Arming a few dictators but not others:

The politics of UK arms sales to Chile (1973-1989) and Argentina (1976-1983)

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Abstract

The UK imposed an arms embargo on Chile in 1974 but not on Argentina after the 1976 military coup, despite brutal military dictatorships in both countries. What explains this difference? What can this difference reveal about the determinants of arms export policies? Using archival evidence, this paper argues that there was a stronger advocacy network in the UK campaigning on Chile, which was due to a greater identification of the British left with the Chilean struggle. The Chile Solidarity Campaign was the hub of this network, mediating the influence of the transnational anti-Pinochet movement on the UK government. These findings suggest that shared values or identities make transnational issues more likely to resonate with domestic audiences. Findings also indicate the importance of activists' connections with gatekeepers, focus on specific arms deals, and demonstrated causal chains between arms exports and repression.

Keywords: arms trade; military regimes; norms; UK foreign policy; Latin America; advocacy networks.

Introduction

What determines government decisions to authorize, promote, or restrict exports of weapons? From a rational-choice standpoint, strategic and economic factors drive arms export decisions: governments promote arms exports to strengthen their security, have leverage on other governments, gain access to military or intelligence facilities, maintain contact with local elites, or facilitate access to supplies of natural resources. Also under this perspective, governments may export weapons to boost economic growth, increase employment, increase inflows of hard currency or amortize research costs of weapons development (Stohl and Grillot 2009; Soysa and Midford 2012; Levine and Smith 2003; Hartley 2000; Laurance 1992; Akerman and Seim 2014; Yarhi-Milo, Lanoszka, and Cooper 2016; Raska and Bitzinger 2020).

Another group of scholars stresses how government decisions on the types of weapons they export – and customers to whom they sell – depend on norms of control and transfer of weapons. Part of this literature looks at how transnational advocacy networks promote norms of responsibility concerning arms development, possession, use and trade, emphasising how they can change what is considered appropriate behaviour. This literature has explained the creation of the Ottawa Convention (Rutherford 2000; Cameron, Lawson, and Tomlin 1998; Anderson 2000; Price 1998; Petrova 2007), the European regime on arms exports (Hansen and Marsh 2015; Erickson 2013), the emergence of international norms concerning small arms and light weapons (Garcia 2006; 2009; 2011; Krause 2014; 2002; 2004), the Convention on Cluster Munitions (Bolton and Nash 2010; Petrova 2016; 2007) and the Arms Trade Treaty (Whall and Pytlak 2014) from this angle. Findings of this literature indicate that norm-driven actors can construct certain weapons as intrinsically problematic and construct arms transfers to certain customers as inappropriate.

However, the impact of international norms and law – and of transnational campaigns – on government behaviour is likely to be mediated by domestic political dynamics. Because governments need to authorize arms exports and frequently promote, fund or provide credit guarantee to arms deals, they are often pressured by arms manufacturers, civil society organisations or political parties to promote, authorize, restrict or ban arms exports. Pressures are especially strong when large arms deals are at stake and controversial weapons or customers are involved. Yet, what makes arms exports a politically salient – and divisive – issue in domestic politics? And what are the effects of their high domestic political salience on a government's behaviour?

This article looks at an empirical puzzle whose solution should contribute to a better understanding of the determinants of arms export policies and practice: why did the UK impose an arms embargo on Chile in 1974 but not on Argentina after the 1976 coup? This

difference is puzzling because levels of political violence were high in both countries. Moreover, the 1976 coup in Argentina coincided with a Labour government in the UK, which had imposed an embargo on Chile in 1974. Besides, the UK had more incentives to export weapons to Chile than to Argentina due to the risk of Chile cutting copper exports, because Chile was a larger market for British weapons, and due to the risk of Argentina invading the Falklands/Malvinas. Also, there was not a multilateral embargo (either mandatory or voluntary) against Chile – as there was, for example, against South Africa since 1963 – further reducing the UK government's incentives to impose an embargo on Chile.

The existence of a transnational anti-Pinochet movement explains in part why the UK imposed an embargo in 1974, but not why it did before other arms exporters in the West. The US Congress imposed an embargo on Chile in 1976 (under the leadership of Senator Ted Kennedy) and, until the end of the 1970s, Austria was the only other Western European country to have imposed an embargo on Chile. In contrast, while the United States imposed an embargo on Argentina in 1977 (in force from 1978 on), the UK did it only when the Falklands/Malvinas War started. These divergent policies suggest that transnational forces were mediated by specific features of domestic politics in the UK in a given moment.

Based on research conducted mainly at The National Archives in London, this paper argues that the British government imposed and maintained an embargo on Chile due in part to a domestic advocacy network, whose hub was the Chile Solidarity Campaign (CSC). In a context of intense industrial struggle in Britain, campaigners framed the Chilean struggle in terms of a left-right divide and labour international solidarity, making trade unions and Labour Party members more likely to get involved. Campaigners catalysed the sympathy of the left for Allende's government and the Chilean opposition. They formed a united front that turned arms sales to Chile into a politically salient issue and constructed solidarity with

Chile as a norm. As Chile became a microcosmos of a global fight between left and right, activists in the UK joined an 'imagined community' of people fighting against fascism and defending labour rights. Their attitude towards the Chilean struggle explains also why a full embargo against Argentina was not imposed after the 1976 coup: there was not a strong movement in the UK targeting Argentina as there was in the case of Chile. This was due to a lack of identification of the British left with Peronism, which shaped perceptions about the coup and the subsequent struggle in Argentina.

Research design and theoretical framework

Comparing the politics of UK arms sales to Chile and Argentina during their last military dictatorships is useful to isolate the potential influence of advocacy networks – and their forms of action – on government decisions: as detailed in this article, there was a stronger domestic advocacy network campaigning against Pinochet than against Argentina's military regime. As a Labour government in the UK coincided with Chile's and Argentina's military dictatorships from 1974 to 1979, the variable 'political party in power in the UK' is held constant over this period. This is also largely valid for the scale of repression in the two countries: Chile's military regime was responsible for around 2,400 deaths and Argentina's for between 10,000 and 30,000, with violence being especially brutal in the coups' aftermaths (Freire et al. 2019; CIA 2017). Also, analysing cases before the 1990s is useful to isolate the role of domestic campaigns from broader international norms concerning responsibility in the arms trade, which emerged from the late 1980s on (Garcia 2006).

Hypothetically, the UK government might have imposed an arms embargo on Chile but not on Argentina for either strategic or normative reasons. Under a rational-choice approach, focus would be on the incentives for the British government to impose the embargo and the cost-benefit character of decisions. From this standpoint, the embargo on

Chile – and a non-embargo on Argentina – were strategic moves aimed at furthering Britain's interests.

In contrast, from a normative perspective, the embargo was imposed due to a brutal government in Chile: the UK should not provide weapons that helped Pinochet's regime to remain in power or kill/wound people in opposition. From this standpoint, arms sales to Chile were constructed as inappropriate and solidarity with Chile was constructed as a norm – and these were major determinants of the embargo. It did not matter that competitors in the arms market benefitted from the UK embargo or that Chile remained importing weapons from other suppliers: the main point was not about gains and losses, but about doing the 'right thing'.

To compare the validity of these potential explanations, I looked for evidence that could support or reject them in government documents at The National Archives, London. Focus was on documents from the FCO, Ministry of Defence and Prime Minister's Office. All available folders about UK arms sales to Chile from 1968 to 1988 (51 folders in total, of which seven were not open to the public) and to Argentina from 1971 to 1985 (25 folders in total, of which two were not open) were consulted. Due to the 30-year rule, no files after 1988 were available, although this is not a substantial problem since it almost coincides with the end of Pinochet's regime. There were also seven folders about the CSC, all open and consulted. Complementarily, I consulted the personal archives of Barbara Castle and Margaret Thatcher, the former at the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford and the latter online. CSC archives were not consulted in full, but I looked at a sample of around 200 documents from 1973 to 1985 made available by the University of Warwick, including documents from the CSC and other members of the anti-Pinochet network in the UK (Warwick Digital Collections 2020). I also looked at secondary sources about UK relations with Chile and Argentina, and about British arms exports in general.

If an explanation based on a rational-choice approach is correct, there should be documentary evidence showing that the embargo was imposed because maintaining arms sales to Chile was considered harmful for British interests or for the government in power in the UK. If a normative explanation is correct, there should be records showing that the embargo was imposed due to norm-driven campaigns and/or because government officials considered that selling weapons to Chile would contribute to human rights violations or political repression – regardless of their perceived impact on British interests.

I tested whether a more restrictive arms sales policy towards Chile than towards Argentina is explained by a difference in the strength of domestic norm-driven campaigns. I consider that a campaign's strength depends on at least four factors. First, on the ability of campaigners to attract support from influential people or groups (Busby 2010; Petrova 2007; Ropp and Sikkink 1999; Bob 2005; Carpenter 2011; 2007). This facilitates what Keck and Sikkink (1998) call 'leverage politics', which can be especially effective when 'gatekeepers' are incorporated into an advocacy network. Second, on whether issues are framed in a way that resonates with target audiences, which is especially observed when they are framed in terms of a pre-existing topic of concern (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Price 1995). As argued by Keck and Sikkink (1998), 'new ideas are more likely to be influential if they fit well with existing ideas and ideologies in a particular historical setting'. Third, a focused campaign is more likely to succeed than one based on generic or vague demands (Krause 2014; Shawki 2011; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Legro 1997). Fourth, issues involving bodily harm and with a clear and short causal chain make campaigns stronger (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

This article is situated within literature reconciling the global and local dimensions of transnational activism. Previous research has looked at environmental issues (Collins 2005; Litfin 2000; Finger and Princen 2013), women's rights (Sperling, Ferree, and Risman 2001; Naples and Desai 2004), indigenous rights (Brysk 2000), support to insurgent groups

(Bob 2005), and the anti-apartheid struggle (Dubow 2017; Klotz 1999; 1995) from this angle. By focusing on the arms trade this article also contributes to literature about the transnational dimension of the anti-Pinochet struggle, which was a milestone for the current international human rights regime (Christiaens, Goddeeris, and García 2014; Sikkink 1996; Ropp and Sikkink 1999; Kelly 2013; Hawkins 2002). Moreover, this article is a contribution to literature looking at relations between political party ideology and foreign policy decisions (Moravcsik 2013; Hofmann 2013; Rapport and Rathbun 2020; Haesebrouck and Mello 2020). I build upon this literature by problematizing how party positions on foreign policy issues are formed, drawing attention to the normative environment in which parties are embedded.

Disarming Pinochet's regime: what explains the UK arms embargo?

In September 1973, Augusto Pinochet led a military coup that overthrew the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende. The coup – and the harsh repression in its aftermath – triggered a global wave of protests and the creation or expansion of various solidarity movements. A transnational anti-Pinochet coalition emerged, involving civil society groups, churches, political parties, media outlets, a few governments, and international organisations. Solidarity movements were founded – or expanded – in Belgium, East Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, the Soviet Union, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, West Germany, among others, existing in 80 countries at a certain point (Ropp and Sikkink 1999; Eckel 2014). Amnesty International made a trip to Chile in November 1973, revealing the scale and details of state repression (Christiaens, Goddeeris, and García 2014; Kelly 2013). Indignation with the coup and the repression against opposition was also expressed through or by the Non-Aligned Movement, the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation, the International Commission of Jurists,

among other international organisations and groups (Ropp and Sikkink 1999; Eckel 2014). In 1975, the UN Commission on Human Rights created a working group on Chile, which reported annually about its human rights situation. Ostracization of Pinochet's regime – and the scope of sanctions against it – reached a scale probably equivalent only to that against South Africa.

During the coup, the Chilean military used British-manufactured Hawker Hunter jets to drop bombs on the La Moneda Palace, turning the UK-Chile military relationship into immediate controversy: should the UK maintain arms sales to Chile after the coup? The Conservative government of Edward Heath (1970-1974) recognized the new regime in Chile, did not impose an arms embargo, and did not facilitate requests of exile from Chileans. He was strongly criticized by the Labour Party and trade unions, which argued that the UK should sanction the new regime in Chile and support the Chilean opposition (Livingstone 2018, 48-52).[1] A few days after the coup, James Callaghan and Labour General Secretary Ron Hayward met Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home, pressuring him not to recognise the new Chilean government.[2] In a meeting with the Foreign Secretary in December 1973, a representative from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) pressured Alec Douglas-Home to interrupt aid and arms sales, and increase support to Chileans looking for refuge.[3] These pressures (and the Conservatives' reaction) not only contributed to make the Chilean struggle a main issue for the British left but also made solidarity with Chile synonymous with the trade unions in the Conservatives' mindset (Hirsch 2016). British diplomats were closer to the Conservatives and Anglo-Chilean business community though, emphasising the need to protect British trade and investment, and seeing with concern the CSC and the bad press about Pinochet's regime (Livingstone 2018, 52; Hirsch 2016).

[1] WDC/CS. TUC, Chile and Spain: meeting with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, 7/1/1974.
[2] WDC/CS. Labour Party, letter from Ron Hayward to the TUC, 19/9/1973.
[3] WDC/CS. TUC, Chile: meeting with Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, 19/12/1973.

However, six months after the coup, a (minority) Labour government took office. In March 1974, Foreign Secretary James Callaghan announced an arms embargo and the cancellation of naval visits. In this way, Harold Wilson's government took a decision similar to the one it had taken in 1964 when the UK imposed an arms embargo against South Africa (also opposed by Conservatives). The decision on South Africa in 1964 had also been taken in a context of a growing campaign led by the Anti-Apartheid Movement, which developed an organic relationship with the Labour Party – similar to what happened in the campaign on Chile (Moraes 2021).

By imposing a unilateral embargo, the UK gave up on potential economic gains from arms sales, lost access to high-ranking officials in Chile, and risked having copper exports from Chile suspended. Moreover, it opened space for competitors in the arms market. What explains this decision? The state of political and civil liberties in Chile cannot be the only factor, as the UK had a less strict arms export policy towards countries with equally poor – or worse – records, such as Argentina and Zaire. The existence of a transnational campaign explains in part the UK embargo but cannot explain why other countries did not impose an embargo on Chile or did it later.

I argue that domestic political dynamics in the UK mediated the influence of the anti-Pinochet transnational coalition on the UK government – with the CSC being a key actor. The CSC was founded soon after the coup, becoming a hub for people and organisations opposing Pinochet's regime, led by Michael Gatehouse, member of the Communist Party. It was organised as a grassroots movement with strong connections to the Labour movement (Jones 2014). The CSC unified groups and people campaigning for the end of Chile's military regime, especially the trade unions, segments of the Labour Party, the Communist Party and groups of students, including also the churches, parts of the media, academics, and refugee organisations. The formation of this network was facilitated by two interrelated

factors: the symbolic role that Allende's government played for the left – and for the British Labour movement in particular; and the mobilization of pre-existing organisations, movements and personal networks.

Solidarity with Chile had roots that pre-dated the coup, which explains why there was a widespread emotional reaction to the coup and why a transnational coalition against the Chilean Junta was rapidly organised. The Popular Unity government and its 'peaceful road to socialism' were seen by many in the left as a promising experience of democratic socialism. The CSC emerged in part from two groups: the Association for British–Chilean Friendship, formed in 1972, whose main goal was supporting Allende's government; and Liberation (called the Movement for Colonial Freedom until 1970) (Jones 2014).[4] Among the trade unions, support of the National Union of Mineworkers was especially strong, reflecting both its tradition of international solidarity and the importance of the Chilean miner's union before the coup (Hirsch 2016). In 1976, there were CSC committees in 66 places in the UK, and 35 student unions had 'adopted' prisoners in Chile – communicating with them through letters and pressuring Chilean authorities for their release.[5] During its existence, the CSC had the affiliation of 30 national trade unions, 85 Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs), 54 trade councils and 56 student unions (Livingstone 2018, 48).

Exile Chileans played an important role, but a bit later. Conservatives did not facilitate requests of exile and, in 1974, only 118 applications for refuge had been granted – which grew to around 3,000 in 1979 (Angell 1996). This suggests that the influence of exiled communities cannot explain why an anti-Pinochet movement emerged so quickly after the coup.[6] Moreover, influence from the exiled community – and even the size of this

[4] WDC/CS. Association for British-Chilean Friendship (letter), 18/9/1973.
[5] WDC/CS. CSC, International Student Day of Action for Chile: action package, 1976.
[6] TNA: FCO-7/2608. FCO, Minutes of meeting between Stan Newens and deputation from CSC, 30/4/1974.

community – was not exogenous to the importance of the Chilean struggle for the British left.

The anti-Pinochet movement in the UK was part of a broader transnational coalition, but at the same time a distinctively local group. On the one hand, activists in the UK joined a global anti-Pinochet movement. The coup and subsequent repression in Chile were vehemently opposed by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), for example.[7] Repression in Chile was regularly discussed at the UNGA, which approved 18 resolutions condemning the Chilean government from 1974 to 1989 (in contrast, there were no equivalent UNGA resolutions against Argentina's military regime). Also, British activists had links with Chilean counterparts through at least four channels. First, Chilean trade unionists were in contact with union leaders in the UK either directly or indirectly (through the ICFTU, for example). Chilean trade unions used these connections to exchange information and express the type of support they needed (for example, pressure the Chilean government to release unionists in jail).[8] Second, there were contacts between the Labour Party and political parties in Chile, especially the Radical Party.[9] Third, Vicaría de la Solidaridad in Chile gathered support from churches abroad (including in the UK) and non-religious groups, being in close contact with Amnesty International (Ropp and Sikkink 1999, 176). Actions were also coordinated through the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (Eckel 2014, 76). Fourth, academics in the UK helped Chilean students and academics to leave Chile and obtain scholarships in Britain, which was articulated by Academics for Chile and the World University Services. With a Labour government from

[7] WDC/CS. TUC, Chile, 20/8/1973; ICFTU, Coup d'Etat in Chile, 17/9/1973; ICFTU, Repression in Chile, 11/10/1973.
[8] WDC/CS. Central Unica de Trabajadores de Chile, letter to TUC, 17/12/1973; TUC, Fund for Chilean Trade Unionists, 14/12/1974.
[9] WDC/CS. Labour Party, letter from Ron Hayward to TUC, 19/9/1973; Affiliates newsletter n. 5: Labour Party conference, 18/11/1974.

1974 on, such help was organised through a government programme (Angell 2020; 1974; 1996). On the other hand, the arms embargo was made possible by an advocacy network managed by the CSC and formed in great part by solidarity activists who came from left-wing movements and organisations within Britain; and who navigated the domestic political system in the UK. The CSC was in this way a spin-off from traditional left-wing groups in the UK, to which it remained linked.

Yet, although Harold Wilson's government imposed an embargo, it honoured existing contracts for sales of warships, arguing that Britain might lose contracts with other countries and Chile might cut copper supplies.[10] This was contested within the Labour Party: more than 100 Labour MPs signed a motion against the delivery of warships; the Labour Party's International Department called upon the government to reconsider it:[11] and various Labour CLPs criticized it (Jones 2014, 129–30; Phythian 2000, 105; Wilkinson 1992). However, a few contracts were suspended: the UK government embargoed supplies of aircraft engines for Hunters, for example, as well as airframe and avionic spares and repairs.[12] Furthermore, the British government decided not to reschedule Chile's debts, which occurred after the CSC and members of the Labour Party got a resolution on this issue approved by the party's conference in November 1974. From CSC's point of view, this issue was closely related to the arms trade, as Chile might use the debt rescheduling to allocate more resources for arms procurement.[13] This led the Chilean government to default on the UK, which led the British government to suspend deliveries of submarines.[14] Moreover, Chile was under an arms embargo that countries with similar – or worse – conditions were

[10] TNA: CAB-148/145. Defence and Overseas Policy Committee. Policy towards Chile, Memorandum by Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs, 19/3/1974.
[11] Bodleian: MS CASTLE-191. Labour Party International Department, letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Apr/1974.
[12] TNA: CAB-148/145. Defence and Overseas Policy Committee. Chile: arms export policy, 2/5/1974.
[13] WDC/CS. CSC, Affiliates newsletter n. 5: Labour Party conference, 18/11/1974.
[14] TNA: DEFE-24/1419. Ministry of Defence, from Ted Rowlands to TUC's General Secretary, 18/6/1976.

not. In 1978, the UK government did not authorize exports of Versatile Console Systems (used for naval communication, navigation and control) to Chile, for example, while authorized them to Argentina, Iran and Saudi Arabia, where human rights conditions were also poor.[15]

Furthermore, the UK was in 1974 the only major arms exporter in the West that had imposed an embargo on Chile. In a message to the TUC, the FCO Minister Ted Rowlands expressed that 'our aim throughout has been, in cooperation with other like-minded states, to bring effective pressure to bear on the Junta.'[16] Although he emphasized working with 'like-minded states', there is no evidence that the UK decision was conditioned by other governments' positions on Chile. Also, there is no evidence that strategic or economic factors were behind the embargo – which was imposed *despite* rather than because of them. There was therefore a 'taboo' on arms sales to Chile, which was constructed by an advocacy network gathered around the CSC, whose power was due in part to an organic relationship it had with the Labour movement.

It is possible to dig deeper and look at divisions within the Labour Party, which indicate how a government policy resulted in part from intra-party contestation. A few MPs (including Judith Hart, Ted Rowlands, Joan Lestor, Stan Newens, and Eric Heffer) and various CLPs defended the suspension of *all* arms sales to Chile, including those of existing contracts. In contrast, James Callaghan and Harold Wilson were cautious, expressing concerns about the impacts of such suspension on the UK's reputation of reliable arms supplier, and considering arms sales as a contributor to employment and balance of payments (Mc Loughlin 2017). Therefore, the Labour government did not meet all demands from the CSC leadership, trade unions or individuals/groups within the party. On the one

[15] TNA: FCO-46/1843. Ministry of Defence, Defence sales, by Antony Duff, 20/3/1978.
[16] TNA: DEFE-24/1419. Ministry of Defence, from Ted Rowlands to TUC's General Secretary, 18/6/1976.

hand, Labour represented trade unions, whose support was especially critical because Labour had either a minority or a slim majority from 1974 to 1979 (Wilkinson 1992). On the other hand, the Labour leadership considered pressures from the Anglo-Chilean community and positions from FCO diplomats, who sought to prevent the government from not honouring contracts (Wilkinson 1992; Hirsch 2016).

When Thatcher took office, the UK position changed. She restored diplomatic relations with Chile and lifted the embargo on various weapons for 'external defence'. In July 1980, in a letter addressed to the Prime Minister, a representative from British Aerospace complained about the suspension of arms sales. Thatcher replied saying that 'henceforth applications for arms exports to Chile will be treated in the normal way'.[17] In 1980, an internal FCO document stressed that they had adopted a 'forward' policy towards Chile and that only 7 out of 100 applications had been turned down in the previous four months.[18] Labour MPs, trade unions, churches and NGOs criticized Thatcher's decision – and pressures remained until the end of Pinochet's regime. Amnesty International started campaigning against arms sales to Chile around that time, publishing in 1981 *The Repression Trade*, criticizing the British policy and using Chile as a case study (Amnesty International, 1981). Cardinal Basil Hume, who enjoyed wide popularity in Britain, sent a letter to the Foreign Secretary stating that he 'must seriously question the wisdom of lifting the embargo on arms' (Amnesty International 1981, 4). Was this pressure effective?

Although the embargo was partially lifted by Thatcher, the UK rarely supplied weapons that could be used for internal repression and maintained restrictions on various other weapons. In 1980, the UK did not authorize sales of a surveillance system, for example, due to 'domestic criticism the sale was likely to arouse from the human rights

[17] Margaret Thatcher Foundation: PREM-19/0158. British Aerospace, from A H C Greenwood to the Prime Minister, 4/7/1980.
[18] TNA: FCO-7/3755. FCO. Chile: arms sales, by G A Duggan, 17/11/1980.

lobby'.[19] Correspondence between the FCO and Ministry of Defence indicates the influence of the 'lobby': the FCO stressed that they were not being 'unnecessarily restrictive as regards [arms sales to] Chile', but that 'any weakening of the formal criteria would be vigorously seized on by the lobbies'. The same document stressed that 'As an indication of the level of lobby activity, we have received this year over 1,100 letters, including 300 from MPs, on our policy towards Chile'.[20] In 1981, the Secretary of State for Defence, John Nott, sent a letter to Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington, arguing that 'the real reason for our hesitancy [of selling arms to Chile] is the vociferous public anti-Pinochet lobby in Britain', indicating how normative pressures constrained the government's policy options.[21]

Thatcher's policy on arms sales to Chile became less restrictive during and after the Falklands/Malvinas War due to the need of gathering support during the war and reward those that took the UK's side. Moreover, the war contributed to a 'British world' revival in the UK, as though it had suddenly brought back to it a great power reputation (Mercau 2019; Livingstone 2018, 125). This created incentives for the UK government to play power politics. Sales of a few weapons were temporarily authorized: the UK granted licences to export 105 mm tank gun ammunition to Chile after the war, for example, whose sales had not been authorized before the war.[22] Yet, concerns about repression in Chile remained. In a decision concerning machine guns and pods, for example, the FCO took pressures from human rights groups into account, arguing that 'there must remain a risk that this sale would attract criticism from the anti-Chile lobby both within Parliament and the country if it were

[19] TNA: FCO-46/3237. FCO. Chile: sale of Heli Tele, 14/12/1982.
[20] TNA: FCO-7/3755. FCO. Arms sales, from P R Fearn to Mr Watkins, 20/11/1980.
[21] TNA: FCO-7/3907. Ministry of Defence, MO 11/16, from John Nott to Lord Carrington, 20/7/1981.
[22] TNA: FCO-46/3237. FCO. Chile: arms sales, 25/8/1982.

to become known'.[23] Also, the British government did not supply antipersonnel landmines, armoured vehicles, grenades, small arms and tanks to Chile.[24]

Media was also a source of pressure, which was facilitated by the availability of visual and testimonial evidence of violence in Chile (Keck and Sikkink 1998). This allowed campaigners to present details of abuses, contributing to turn Chile into a cause célèbre. Yet, media coverage and representations were not exogenous to the importance of the Chilean struggle for the British left. Activities from trade unions, Labour Party members, and the CSC generated media coverage, contributing to keep UK-Chile relations as a politically salient and contentious issue in Britain.[25] Moreover, information about abuses in Argentina started circulating in the late 1976 when Amnesty International published a report about the disappearances (Keck and Sikkink 1998). However, activists did not take up the Argentine case to the same extent they did with Chile. Also, there is no evidence that a stricter arms sales policy to Chile was introduced or maintained due to scandals related to arms deals. The potential role of this factor is suggested in Erickson (2015), who argue that governments may adopt a 'responsible' behaviour concerning arms sales to avoid scandal-related reputational damage.

Controversy around the UK-Chile relations during Pinochet's regime did not end after he left the presidency. In 1997, Robin Cook launched what Labour called the 'ethical dimension' in British foreign policy. The context favoured Pinochet's arrest in 1998 – even if he had been invited by the UK Ministry of Defence and weapons-manufacturers to visit the UK (Livingstone 2018, 85). His arrest implied cancellations of imports of machine guns and tanks by the Chilean military (Binyon, Wood, and Watson 1998; Sengupta and Boggan

[23] TNA: FCO-46/3237. FCO. Document by J E Holmes, concerning authorisation of machine gun sales to Chile, 25/7/1982.
[24] TNA: FCO-46/3237. FCO. Chile: arms sales, 25/8/1982.
[25] See, for example, these news articles: Chippindale (1973); Fairhall and Keatley (1974); Wallace (1974); Lowry (1975); Pallister (1977); Ballantyne (1980); Fairhall (1981); Walker (1983).

1999). Thatcher vehemently criticized his arrest and visited Pinochet in his house arrest, indicating how this was still a divisive issue between Labour and Conservatives (Livingstone 2018, 86–89).

UK arms sales policy towards Argentina's military regime: why was it less restrictive than the one to Chile?

The 1976 coup in Argentina raised concerns within the UK government on whether British weapons could contribute to increase domestic repression and strengthen Argentina's military regime. However, restrictions were never as severe as those against Chile, despite Argentina's military dictatorship being as brutal as Chile's and the risk of an invasion of the Falklands/Malvinas. Although the Labour government considered the possibility of imposing an embargo, it decided not to do it, concurring with FCO diplomats: there were economic benefits from selling weapons, an embargo could strengthen the hard-liners in Argentina, and Argentina was unlikely to attack Chile regarding the Beagle Channel dispute.[26] Yet, similar arguments had been presented by FCO diplomats concerning arms sales to Chile, but the Labour government imposed an embargo anyway, suggesting that other variables played a determining role. In 1978, for example, the UK exported a few weapons to Argentina that could not be sold to Chile: Type 42 destroyers, electronic warfare equipment, Seacat/Tigercat missiles and anti-aircraft missile systems.[27] James Callaghan's government invited Argentine officials to attend the Royal Navy Equipment Exhibition in 1979 (with all expenses paid by the Ministry of Defence) while Chileans were not invited. Although there were concerns in the FCO about inviting an Argentine delegation, it was

[26] TNA: FCO-7/3579. FCO. Arms sales to Argentina, 12/12/1978.
[27] TNA: FCO-7/3579. FCO, Arms sales to Argentina, 12/12/1978.

decided that among seven South American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Venezuela) only Chileans and Paraguayans should not be invited.[28]

The Labour government and FCO diplomats were aware that the military dictatorship in Argentina was similar to or worse than Chile's regarding political repression and human rights violations – and that divergent UK policies towards these two countries was a contradiction. In 1979, Ted Rowlands affirmed that Britain was selling weapons to a 'nasty dictatorship', a regime whose human rights record was worse than Chile's.[29] Foreign Secretary David Owen stressed that Argentina had a 'regime whose human rights record is worse than Chile, and which could come close to a confrontation with us over the Falklands'.[30] Although FCO diplomats emphasised that ministers were not seeking to 'prevent negotiations with Argentines for the supply of defence equipment',[31] they later questioned: 'how does the government allow arms sales to Argentina but not to Chile?'.[32] Therefore, a lack of information or awareness concerning violence in Argentina cannot explain the absence of an embargo.

Divergent arms sales policies towards Chile and Argentina are in part explained by the fact that the coup in Chile was a shock for the British left to an extent that the coup in Argentina was not. While the coup in Chile overthrew a democratic socialist government – with whom the British left shared an identity – the overthrown government in Argentina was less deserving of mourning because Juan and Isabel Perón were not democratic left-wing leaders. This made the subsequent internal struggle in Argentina less appealing for the British left, in this way influencing the scale of campaigns in the UK against Argentina's military dictatorship. Although concerns about Argentina were raised by civil society groups

[28] TNA: FCO-7/3579. FCO. Royal Navy Equipment Exhibition, 2/3/1979.
[29] TNA: FCO-7/3579. FCO. Letter from Ted Rowlands to the Secretary of State, 5/1/1979.
[30] TNA: FCO-7/3579. FCO. Document from David Owen to Fred Mulley (MP), 26/1/1979.
[31] TNA: FCO-7/3579. FCO. Arms sales to Argentina, 12/12/1978.
[32] TNA: FCO-7/3579. FCO. Notes for supplementaries. Arms sales, Jan-Feb/1979.

(including by the CSC and others, which pressured the government to stop arms sales),[33] there was more interest towards Chile (Livingstone 2020). The World University Services' reports from 1976 and 1977, for example, emphasised the selective repression of Isabel Perón's government and how it had fought against left-wing groups – a 'work' that the military regime continued and expanded.[34] As additional evidence, there are seven folders of government documents about the CSC at The National Archives but none about campaigns on Argentina. There was not in the UK a united front in support of the Argentine struggle; and the campaign on Argentina was in practice a relatively small subdivision of the CSC. In the absence of a strong domestic advocacy network, there was less pressure on the UK government, influence on 'gatekeepers', and media coverage concerning arms sales to Argentina – even during Labour governments.

Thatcher's government maintained supplies of various types of weapons to Argentina and authorized negotiations of new arms deals, including of weapons whose sales the previous Labour government had not authorized – such as main battle tanks.[35] In a meeting in 1981 attended by representatives from different ministries, the FCO was criticized for not authorising arms deals due to human rights concerns. An FCO's representative explained, however, that they were already adapted to the new guidelines: 'the major restriction was now largely on security grounds', and the criterion to authorize arms sales had been altered from 'could' to 'is likely to be' used to violate human rights. Yet, an FCO document from late 1979 stressed that 'arms sales to Argentina are controversial and concern is expressed both by the human rights and the Falkland Island lobbies' – which led the UK government not to authorize sales of certain weapons.[36] When

[33] WDC/CS. TUC, Visas for refugees from Chile and Argentina, 11/10/1976.
[34] WDC/CS. WUS, The present situation in Chile and Argentina, Dec 1976; WUS, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay: An outline of conditions in 1977, Oct/1977.
[35] TNA: FCO-7/3730. FCO. Argentina: arms sales. by P R Fearn, 6/6/1980.
[36] TNA: FCO-7/3579. FCO. Argentina: arms sales, by P R Fearn, 10/12/1979.

rejecting exports of Protector pistols, for example, the FCO argued that they 'could not convincingly defend the sales of such equipment […] if we were challenged to do so by the human rights lobby'. This decision was taken because these weapons might be used by 'para-military groups in carrying out raids on the homes of suspected terrorists in the sort of operation mounted by the Argentina government in the "dirty war" of 1976-8'.[37] The FCO also opposed sales of 20 mm Hispano guns to Argentina's Air Force and of dock landing ships as they could be used to attack the Falklands.[38]

However, arms sales to Chile remained more restrictive, even if Thatcher's government was one of Pinochet's main allies. The FCO agreed to sell Stingray light-weight torpedoes to Argentina manufactured by Marconi, for example, which could not be sold to Chile.[39] This is also valid for aircraft, aircraft engines, aircraft parts and helicopters, whose sales to 22 countries were not authorized, among which Chile and Cuba were the only ones in Latin America, with most others being communist countries.[40] As it had occurred over the previous Labour government, diplomats were aware that selling certain weapons to Argentina was contradictory because the same – or similar – weapons could not be sold to Chile. The UK government position on Argentina changed only after the Falklands/Malvinas War started, when the British government imposed an embargo and pressured other countries to do the same.[41]

A difference of strength between the UK advocacy campaigns on Chile and Argentina

[37] TNA: FCO-7/3730. FCO. Argentina: arms sales, by N E Cole, 8/12/1980.
[38] TNA: FCO 7/3579. FCO. Argentina: dock landing ship, by J B Ure, 16/10/1979; FCO. Argentina: arms sales, by P R Fearn, 5/12/1979.
[39] TNA: FCO 7/3579. FCO. Argentina: arms sales. Document prepared by P R Fearn, 10/12/1979.
[40] TNA: FCO 7/4622. FCO. Export licence: hovercraft and hovercraft engines and specialized parts and components, p. 2 (schedule), 21 Nov 1981.
[41] TNA: FCO-46/2782. DPS 087/12, Comments on meeting of Defence Sales Working Group, 21/7/1981; DEFE-24/2136. FCO. Argentina: German arms sales, by S L Squire, 12/6/1984; DEFE-24/2136. Letter from Thatcher to Helmut Kohl, 9/8/1983.

The four factors that can make an advocacy campaign stronger (introduced in the 'research design and theoretical framework' section) – support from influential actors, framing, focused campaigns, and issues involving bodily harm and with a clear causal chain – distinguished the British network against Chile's military dictatorship from the one against Argentina's. The campaign on Chile was supported by a broad coalition that included the trade unions and Labour Party members. Connections with these actors made the incorporation of 'gatekeepers' into the anti-Pinochet network more likely, contributing to raise the political salience of the Chilean struggle and keep it as a matter of concern among the Labour (and Conservative) Party's leadership. In the House of Commons, there were 18 debates on UK policies towards Chile's military regime in the five years following the 1973 coup, while there was only one about Argentina in the five years following the 1976 coup.[42] Also, those campaigning against Argentina did not have a hub around which a network could form. In addition, activists campaigning on Argentina either lacked links with influential people or, when they had them, did not use them extensively (Livingstone 2020).

Moreover, the coup – and subsequent struggle – in Chile divided the UK along pre-existing party lines. A 'common frame of meaning' united most of the British left to the Chilean opposition, making the struggle in Chile more likely to resonate with policymakers and the public in the UK. The CSC framed the anti-Pinochet campaign in terms of left-wing solidarity, democratic socialism, anti-imperialism, anti-fascism and labour solidarity, which found a fertile ground in the UK due to the symbolic importance of Allende's government for the left – both before and after the coup.[43] This gave rise to what Cortell and Davis Jr

[42] I looked at all reports from debates at the House of Commons in which the UK relations with Chile (Sep 1973 to Sep 1978) and Argentina (Mar 1976 to Mar 1981) were discussed: <https://hansard.parliament.uk>. [Accessed 30 May 2021].
[43] Warwick Digital Collections/Chile Solidarity (WDC/CS). Enfield College CSC, Support the workers and peasants of Chile, Nov/1973; CSC, Support the people of Chile, Nov/1973; World University Service, The Chile Monitor: bulletin of news on Chile, n. 2, 18/12/1973.

(2000) call 'feelings of obligation by social actors'. A language of human rights was not frequently used by the CSC, but it was adopted by the Chile Committee for Human Rights, which worked closely with the CSC.[44] Human rights and democracy were also common frames used by the Labour and Conservative Parties when discussing about Chile in the House of Commons (House of Commons 1974; 1980; 1984; 1987). Campaigns against Argentina had less appeal, which was due in part to the difficulty of framing it as an important cause for the left: Juan and Isabel Perón were not left-wing leaders and did not enjoy sympathy from the left. This made a condemnation of the 1976 coup and the organisation of campaigns against Argentina's military regime less attractive for the left.

In addition, activists campaigning against Chile drew attention to specific arms deals. From March 1974 on, workers refused to service and repair Hawker Hunter jets' engines from the Chilean Air Force during the 'blacking' campaign at the East Kilbride's Rolls-Royce factory, which started in March 1974 (Hirsch 2016). There was also a campaign against sales of tropospheric scatter systems and specific campaigns against potential sales of Jaguar jets and an aircraft carrier in 1983.[45] Equivalent campaigns – or other forms of action – concerning specific arms deals against Argentina were not observed.

Also, the causal chain between the UK and violence in Chile was clearer than in the case of Argentina because British-manufactured jets were used during the coup in Chile. During the 1980s, the UK justified a few sales of weapons to Chile arguing that they were for 'external defence', but the use of Hawker Hunter jets during the 1973 coup was invoked to show that the lines between arms for 'external defence' and 'domestic repression' were blurred. In 1985, MP (and CSC member) Jeremy Corbyn drew attention to this point when

[44] WDC/CS. Enfield College CSC, Support the workers and peasants of Chile, Nov/1973; CSC, Support the people of Chile, Nov/1973; World University Service, The Chile Monitor: bulletin of news on Chile, n. 2, 18/12/1973; CSC, Chile: the tide has turned, Annual Report, 1983.
[45] WDC/CS. CSC, Chile: the tide has turned, Annual Report, 1983.

arguing against arms sales to Chile (House of Commons 1985). Moreover, the extensive justification of the few UK sales of weapons to Chile in the 1980s indicates their domestic political salience, which were under scrutiny from civil society groups and the opposition parties (Cortell and Davis Jr 2000, 71).

In summary, despite similar regimes in Chile and Argentina – and a territorial dispute between Argentina and the UK – both Labour and Conservative governments were more willing to sell weapons to Argentina than to Chile. There were stronger and more comprehensive international pressures against Pinochet's regime, with no equivalent for any other military regime in Latin America (Ropp and Sikkink 1999). Yet, the difference in behaviour of the UK government towards Chile and Argentina was due not only to this factor but also to a stronger *domestic* advocacy network campaigning to isolate Pinochet's regime. This suggests that government behaviour concerning arms sales depends not only on objective humanitarian conditions in potential customers – and on how large transnational campaigns are – but also on the strength of domestic groups campaigning to isolate a specific target.

I do not claim that opposition to arms sales to Argentina did not have an impact on government's behaviour: evidence shows that the British government took it into account and did not authorize arms sales in various cases. I argue though that the UK policy towards Argentina was less restrictive than the one towards Chile in part because the movement in the UK to isolate Pinochet's regime was stronger.

Concluding remarks

A comparison between the politics of UK arms sales to Chile (1973-1989) and Argentina (1976-1983) suggests that the strength of domestic campaigns and the characteristics of domestic political environments mediate the influence of transnational networks, coalitions

or movements. They determine whether norms change state behaviour, the timing of such change, and the degree of embeddedness of norms in policies.

The transnational campaign against Pinochet's regime was larger than the one against Argentina's military dictatorship, which in part explains why the UK imposed an embargo on the former but not on the latter. Yet, this cannot explain why the UK imposed an embargo on Chile but other countries did not or did it later, suggesting that causal mechanisms in domestic politics mediated the influence of transnational pressures on government policies. The Labour Party's victory in the February 1974 general election was the proximate cause of the UK embargo on Chile. The embargo was a campaign pledge from Labour and was opposed by the Conservatives, suggesting that an embargo would not have been imposed had the Conservative Party won that election. However, if the military dictatorship in Argentina was as brutal as the one in Chile and there were risks concerning the Falklands/Malvinas, why did Labour take a different decision concerning Argentina after the 1976 coup? And why did Thatcher's government maintain a more restrictive arms sales policy against Chile than against Argentina until the Falklands/Malvinas War started?

This paper argues that the imposition and maintenance of the UK arms embargo on Chile were due in part to a combination of a unified domestic campaign (whose hub was the CSC), close contacts with 'gatekeepers' in government, the identification of the British labour movement with Allende's government and the subsequent Chilean opposition, pressures against specific arms deals, and a clear causal chain between British weapons and the Chilean coup. These factors contributed to the creation of a 'taboo' concerning arms sales to Chile that had no equivalent for Argentina. Although the coalition against Pinochet's regime was transnational, the CSC was more than a local 'branch' of a global anti-Pinochet struggle: it was a distinctively British group, which navigated the political system in the UK to influence a government policy. Until the end of Pinochet's regime, the CSC, Labour

members, trade unions and other groups in the UK remained actively campaigning against Pinochet, and exerting influence on government behaviour – during both Labour governments and Thatcher's premiership.

This suggests that opposition groups in authoritarian contexts are more likely to receive support from groups abroad (through a 'boomerang pattern' type of process, for example) if they are perceived to belong to an imagined community. Identification was based mainly on a left-wing ideology and labour rights in the case of Chile, but a similar pattern should be observed for identities based on other factors – religion or ethnicity, for example.

This study also indicates that advocacy campaigns can lead states to unilaterally change behaviour. Although the UK government imposed an embargo on Chile due to interactions between domestic and transnational political dynamics, it did not invest much effort in coordinating with other governments to form a common position. This is remarkable because unilateral restrictions on arms sales put arms exporting countries into a disadvantaged position against others while potentially having little or no impact on overall levels of armament in arms importing countries.

Findings of this article also contribute to a better theorization of the influence of advocacy campaigns on foreign policy decisions. Although the literature demonstrates that norm-driven campaigns by civil society groups and advocacy networks shape foreign policy decisions – after all, 'ideas do not float freely' (Risse-Kappen 1994) – the causal mechanisms remain undertheorized. This article indicates that civil society groups and advocacy networks can influence decisions through multiple channels: a) pressuring governments from the outside, b) persuading elites, c) influencing public opinion, d) using formal and informal channels of communication with government actors (bureaucrats, parliamentarians, political parties, etc.), and e) involving government sectors in their

networks. Although part of the literature looks at civil society groups mainly as outsiders, they are frequently insiders and can combine efforts with governments. In the case here analysed, civil society groups were mainly outsiders during Conservative governments but insiders during Labour ones. This implies that norms were influential during both governments but in different ways: while Labour was both a target and a source of normative pressures concerning solidarity with Chile, Conservatives were mainly a target. Moreover, this article indicates the importance of looking at the role of political parties and trade unions not only as supporters of advocacy campaigns but also as active participants in them.

This study contributes also to a better understanding of the determinants of arms export decisions to authoritarian governments in general. Labour and Conservatives have different positions regarding arms sales to Saudi Arabia, for example. A comparison with the cases of Chile and Argentina suggests that a Labour government would be more likely to impose restrictions on Saudi Arabia than a Conservative one. Yet, a Labour government would probably honour existing contracts, striking a balance between the Anglo-Saudi business community, sectors of the bureaucracy, segments of the Labour movement, and civil society groups. Moreover, campaigners in the UK face an obstacle that resembles the case of Argentina: the British left does not identify with a 'prior' government in Saudi Arabia (an equivalent to Allende's government in Chile) and there is not a clear political opposition in Saudi Arabia that groups in the UK can actively support (trade unions or opposition political parties, for example). Other complicating factors are that UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia are larger than those to Chile in the 1970s, and the Middle East is more geostrategic than South America was, creating greater incentives for the instrumental use of arms sales. However, a campaign framed in terms of human rights is nowadays more likely to find an echo in domestic politics given the emergence of human rights as a central topic of concern not only for the left but also for parts of the right. A focused and unified

campaign, able to gather support from different actors and keep this issue as a priority within the Labour Party might induce a policy change in a future Labour government.

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