturb the regional balance of power. Israel's sale to Honduras was also considered illegal by the Carter administration because of contract obligations about technology and parts transfers of the planes' Pratt and Whitney engines, which Israel had acquired from the U.S. (Israeli Plane Sale Is Studied for Violation of Law – The Washington Post 1977). Despite their concerns, however, the Carter administration did not stop these sales.

The Israeli-Guatemalan defense relationship began in the early 1970s, as the Guatemalan military dictatorship faced renewed leftwing insurgencies. Guatemala also threatened to annex the neighbouring British colony of Belize, which was transitioning to independence. Because of its ramifications for Anglo-American relations, the U.S. became unwilling to provide military aid (Jones 1975), in particular the sale of the eleven C-47 transport aircrafts that could be used to send paratroopers during an invasion (Lazar 1975a). Consequently, Guatemala approached Israel for planes (Lazar 1975b), and it supplied more than 10 Arava Short Takeoff and Landing aircraft to substitute for the C-47 (Haapiseva-Hunter 1987, 113). Israel also sold Dabur class patrol boats, 10 RBY armoured personnel carriers (Haapiseva-Hunter 1987, 113).

Besides major weapons systems, Israel also supplied small arms: specifically 20,000 Galil assault rifles and 1000s of UZIs (Johnson 1986, 3–20). The Galil subsequently became the

standard-issue rifle for Guatemalan forces (Haapiseva-Hunter 1987, 113). Furthermore, Israel delivered non-lethal equipment critical to the Guatemalan security forces counter-insurgency efforts in the 1970s. Specifically, Israel supplied and set-up an electronic monitoring system for the Guatemalan military intelligence service called the G-2.

The monitoring system was part of a major reorganisation and reequipping of G-2. A U.S. Department of Defense report in 1972 stated, it was “a relatively small and ineffective organization”, suffering from a “lack of proper selection of agent personnel, poor staff procedures, general weakness in all intelligence cycle elements, poor source administration and control, over compartmentation”, and the low calibre of agents (Redacted 1972). Attempted reorganisations of the G-2 had been thwarted by military and civilian leaders’ suspicions about its past record of spying on them (Redacted 1972). However, Israeli advisors worked with the G-2 in the late 1970s when the organisation led Guatemala’s successful counter-insurgency, which included operating death squads against insurgents and suspected sympathisers (Haapiseva-Hunter 1987, 116).

Israel’s defense ties with El Salvador began after its 1969 Soccer War with Honduras. When the U.S. was unwilling to supply offensive weapons in order to maintain the regional balance of power, the Israelis sold 18 refurbished French Dassault Ouragan, a super-sonic fighter jet capable of air-to-air combat, which could give Salvadorans air-superiority over Honduras (Low 1975).³ In a 1973 conversation with U.S. officials in the San Salvador Embassy, Salvadoran President Arturo Armando Molina remarked that he had approached Israel for fighter jets because the U.S. refused to provide him the planes (Moskowitz 1973).

Israeli small arms deliveries to El Salvador continued through the Carter administration, which was unwilling to supply El Salvador because – in line with the administration’s broader foreign policy approach to the region – it sought to move from a purely anti-Communist stand to one focused on supporting democratisation and human rights with the help of the moderate opposition parties (469. Minutes of a Policy Review Committee Meeting 1979, 1220). Thus, Israel continued to supply small arms to El Salvador: selling rocket launchers, UZI sub-machine guns, and Galil assault rifles (Bahbah and Butler 1986, Table 9, 78–79).

Israel became El Salvador’s largest supplier of defense goods from 1975 until 1979, until the re-start of U.S. supplies at the end of Carter administration (due to the Nicaraguan Revolution) moved it to second position (Feldman 1989, 180). During the peak of the Salvadoran civil war in 1980–1982, Israel delivered airplanes suited for counter-insurgency operations, such as 3–4 refurbished Super Mystere B-2 fighter-bombers and 25 new Arava STOL aircraft for military transport (Bahbah and Butler 1986, 78–79).

Nicaragua had a dictatorship established in 1936 that centred on the Somoza family’s control of the National Guard. Israeli aid in the 1970s was critical to the regime’s survival because the Carter administration had cut-off supplies to Nicaragua (Beit-Hallahmi 1987, 90–91) and warned Israel to do the same (469. Minutes of a Policy Review Committee Meeting 1979). In fact, Israeli supplies to the Somoza regime peaked in 1978, a year before the revolution. It supplied small arms, like the UZI sub-machine guns and Galil automatic rifles, and heavier weapons like Sherman, T-54, and T-55 tanks, as well as helicopters, Arava transport planes, and armed patrol boats: becoming Nicaragua’s largest weapons supplier in 1978–1979 (Parry and Barger 1986).

1980s–1991: the United States is willing and able, while ties benefit Taiwan, but not Israel⁴

The Nicaraguan Revolution in 1979 and the Reagan administration’s confrontational attitude toward Communism transformed U.S. policy to one of being willing and able to supply

offensive and defensive weapons. The U.S. refurbished a military base in Soto Cano, Honduras in 1983 to deter Nicaraguan and Cuban aggression (U. S. Government Accountability Office 1989). Whereas the Carter administration suspended U.S. defense ties with El Salvador in the late 1970s (Pierre 2014, 66–67), the Reagan administration renewed them by sending “\$35 million in military aid” to El Salvador, which “included helicopters and light arms for the Salvadoran armed forces, and fifty military advisors to provide training for their use” (Pierre 2014, 247–48). During the 1980s, El Salvador received \$2.4 billion in security assistance (Clarke, O’Connor, and Ellis 1997, 79), which was part of a comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy (Hazelton 2017).

Despite the Reagan administration’s willingness to renew arms transfers, however, supplies continued to be restricted by the U.S. Congress because of Guatemala’s terrible human rights record. Thus, the U.S. sold Guatemala civilian Bell 212 and 412s, which the Guatemalans modified for military use (Dickey 1982). Furthermore, the U.S. Department of State calculated that the U.S. should distance itself from the Guatemalan regime’s “dirty war”, to avoid accusations of supporting human rights violations, and renew ties only if the regime were to win against the guerrillas (Jacobs 1981).

Due to the Reagan administration’s willingness to transfer arms and Congressional opposition, U.S. defense relations with Central America vis-à-vis Taiwan and Israel became conflicted during this period. On one hand, due to Honduras’ support for the pro-U.S. Contra rebels the Reagan administration provided Honduras the Northrup F-5E fighter jets it had wanted for years and also agreed to refurbish the 12 Super-Mystere fighters (U.S. or Israeli Fighters; Updating the Honduran Air Force 1986). On the other hand, in 1986, it leveraged restrictions on the end-user agreement of the Israeli Kfir’s General Electric engine to prevent its sale to Honduras (U.S. to Offer F-5 Jets to Honduras 1986, 5), in order to supply these F-5s.

The sale of F5s indicated a broader shift in U.S. perceptions regarding the need for offensive weapons in the region, which the U.S. had opposed in the 1960s and 1970s on grounds of costs for regional states and detrimental effects on regional stability. In particular, the U.S. delivered the F-5s because it feared the possibility that Nicaragua might acquire Soviet Mig-21s (Honduras Jet Deal Triggers Controversy 1987).

Besides major weapons systems with offensive capabilities, the U.S. continued providing defensive services, such as counter-insurgency training to friendly regimes (LeoGrande 2009). Moreover, despite competition with Israel on supplying offensive weapons like fighter jets, the U.S. also encouraged Taiwan and Israel (LeoGrande 2009, 392–93) to supply defensive weapons like small arms and training to regional states.

Taiwan continues training and arming regional security forces

Explaining the close ties between Taiwan and regional governments, the C.I.A.’s 1985 report on increasing competition between China and Taiwan for diplomatic recognition in Central America, noted that the shared anti-Communist ideologies of Taiwan and regional states made its hold “hard to break” (China’s Active Diplomacy in Latin America 1985, 3). However, defense ties also enhanced these relationships.

Under the Reagan administration, the U.S. encouraged Taiwan’s defense relations with Guatemala (Malkin 2018). Taiwan trained officers of the Guatemalan security forces through the 1980s (China’s Active Diplomacy in Latin America 1985). Taiwan also delivered small arms and training to the Salvadoran security forces during the 1980s. Training in counterinsurgency techniques became especially prominent because the Reagan administration was willing to provide such support but unable to do so due to Congress having limited the U.S. presence in El Salvador to 55 military advisors (Weinraub and Times 1983).

Israel continues training and equipping regional security forces

The Reagan administration's willingness, but inability to supply Guatemala, led to its encouragement of Israel to fill the gap. The Reagan administration's encouragement was effective because of U.S. technology transfers, licensing agreements, co-development, and investments in the Israeli arms industry (Bahbah and Butler 1986, 44). Thus, Israel frequently delivered to states in Central America at the behest of the U.S. if it did not want to be seen delivering to human rights violators (Bahbah and Butler 1986, 167).

Israel's capacity to sell weapons was also propelled by the early-mid 1980s consolidation of defense manufacturing industries under the aegis of the Israeli government (Bahbah and Butler 1986: Table 3., 33–36). Foreign arms sales were contingent on Israeli political leaders, specifically the: "Ministerial Committee on Weapons Transfers, composed of the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Defense Minister, and the Minister of Industry and Commerce", and the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) decided what items could be sold, while the foreign ministry decided which states could not receive weapons (Bahbah and Butler 1986, 37).

Two hundred Israeli military experts trained Guatemala's special operations brigade, the *Brigada de Reacción de Operaciones* or BROE, to act as a rapid reaction force against urban and rural insurgents (Schirmer 1998, 165). During this period, the Israeli Aircraft Industries, then owned by Israel's Ministry of Defense, provided radars for Guatemala City's International Airport, and the system was initially run by Israeli technicians (Israel and Guatemala | MERIP n.d.).

Israel also developed, maintained and operated a computerised data-processing system that monitored consumption of water and electricity to note excessive use, thereby indicating possible rebel hideouts and ongoing meetings (Beit-Hallahmi 1987, 40–41). In 1981, based on the gathered information, the G-2 helped the military conduct simultaneous raids on thirty safe-houses of the rebel group *Organización Revolucionario del Pueblo en Armas* (ORPA) (Haapiseva-Hunter 1987, 117–118; Schirmer 1998, 161). Finally, Israel also repaired the helicopters supplied by the United States (Haapiseva-Hunter 1987, 114).

The Reagan administration also requested Israel to supply more military advisors to El Salvador because it was unable to do so due to the above-mentioned restrictions imposed by the U.S. Congress. Israel delivered a computerised system to track telephone call volumes and another to track movements of people (Bahbah and Butler 1986, 151–52; Haapiseva-Hunter 1987, 99–100).

Unlike other regional states, Costa Rica disbanded its army after the 1949 Civil War, and enjoyed uninterrupted democratic rule. However, given the escalating leftwing insurgencies in El Salvador and Guatemala, and the installation of a revolutionary regime in neighbouring Nicaragua, even Costa Rica acquired Israel's help in upgrading its "7,000 person, lightly-armed security forces" (Costa Rica: Intelligence Overview | CIA FOIA (foia.cia.gov) 1982, 2).

1990–2016: the United States is unwilling and unable, and ties benefit Taiwan, not Israel

In the post-Cold War era, U.S. defense ties with Central America became one of benign neglect (Clarke, O'Connor, and Ellis 1997, 84), and security ties centred on combatting drug trafficking. To monitor and interdict drug supplies, the U.S. continued to maintain its Honduran base in Soto Cano and established a smaller base (called Forward Operating Location) in Comalapa, El Salvador in 2000 (Comalapa Air Base, El Salvador n.d.; U.S. Southern Command > Media > Special Coverage > Cooperative Security Locations n.d.). Yet, the U.S. was unwilling to sell or provide offensive weapons. As late as 2014, the U.S. blocked the Taiwanese financed refurbishment of the Honduran F-5s by Israel (Gilroy and Kinoshian 2014)

because of its controversial law to shoot down suspected drug trafficking planes (Grandin 2017).

Taiwan institutionalises defense ties with Central America

During this period, Taiwan's approach to defense ties with Central America moved from bilateral links with individual states to participation in formal regional organisations or region-wide multilateral approaches. Founded in 1997, the Central American Armed Forces Conferences (Conferencia de las Fuerzas Armadas Centroamericanas or CFAC), which enhances cooperation and coordination between regional states, admitted Taiwan as an observer in January 2005 (Observadores Militares | CFAC n.d.). CFAC in turn is part of the broader Central American Integration System (Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana), which aims for greater political and economic integration, and also includes Taiwan as an observer.⁵

Israel permits the privatisation of defense ties

As the U.S. became unwilling and unable to supply defense goods, so did Israeli willingness to supply the region. In fact, despite the accentuation of official defense ties in the 1970s–1980s, Israel's relations with the region began changing by the 1980s. It became cognizant of the reputational costs of supplying pariah regimes like Guatemala and El Salvador (Israeli Economy Depends on Nation's Role as Arms Exporter 1986), and began contracting Private Military Companies (PMC) for "less desirable clients" when it did not want to "have (active military) personnel involved" (Tamayo 1986). Israeli PMCs began operating in Guatemala as security managers of rural plantations during the civil war (Haapiseva-Hunter 1987, 182). However, the "former career military officers" in these PMCs retained "their commissions while on reserve status" (Israeli Economy Depends on Nation's Role as Arms Exporter 1986).

Thus, by the 1990s, only Private Military Companies maintained the legacy of Israeli defense relations with the region. By 2009, the largest and oldest PMC in Guatemala was the Israeli owned Grupo Golán (Private Security in Guatemala: Pathway to Its Proliferation - Argueta - 2012 - Bulletin of Latin American Research - Wiley Online Library n.d.). Headquartered in Boca Raton, Florida, the Grupo Golán was founded by former members of Israel's special forces, and provides both physical and information technology centred security (Axelrod 2014). Other Israeli PMCs in Guatemala include the Grupo SIS (:::GRUPO SIS::: n.d.) and Decision Ejecutiva (Decision Ejecutiva n.d.). Another Israeli PMC, the Mer Group is now entering the Salvadoran market (Mexico Accepts Israeli Offer to Help Develop Central America | Voice of America - English n.d.). The Mer Group was founded by a former member of Israel's cyber and electronic warfare Unit 8200, and is manned by former members of Israeli intelligence services and military (Athena | Our Management n.d.). These PMCs have also attracted negative attention. Guards from the PMC Alfa Uno, a local subsidiary of Grupo Golán, shot seven protestors at Guatemala's Escobal silver mine owned by the Canada based Tahoe Resources group in 2013 (Can Canada's new PM stop mining abuses in Latin America? 2015).

2016–2019: the United States is willing and able, and ties benefit Taiwan and Israel

U.S. defense ties with Central America were escalated by the Obama administration and continued by the Trump administration, which have sought to stop migrants and the flow of narcotics originating and passing through the region. Moreover, because of the U.S. desire to prevent China's growing influence in the region, the Trump administration made official statements and took actions in 2018 to bolster Taiwan's weakening ties with regional states (CNN 2018; Harris 2018; Pence warns Central American leaders on China ties 2018). Consequently, the U.S. encouraged the transfer of defense goods to the region by Taiwan

and Israel. For example, the Obama administration in 2016 did not prevent Honduras and Israel signing a major agreement to refurbish the F-5s and U.S. made A-37s, as well as helicopters (JTA 2016).

Taiwan increases official defense ties to the region

Taiwan signed a defense cooperation agreement with Nicaragua in 2017 (Armed forces of Nicaragua, Taiwan sign cooperation agreement 2017). The same year, El Salvador received four Bell US-1H helicopters, at only shipping costs of approximately \$2 million, from Taiwan. (Taiwan News 2017) Taiwan also donated an Interceptor 1102 boat to Panama, for anti-terror and anti-smuggling operations, as part of the “Programa Binacional de Cooperación 2014–2019”, via which Taiwan had already donated two such Interceptors (Tom 2017).

The transfer of defense goods was accompanied increased official ties. The Taiwanese Minister of Defense, Feng Shi Kwan, undertook an intensive tour of Central America – visiting Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua – in September 2017 in order to review and renew various agreements with regional armed forces (Infodefensa.com 2017). In April 2018, A Taiwanese Navy flotilla of three warships toured its remaining diplomatic allies in the region: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. The Taiwanese crew of officers, sailors and cadets participated in joint training activities with the Nicaraguan military. It was the sixth time Taiwan has sent a “friendship flotilla” to Nicaragua (France-Presse 2018). Despite such bilateral and multilateral regional diplomacy, Panama in 2018 and Nicaragua in 2020–21 switched diplomatic recognition to China (Panama cuts ties with Taiwan for China 2017), thus, revealing the limits of Taiwan’s long-cultivated defense ties.

Israel’s renewed official ties with Honduras

Israel renewed official defense ties with Honduras in 2016 under the Obama administration, a trend that continued under the Trump administration’s declared enforcement centric focus on preventing immigrants and drugs from entering the United States. Thus, in 2016, Israel agreed to refurbish and upgrade the Honduran Air Force’s combat aircraft and helicopters, including the U.S. supplied 10 F5-Es, 10 A-37s, 9 Tucanos, 6 Bell UH-1s, 6 Bell 412Eps, and 2 Hughes 500-Ds (Maharaj 2017). The deal also covered the provision of high-tech communications equipment, drones, and offshore patrol vessels with helipads for the navy (Honduras suscribe acuerdo con Israel 2016). In 2017, the countries signed a \$300 million framework – underwritten by the U.S. – to provide vessels for the Honduran navy, technology and training in cyber security services, and developing emergency response teams (Dombe 2017). In 2019, the U.S. permitted the deployment of 1,000 Israeli military personnel in the U.S. Soto Cano airbase in order to train Honduras security forces and the national police (Tratado militar 2019).

While Israel’s economic ties to Latin America as a whole has increased since the mid-2000s, as epitomised by Israel signing a free trade agreement with the Mercado Común del Sur in 2007 and the granting of observer status to Israel by the Pacific Alliance a regional integration organisation (Kacowicz, Lacovsky, and Wajner 2021). There was also an official policy by the Israeli government to increase security and anti-terror cooperation (Kacowicz, Lacovsky, and Wajner 2021). However, defense and security ties – particularly with the Central American sub-region of Latin America – did not witness increases with the major exception of Honduras mentioned here.

Conclusion: understanding the defense ties of client states

This article compares the defense ties of two U.S. clients, Israel and Taiwan, with Central American countries. As the studies show, Israel and Taiwan’s defense ties with the Central

America were initiated by shifts in the U.S.' desire and capacity to supply the region with weapons and training. However, Israeli defense ties with the region created friction with the U.S. in the 1970s–1980s when Israel supplied fighter-jets to El Salvador and Honduras or other arms to leaders like Nicaragua's Somoza. Israel and Taiwan's distinct foreign policy behaviour from the 1990s – the former downgrading and the latter upgrading defense ties – reveals moreover that client states are not merely surrogates for their great power patron, but also supply defense goods for self-interested reasons that may not overlap with their patron and vary over time.

During the 1970s–1980s, Taiwan primarily provided training to regional states' security forces in counter-insurgency warfare. From the 1990s, Taiwan has used a multilateral approach through participating in regional security organisations, but also maintained supplies of defense goods to individual countries. Analyzing the underlying causes of the relationship and its changing approach reveals that Taiwan followed or anticipated U.S. willingness and ability to supply such goods. Given that its own desire for maintaining diplomatic ties has been high throughout, it offered these goods if the U.S. was willing but unable to do so in the 1970s–1980s, and continued to offer them through official channels after the Cold War when the U.S. was unwilling and then unable to fulfil the regional states' needs, right up until 2016 when the US became able and willing to supply more to the region.

Similarly, Israel supplied defense goods to regional states after the U.S. became unable to supply these goods in the 1970s–1980s, but given its improved security situation, it stopped official connections by the 1990s. Its recent involvement in Honduras, however, indicates that its behaviour may again be returning to that of official ties, if not major supplies of defense goods.

The above-mentioned insights explain the nature of foreign relations of other client states as arising from the interaction between their own self-interest and that of their great-power patron. For example, between 2001 and 2014, China's client North Korea helped develop and modernise small arms and ammunition factories in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Namibia, Yemen, and possibly Uganda (Holtom and Pavesi 2017). North Korea's extensive defense relationships with post-colonial African states during the Cold War included: delivering T-54 tanks, armoured personnel carriers, and artillery to Zimbabwe; loaning Madagascar Mig-17 fighter jets, and training their pilots on Mig-21s delivered by the Soviet Union; and supplying Iran with *Silkworm* anti-shiping missiles in 1987–1988 (North Korea: The Foundations for Military Support 1991).

However, the findings from the comparative historical studies of Taiwan and Israel suggest that North Korean actions may also reflect Chinese interests. Thus, our findings challenge China's frequent assertions of incapacity to influence North Korean foreign policy and its argument that abandoning or punishing North Korea could increase the risk of conflict. Rather, the findings dovetail with the U.S. Department of Defense's evaluation that such sales are either a way for North Korea to earn scarce foreign exchange and broaden diplomatic relations or to act as a surrogate for China and historically the Soviet Union (North Korea: The Foundations for Military Support 1991).

Further development and testing of our theory needs to address whether arms transfers from clients to non-state actors, specifically insurgents in third countries, follow the same rationales, as well as whether states can simultaneously serve as clients to two great powers. In terms of defense ties with regional non-state actors, Taiwan and then Israel became one of the "big three" supporters (the other being South Korea) of the World Anti-Communist League that sought funds for the Contra insurgency from international donors (Parry and Barger 1986). Taiwan trained Contra rebels fighting Nicaragua's revolutionary Sandinista regime (Anderson and Spear 1986). The Israeli government was also directly involved in supplying weapons to

Iran, in what became known as the Iran-Contra scandal (Tamayo 1986). Furthermore, Israel was requested by the United States to “to send weapons captured from the Palestine Liberation Organization to Honduras for eventual use by Nicaraguan rebels” (Jamail and Gutierrez 1986).

Cursory evidence on Pakistan’s defense goods transfers to insurgent groups in Afghanistan suggests that client-insurgent ties may follow a similar pattern. Pakistan has been a client state of the United States since the early Cold War when it joined United States sponsored defense alliances, namely the South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), which also enjoyed domestic political support in the United States (Haqqani 2013).

In the 1980s, Pakistan began transferring U.S. arms to Afghan mujahideen fighting the Soviet occupation. Pakistan also acted as a surrogate for multiple patrons, while forwarding its own interests. Specifically, Pakistan began accepting funds to buy arms, as well as permitting the stationing of “almost three hundred Chinese military advisors ... along the Afghan-Pakistan border” to train and advise the mujahideen (Raghavan 2018).

In conclusion, our theory and findings highlight the prevalence and the dynamics of a sub-plot in the wider great power competition between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Middle powers like Israel and Taiwan were surrogate weapons suppliers for the United States which was geared towards containing Soviet influence in many of the above-mentioned regions. Moreover, similar dynamics in other regions may be observed as great power competition between the United States and China intensifies due to the economic and military eclipse of Russia, akin to Britain and France in the post-Second World War period. Therefore, while the paper utilises the Cold War period, its implications help us understand U.S. partners and allies’ preferences regarding arms diplomacy with third countries that the U.S. may find difficult to maintain direct defense ties with.

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Notes

1 Tom Long’s discussion on “derivate power” is also relevant to this idea. Tom Long, Small States, Great Power? Gaining Influence Through Intrinsic, Derivative, and Collective Power, *International Studies Review*, Volume 19, Issue 2, June 2017, Pages 185–205, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viw040>.

2 Namely: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

3 This was prior to Israel’s fighter/bomber sale to Honduras mentioned above.

4 An in-depth study of this period could indicate that willing and able for Honduras and El Salvador, if willing but unable for Guatemala, while the US was willing and able to covertly organize the Contra forces, though supply often had to be indirect, with ties to Honduras

helping facilitate transfers to the main FDN contra force. We thank Dr. Kai Thaler for this insight.

5 The full member states are: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and Belize. The regional observers are: Mexico, Chile, and Brazil. The extra-regional observers are: Germany, Japan, Spain and Taiwan.

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Appendix

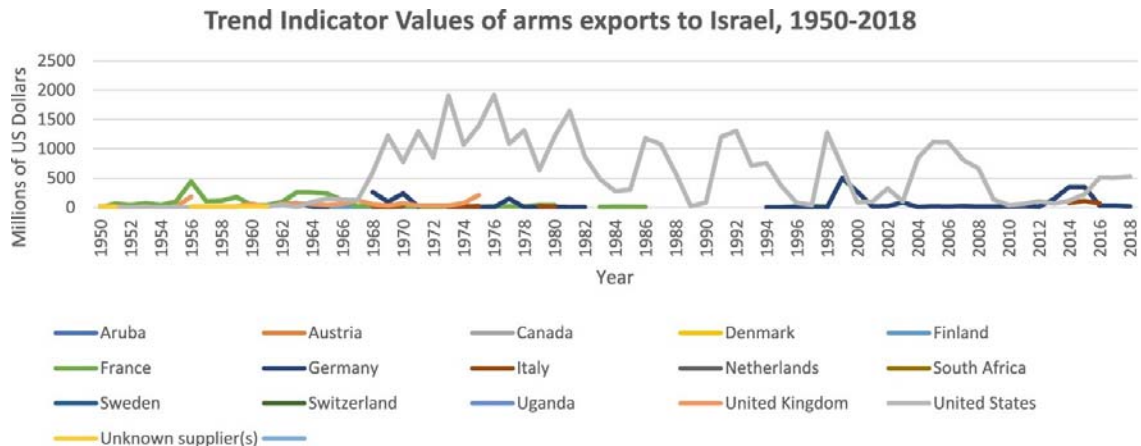


Figure A1. Transfers of major weapons from All Suppliers to Israel, 1950–2018. Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database. Information generated: 4 April 2020.

Note: Information on the sources and methods used in the collection of the data, and explanations of the conventions, abbreviations and acronyms, can be found at URL <http://www.sipri.org/contents/armstrad/sources-and-methods>.



Figure A2. Transfers of major weapons from All Suppliers to Taiwan, 1950–2018. Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database. Information generated: 4 April 2020.

Note: Information on the sources and methods used in the collection of the data, and explanations of the conventions, abbreviations and acronyms, can be found at URL <http://www.sipri.org/contents/armstrad/sources-and-methods>.

Table A1. Transfers of major weapons from Israel to Central American States: Deals with deliveries or orders made for 1950–2018.

Supplier/ recipient (R)	Ordered	No. designation	Weapon description	Year(s) weapon of order	Year delivery	of delivered	No. comments
Israel							
R: El Salvador	4	Arava	Transport aircraft	1973	1974–1975	4	
	4	CM-170 Magister	Trainer aircraft	(1973)	1974	4	Second-hand
	18	MD-450 Ouragan	FGA aircraft	1973	1974–1975	(18)	Second-hand but modernised before delivery
	1	CM-170 Magister	Trainer aircraft	(1975)	1975	1	Second-hand
	3	Arava	Transport aircraft	(2008)	2008	3	Second-hand
	(2)	M-68/M-71 155mm	Towed gun	(2015)	2016	2	Second-hand; M-71 version
Guatemala	10	Arava	Transport aircraft	1974	1975–1976	10	
	10	RBV-1	APV	(1976)	1977–1978	(10)	
	1	Arava	Transport aircraft	(1982)	1983	1	Second-hand
Honduras	2	Arava	Transport aircraft	1976	1976	2	
	30	M-58 160mm	Mortar	(1976)	1977–1978	(30)	
	(30)	M-65 120mm	Mortar	(1976)	1977	(30)	
	(16)	RBV-1	APV	(1976)	1977	(16)	Incl some with 106 mm recoilless gun
	(100)	Shafir-2	SRAAM	(1976)	1976–1978	(100)	For Mystere B-2 combat aircraft
	10	Super Mystere/ Saar	FGA aircraft	1976	1976–1978	(10)	Second-hand
	(6)	Super Mystere/ Saar	FGA aircraft	1977	1978	(6)	Second-hand
	1	EL/M-2288 AD- STAR	Air search radar	(2011)	2014	1	Part of \$25 m deal; designation uncertain (reported as 'mobile 3D air search radar')
Nicaragua	(45)	T-17E1 Staghound	Armoured car	(1957)	1957	(45)	Second-hand vehicles captured by Israel in 1956 and sold to Nicaragua incl as reward for Nicaraguan arms deliveries to Israel in 1948
	2	Arava	Transport aircraft	(1973)	1973	(2)	
Taiwan							
R: Guatemala	(2)	Bell-205/UH-1H	Helicopter	(1996)	1996	(2)	Second-hand; aid
	(2)	Bell-205/UH-1H	Helicopter	2012	2012	(2)	Second-hand; aid
Honduras	4	Bell-205/UH-1H	Helicopter	2013	2015	4	Second-hand; \$12 m aid

Panama	5	Bell-205/UH-1H	Helicopter	1997	1997	5	Second-hand; aid; for police
	1	Bell-407	Light helicopter	(2002)	2002	1	Second-hand; aid
	1	Bell-407	Light helicopter	(2008)	2009	1	Second-hand; aids

Note: The "No. delivered" and the "Year(s) of deliveries" columns refer to all deliveries since the beginning of the contract. The "Comments" column includes publicly reported information on the value of the deal. Information on the sources and methods used in the collection of the data, and explanations of the conventions, abbreviations and acronyms, can be found at URL <<http://www.sipri.org/contents/armstrad/sources-and-methods>>.

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database