CHAPTER 1

Nuclear Opportunism

How States Use Nuclear Weapons in International Politics

This chapter offers a theory that allows us to understand the way nuclear weapons affect the foreign policy of the states that acquire them. Foreign policy is the portion of grand strategy that deals with a state's relationships with other states. If grand strategy is the collection of means and ends with which a state attempts to achieve its goals in international politics, then foreign policy is the collection of means and ends with which a state pursues its goals with respect to a given other state.[1] Foreign policy does not therefore simply refer to the day-to-day conduct of a nation's diplomats, and is not the sole preserve of the governmental institution tasked with conducting bilateral diplomacy (for example, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office or the US State Department). The definition of foreign policy used throughout this book includes a state's goals with respect to other states, the strategies it uses to pursue them, and the resources it dedicates to pursuing them. Importantly, foreign policy is dyadic, because a state may have very different foreign policies toward different other states. Thus, a state has a foreign policy toward a particular other state, rather than having a single foreign policy writ large. Nuclear weapons, for example, may affect China's foreign policy toward Pakistan differently from how they affect China's relationship with the United States.

The theory I offer argues that the acquisition of nuclear weapons can facilitate (that is, reduce the expected costs of) a range of foreign policy behaviors. In particular, I focus on six foreign policy behaviors that nuclear weapons can facilitate: independence, bolstering, aggression, expansion, steadfastness, and compromise. However, not all states use nuclear weapons to facilitate all of these behaviors. The crux of the theory is that different states find different combinations of these behaviors attractive depending on the strategic circumstances in which the state finds itself. In particular, the nature of the threats the state faces, its position within its alliances, and whether it is increasing or decreasing in relative power all affect which

combinations of these behaviors the acquiring state finds attractive, and therefore which foreign policy behaviors the state will use nuclear weapons to facilitate. States incorporate nuclear weapons into the calculations they make about what they can achieve (and what they can get away with) in international politics, and direct nuclear weapons to purposes that the state considers useful. Nuclear weapons, in this view, are useful to the states that possess them, but they are not silver bullets that grant states free rein in international politics. I label my theory, and the view of nuclear weapons it implies, as "nuclear opportunism." The theory emphasizes that states seek to use their nuclear weapons to improve their position in international politics and that the circumstances in which a state finds itself determine the way in which it will use its nuclear weapons to do so.

This view of nuclear weapons is in contrast to the theory of the nuclear revolution. The theory of the nuclear revolution predicts that by resolving a state's fundamental security needs, nuclear weapons mean states have less need to compete and thus transform the nature of international politics. However, the political goals and concerns that states have do not end even if their security has been guaranteed. States have a wide range of political goals and those goals vary from state to state. Nuclear weapons may improve a state's security, but in doing so, they grant states greater freedom to pursue their goals in international politics rather than tamping down their ambitions. Nuclear weapons do not transform the preferences that states have, but grant them greater freedom to pursue their preexisting political goals.

Why Do Nuclear Weapons Affect Foreign Policy?

Why is it that nuclear weapons may affect the calculations of the states that acquire them? Nuclear weapons can affect states' calculations about foreign policy through a range of mechanisms. Some of these mechanisms reflect strategic responses to the military capabilities that nuclear weapons provide the state, while others are less rooted in rational-strategic calculations at the level of the state and reflect individual- or group-level responses to nuclear acquisition.

First, there are *direct military* mechanisms by which nuclear weapons affect calculations about foreign policy. For example, using nuclear weapons militarily to achieve a certain level of destruction may be cheaper or easier than using conventional military means to achieve the same level of military destruction: the destructive capabilities that nuclear weapons offer are unique among military technologies. Thomas Schelling was correct to say that "against defenseless people there is not much that nuclear weapons can do that cannot be done with an ice pick," but the significance of nuclear weapons in international politics is not *what* they can achieve but the speed and efficiency with which they can achieve it.[2] For example, the United States

was able to destroy Hiroshima and Nagasaki far more easily with nuclear weapons than it would have been able to with conventional ordnance. Single nuclear weapons destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki; achieving the same results with conventional weapons would have required hundreds of bombs and planes. Of course, there are many military missions that nuclear weapons are poorly suited for, but nuclear weapons make large-scale and indiscriminate destruction easier to achieve.

Most states do not plan to use their nuclear weapons in a direct military sense, however. The second way in which nuclear weapons affect calculations about foreign policy is through *political* mechanisms. Nuclear weapons affect the calculations of states with which the nuclear state is interacting in its foreign policy. Nuclear weapons grant states an ability to escalate (or threaten to escalate) a conflict or crisis to the nuclear level. This raises the expected costs of escalation for adversaries, because nuclear use may impose costs on their territory, population, or military capabilities beyond those that can be imposed using conventional forces. The expected cost for the nuclear-armed state of engaging in foreign policy behaviors that may trigger escalatory responses is therefore reduced, because it is harder for adversaries to escalate in response. The same logic applies even in situations in which the threat of nuclear use is not credible, because nuclear weapons may nonetheless make a state better able to outbid adversaries in a competition in risk taking. As Schelling argues, states can exert coercive pressure on each other by making "threats that leave something to chance" even if deliberate nuclear use is not credible.[3] Every act of escalation is therefore costlier (in expectation) against a nuclear-armed state than it would be if the state did not have nuclear weapons. For the nuclear-armed state, therefore, foreign policy behaviors that raise the risk of escalatory responses may have their expected costs reduced by nuclear possession because nuclear weapons make it harder for adversaries to escalate.

Similarly, nuclear weapons may reduce the cost of certain foreign policy behaviors by affecting the calculations of actors not directly involved in the particular dyadic foreign policy interaction. For example, nuclear weapons may deter diplomatic or military interventions by hostile third parties, or encourage similar interventions by friendly third parties.[4] In this case, nuclear weapons may not affect the calculations of the state with which the nuclear state is interacting in a given foreign policy, but nonetheless affect the costs associated with that foreign policy by influencing the calculations of other states. For example, as I discuss in chapter 3, South Africa's nuclear weapons allowed it to reduce the risk of Soviet intervention in Angola, thus facilitating greater South African aggression in the ongoing war in Angola.

Third, there are *efficiency* mechanisms by which nuclear weapons may affect foreign policy costs by freeing up resources or rendering the nuclear-armed state less reliant on others. By reducing the costs of certain foreign policy behaviors, nuclear weapons may free up resources to engage in other

foreign policy behaviors that the state would not otherwise be able to afford. Thus, even if the expected costs of these behaviors are not directly affected by nuclear weapons themselves, they may nonetheless be facilitated by nuclear acquisition. Similarly, the capabilities offered by nuclear weapons may mean that the need to secure external political or military support from a third party is less pressing, increasing the state's self-reliance and reducing the costs of foreign policy behaviors that risk jeopardizing support from allies. For example, as I discuss in chapter 2, nuclear weapons allowed Britain to act more independently of the United States.

Fourth, there are *bureaucratic* and *domestic political* mechanisms by which nuclear weapons affect foreign policy. Programs to acquire nuclear weapons are large, resource-intensive efforts that require buy-in from coalitions of scientists, bureaucrats, political leaders, and legislators.[5] For individuals and institutions that made the argument that nuclear acquisition would benefit the state and that invested political resources into the acquisition of nuclear weapons, there may be strong incentives to demonstrate that those benefits have in fact been achieved. Nuclear weapons may tempt nuclear advocates within the government to pursue certain foreign policies (or reduce the obstacles preventing such policies being pursued) precisely to demonstrate the utility of nuclear weapons. For example, it was the Pakistani military that both controlled Pakistan's nuclear program and then planned and advocated for the nuclear-enabled adventurism of the 1999 Kargil War on the basis that Pakistani nuclear weapons would inhibit any Indian response.[6]

Fifth, there are a range of *psychological* and *identity-based* mechanisms by which nuclear weapons affect international politics.[7] Relative to other weapons, nuclear weapons are imbued with unusual symbolism, mythology, and significance for those who acquire them. Similarly, nuclear weapons have often been viewed as powerful symbols of technological progress and prestige by those who have sought them. For example, as British prime minister Winston Churchill's scientific adviser told him, "It is surely vital, unless we are to become a second-class nation armed with inferior weapons, that we should be in a position to make our own bombs."[8] Indeed, the very fact that nuclear weapons are commonly classified as distinct from "conventional" weapons is indicative of their unusual status. Given that states care deeply about prestige, status, and self-identity, nuclear weapons may also affect foreign policy by changing how states and leaders conceive of themselves, what they are capable of, and their state's role in international politics.

Sixth, these mechanisms are all magnified by the *selection effects* involved in which states acquire nuclear weapons.[9] Many of the mechanisms described above could work in multiple directions; for example, there are plenty of normative or identity-based mechanisms that would constrain nuclear weapons from having a substantial effect on a state's foreign policy.[10] However, the states that ultimately acquire nuclear weapons are not a ran-

dom selection of states. The states that are willing to bear the financial, diplomatic, and other costs associated with pursuing and acquiring nuclear weapons are likely to be those whose foreign policy calculations will be most affected by having them: nuclear acquisition is likely to be most attractive to those that will benefit most from nuclear acquisition. Similarly, those that acquire nuclear weapons are likely to be those that are most susceptible to the bureaucratic or identity-based mechanisms. For example, as Jacques Hymans argues, leaders who seek nuclear weapons tend to be those whose calculations about foreign policy will be most influenced by nuclear weapons: those who "develop a desire for nuclear weapons that goes beyond calculation, to self-expression."[11]

How Can Nuclear Weapons Affect Foreign Policy?

Nuclear weapons can therefore affect a state's calculations about foreign policy through a range of different mechanisms. But what foreign policy behaviors do nuclear weapons facilitate? This section distinguishes among six distinct foreign policy behaviors that nuclear weapons can facilitate: aggression, expansion, independence, bolstering, steadfastness, and compromise. Some of these effects have previously been conflated under the catch-all term "emboldenment," while others are not typically thought of as emboldening effects. I show why nuclear weapons may facilitate each of these behaviors. This does not imply that nuclear weapons make any particular behavior easy: nuclear weapons do not grant states free rein in international politics, and many foreign policy behaviors will be costly both before and after nuclear acquisition. Similarly, I do not assume that the expected costs of engaging in each of these behaviors will *always* be reduced by nuclear acquisition. Nonetheless, nuclear weapons *can* facilitate each of these behaviors.[12]

AGGRESSION

Nuclear weapons may facilitate aggression. Aggression is defined as more belligerent pursuit of goals in preexisting disputes or in pursuit of previously defined interests.

Nuclear weapons can facilitate aggression through any of the mechanisms discussed above. Nuclear weapons may reduce the expected cost of aggression because a state may use nuclear weapons directly to engage in military operations that would be more costly to undertake with conventional forces (the military mechanism). Nuclear weapons may also facilitate aggression because nuclear weapons raise the risk of escalation for the state's opponents, which must reckon with both the conventional forces the state previously possessed and its nuclear capabilities (the political mechanism). This should make it harder for states to respond to the escalation of the nuclear-armed

state, which should therefore find it easier to escalate its efforts to revise the status quo. Similarly, nuclear weapons may deter third parties from intervening to prevent the aggression of the nuclear-armed state. Nuclear weapons may facilitate aggression because they can free up resources previously dedicated to other military contingencies, allowing a state to concentrate additional resources in revising a particular element of the status quo (the efficiency mechanism). And nuclear weapons may facilitate aggression because they alter individual leaders' assessments of what their country is capable of, or because bureaucratic institutions that advocated for nuclear acquisition face incentives to demonstrate that nuclear weapons allow the state to achieve long-held revisionist goals (the identity-based or bureaucratic mechanisms). Through all of these mechanisms, nuclear weapons can make opportunities to escalate a conflict or attempts to revise the status quo more attractive than they would have been before nuclear acquisition.

Aggression may be identified by a range of behaviors, including (a) the issuance of new or more demanding compellent threats in an ongoing dispute; (b) the dedication of larger conventional forces to missions associated with a particular dispute; (c) more belligerent rhetoric being used by government officials and political leaders toward a particular country; (d) the vertical escalation of a dispute through the use of new tactics, forces, military doctrines, or technologies; and (e) a greater tolerance for escalation and risk-taking behavior in an existing dispute.

As I discuss in chapter 5, Pakistan provides perhaps the clearest example of a state using nuclear weapons to facilitate aggression. Scholars largely agree that nuclear weapons have acted as a shield behind which Pakistan has been able to pursue more aggressively its foreign policy goals in Kashmir and against India more broadly, most notably during the 1999 Kargil War and in the use of subconventional attacks against Indian cities.[13] For example, C. Christine Fair argues that nuclear weapons "increase the cost of Indian action" against Pakistan, which facilitates "risk-seeking behavior as part of [Pakistan's] effort to change the status quo."[14] South Africa also provides an example of a state using nuclear weapons to facilitate aggression. As I discuss in chapter 3, fears regarding escalation placed substantial constraints on South African behavior in the frontline states (and particularly in Angola) before nuclear acquisition. South Africa acquired nuclear weapons to provide an additional tool with which to control escalation and thus reduced the risks associated with aggression. As a result, South African tolerance for escalation in the Border Wars increased significantly once South Africa had acquired nuclear weapons, and South Africa became comfortable engaging in operations that had previously been considered too risky. To take another example, had Iraq succeeded in acquiring nuclear weapons, documentary evidence suggests that Saddam Hussein had at least considered using nuclear weapons to facilitate conventional aggression against Israel.[15]

EXPANSION

Nuclear weapons can reduce the costs of expansion. While some scholars use the term "expansion" as more or less synonymous with "aggression,"[16] I distinguish between the two. Expansion is defined as the *widening* of a state's interests and ambitions in international politics, rather than the more aggressive pursuit of existing interests.

As with aggression, nuclear weapons may reduce the costs associated with expansion through many of the mechanisms discussed above. First, through the efficiency mechanism: nuclear weapons may allow states to free up conventional military resources that had previously been dedicated to certain tasks that the state can now accomplish with nuclear weapons or by relying on nuclear deterrence. These freed-up forces can be redeployed in pursuit of new interests at lower risk than would have been possible without nuclear weapons. In addition, nuclear weapons may lower the costs associated with taking on new allies by making other states less willing to escalate conflicts against those allies now that they have a nuclear-armed patron, or by increasing the risks associated with resisting a state expanding its interests (the political mechanisms). And nuclear weapons may facilitate expansion by altering individual leaders' assessments of their country's appropriate role in the world, or because bureaucratic institutions that advocated for nuclear acquisition face incentives to demonstrate that nuclear weapons allow the state to rethink and expand its ambitions and status in the world (the identity-based or bureaucratic mechanisms).

Distinguishing expansion from aggression is not always easy, because states have incentives to claim that the pursuit of new interests or the initiation of new alliances or rivalries is consistent with long-standing interests or goals.[17] Nonetheless, actions indicative of expansion may include a state (a) broadening its declared interests in world politics; (b) forming alliances with, or offering extended deterrence to, new states; (c) developing greater power projection capabilities; (d) providing support for insurgents, proxies, or rebel groups in new countries; (e) participating in disputes with states with which the state has no previous history of conflict; and (f) taking a more active role in multilateral or international institutions.

The United States provides an example of a state that was able to expand its interests in world politics in the aftermath of acquiring nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons played a key role in the US Cold War strategy to contain the Soviet Union, facilitated a semi-permanent military presence in Europe, allowed the United States to extend nuclear deterrence to a range of new allies, and thus permitted the United States to pursue a more expansive grand strategy than it had previously considered in its history.[18] Similarly, after acquiring nuclear weapons, the Soviet Union sought to expand its interests in Asia. The Soviet Union reversed its previously cautious attitude toward the Chinese revolution, signing an alliance treaty with the People's Republic of

China (PRC) that included a commitment to assist China "by all means at its disposal," a phrase that deliberately invoked the use of nuclear weapons.[19] More dramatically, Joseph Stalin authorized the transfer of substantial military capabilities to the North Korean army and ultimately approved Kim Il Sung's attack on South Korea. More broadly, and consistent with the idea that states expand their interests after nuclear acquisition, quantitative research suggests that states possessing nuclear weapons are on average more likely to initiate military disputes with countries with whom they have no history of conflict.[20]

INDEPENDENCE

Nuclear weapons may reduce the costs associated with a state acting independently of allies. Independence is defined as taking actions that an ally either opposes or does not support the state taking.

How might nuclear weapons facilitate independence? Most obviously, through the efficiency mechanism of increasing the state's self-reliance. By providing an internal source of military power that the state previously lacked, nuclear weapons reduce a state's need to rely on external sources of military power—that is, alliances.[21] The alliance therefore becomes somewhat less valuable than it previously was.[22] As a result, the costs of acting independently of the ally, or in ways contrary to the wishes of the ally, are reduced because the ally's support is no longer required to the degree it was before nuclear acquisition. Because states with nuclear weapons have less need for an ally's protection, they should be less inclined to compromise their own goals in exchange for protection. However, nuclear weapons may also facilitate independence via the bureaucratic or identity-based mechanisms if the desire for independence was a core driver of nuclear acquisition in the eyes of the individuals and institutions that advocated for nuclear weapons.

Importantly, independence may be observed in the state's relationship with the ally from which the state is increasingly independent. However, independence may also be observed in the state's relationship with other states. Independence may go hand in hand with other behaviors identified by the typology when those other behaviors are at least partially constrained by the preferences of an ally. For example, nuclear acquisition may facilitate aggression either via the mechanisms identified above or because a state previously refrained from aggression for fear of invoking the displeasure of an ally.

Actions indicating an increased independence from an ally may include (a) an increased willingness to criticize an ally, (b) an increased willingness to cooperate with an adversary of an ally, (c) an increased willingness to take actions opposed by the ally, (d) a reduced inclination to inform an ally in advance of taking particular action, (e) an increased willingness to take military actions in the absence of support from an ally, and (f) withdrawing from an alliance.

France provides an example of a state using nuclear weapons to facilitate independence. As I discuss in chapter 5, France obtained nuclear weapons partly to reduce its dependence on the United States for its security. Upon acquiring a deliverable capability in 1964, France became more comfortable acting independently of the United States—for example, in criticizing the Bretton Woods monetary system, in pursuing détente with the Soviet Union, in recognizing China, and, most notably, by withdrawing from the command structure of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).[23] Similarly, observers have argued that North Korean nuclear weapons have allowed Pyongyang to defy its Chinese patron at lower risk. Jonathan Pollack argues that "the desire to be answerable to no external power" was a key driver of the North Korean nuclear program, and that "North Korean leaders have concluded that its nascent nuclear weapons capabilities . . . inhibit the Chinese," both in terms of controlling North Korean behavior and in limiting its ability to jettison its ties with Pyongyang despite Chinese leaders becoming "increasingly perturbed" by North Korean behavior.[24] In chapter 2, I argue that Britain became more willing to respond to challenges to its position in the Middle East independently of the United States after acquiring nuclear weapons. Before Britain had acquired a usable nuclear capability, British responses to challenges to its position in the Middle East were characterized by dependence on the United States and a reliance on US military and diplomatic support. In the aftermath of nuclear acquisition, Britain became considerably more willing to use force unilaterally to restore or protect the status quo, including in cases where the United States either opposed or did not actively support British action.

BOLSTERING

Nuclear weapons may reduce the costs associated with bolstering. Bolstering is defined as taking actions to increase the strength of an existing alliance or alliance partner.[25] Thus, while independence involves using nuclear weapons as a substitute for an alliance, bolstering involves using nuclear weapons to augment an alliance.

Nuclear weapons can facilitate or reduce the costs associated with bolstering through several of the mechanisms identified above. First, through political mechanisms: nuclear weapons may offer a lower-cost way to defend an alliance partner by making hostile third parties less inclined to challenge the alliance partner. Similarly, nuclear-armed states possess a range of nuclear technologies that they can choose to offer to an ally—increasing the ally's strength (and capacity to acquire nuclear weapons of its own) in a way that is less costly than making an equivalent conventional commitment. For example, a state can transfer sensitive nuclear technologies to an ally as a way of strengthening it.[26] Second, by using nuclear weapons to accomplish tasks for which the state had previously relied on conventional forces, nuclear

weapons may free up financial or conventional military resources that a state can use to take on deeper alliance commitments (the efficiency mechanism). Third, nuclear weapons could facilitate bolstering via the bureaucratic or identity-based mechanisms if the desire to maintain or enhance the credibility of a state's alliances was a key reason to acquire nuclear weapons for the leaders and institutions that advocated for nuclear weapons. Actions indicating bolstering may include a state (a) offering a firmer defense commitment than had previously been offered to an ally, (b) stationing forces or weapons systems on the territory of the ally, (c) institutionalizing or formalizing a previously informal cooperative relationship, and (d) providing additional resources to the state (including nuclear technologies).

A range of states have used nuclear weapons to bolster their allies. For example, China provided Pakistan with enough highly enriched uranium (HEU) to build several nuclear weapons, along with a nuclear weapon design, in order to bolster Pakistan against their common adversary, India.[27] Indeed, research suggests that sensitive nuclear assistance is often undertaken to bolster friends against common enemies.[28] Britain also provides an example of a state that used nuclear weapons to bolster its alliances. As discussed in chapter 2, upon acquiring a deliverable capability in 1955, Britain used its nuclear weapons to make commitments to allies in the Middle East, Asia, and Europe that it was increasingly unable to make credible with declining conventional forces.

STEADFASTNESS

Nuclear weapons may reduce the costs associated with steadfastness. Steadfastness is defined as a reduced inclination to back down in disputes or in response to coercion, and an increased willingness to fight to defend the status quo.

As with aggression, nuclear weapons can reduce the cost of this behavior through a range of mechanisms. Nuclear weapons facilitate steadfastness because they raise the risk of escalation for the state's opponents, which must reckon with both the conventional forces the state previously possessed and its nuclear capabilities (the political mechanism). Because other states find it harder to escalate against the nuclear-armed state, it should be easier for the nuclear-armed state to stand firm in defense of the status quo. Similarly, nuclear weapons may also deter potentially hostile third parties from joining in an attack against the nuclear-armed state, making it easier to stand up to threats it does face. Nuclear weapons may facilitate steadfastness because they may free up resources previously dedicated to other contingencies, allowing a state to concentrate additional resources in defending the status quo (the efficiency mechanism). And they may facilitate steadfastness via the bureaucratic or identity-based mechanisms as those individuals and institutions that advocated for nuclear weapons feel stronger as a result of acquiring nu-

clear weapons or feel compelled to demonstrate that they no longer have to acquiesce to the demands of other states. Through all of these mechanisms, nuclear weapons can allow states to stand more firmly in defense of the status quo. Actions indicating steadfastness may include a state (a) issuing more explicit deterrent threats to opponents, (b) more quickly mobilizing forces in response to aggression, (c) using more belligerent rhetoric during disputes and crises, and (d) responding to military provocations at higher rates.

Pakistan provides an example of a state that has used nuclear weapons to stand firmer in defense of the status quo. For example, Pakistani elites viewed the various India-Pakistan crises of the 1980s as "validat[ing] Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's decision to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. . . . [A] nuclear capability ensures defense against physical external aggression and coercion from adversaries, and deters infringement of national sovereignty," as well as providing Pakistan with the ability to draw the United States in to resolve Indo-Pakistani disputes should escalation rise to an intolerable level.[29] Nuclear weapons have thus allowed Pakistan to tolerate higher levels of escalation in disputes with India and to stand more firmly in defense of what it perceived to be the status quo in the face of Indian provocations. To take another example, Britain also used nuclear weapons to facilitate steadfastness. In chapter 2, I argue that after nuclear acquisition Britain responded to challenges to its position in the Middle East more forcefully but without seeking to acquire resources or territory beyond the preexisting status quo.

COMPROMISE

Nuclear weapons may reduce the costs associated with compromise. In contrast to aggression, which is defined as seeking more in preexisting disputes, compromise is defined as accepting less in preexisting disputes.

Nuclear weapons may reduce the cost of compromising in disputes through several of the mechanisms above. First, through political mechanisms: because nuclear weapons raise the costs associated with adversaries challenging the state, nuclear weapons reduce the security risks that the state faces, and thus mean that a state may face lower risks if it makes compromises. For example, if nuclear weapons make conventional aggression against the state less likely, then they also reduce the value of strategic depth and therefore reduce the value of holding territory. The risks associated with making territorial compromises are therefore lower. Nuclear weapons may also facilitate compromise through the efficiency mechanism: nuclear weapons may free up military or financial resources that a state can use to directly mitigate the security risks—and thus reduce the costs—associated with making compromises. It is possible, though perhaps less likely, that nuclear weapons could also facilitate compromise via the bureaucratic or identity-based mechanisms if the desire to make compromises was an important rationale for nuclear acquisition in the eyes of the individuals and institutions

that advocated for nuclear weapons. Compromise may be identified by a range of behaviors, including (a) the dedication of fewer or less offensively postured conventional forces to missions associated with a particular dispute, (b) less belligerent rhetoric being used by government officials and political leaders toward a particular country, (c) the initiation of negotiations or issuance of less onerous demands in a given dispute, and (d) the settling of territorial disputes through negotiation.

I argue below that we should not expect states to use nuclear weapons to facilitate compromise. And, indeed, it is unclear whether any state has ever behaved in this way in response to nuclear acquisition. One possible case is that Soviet "New Thinking," and the associated withdrawal from Eastern Europe, Afghanistan, and Africa, was the result of a belated recognition of the reduced benefits of controlling territory in the nuclear age. However, the role of nuclear weapons in this case is contested, and even advocates of this view acknowledge a wide range of other factors played into Soviet thinking.[30] However, regardless of whether states have responded to nuclear acquisition in this way, scholars have frequently argued that states *should* behave in this way. For example, Shai Feldman argues that Israel should respond to nuclear acquisition by being more willing to make territorial compromises with its neighbors.[31]

Nuclear Opportunism and the Primacy of Politics

When will states use nuclear weapons to facilitate different combinations of these behaviors? Why do some states use nuclear weapons to facilitate aggression, while others use them to bolster their allies or act more independently of allies?

I argue that states exist in different strategic circumstances and therefore have different political priorities. These different priorities lead states to use nuclear weapons to facilitate different foreign policy behaviors after acquisition. For example, some states may use nuclear acquisition to facilitate aggression, while others may use nuclear weapons to bolster allies. I label this theory, and the view of nuclear weapons that it implies, as "nuclear opportunism." According to the theory, states use nuclear weapons in an opportunistic way to improve their position in international politics and to help them achieve political goals that the state cares about. Nuclear weapons, according to the theory, do not transform international politics or necessarily ameliorate security competition among states. Nor do they grant states free rein in international politics. Instead, nuclear weapons are incorporated into the practice of international politics and used by states to help pursue their political goals.

The theory is structured as a decision tree of three simple variables that describe the state's position in the international system and thus shed light on its political priorities.[32] The first variable is the existence of serious ter-

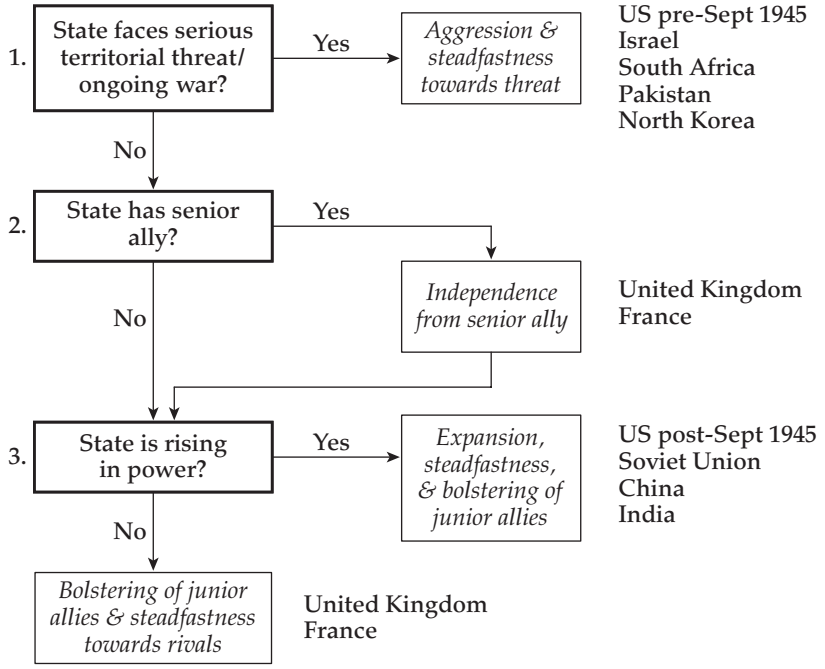

Figure 1.1. The theory of nuclear opportunism and empirical predictions

ritorial threats or an ongoing war, the second is the existence of a senior ally that provides for the state's security, and the third is whether a state is increasing or decreasing in relative power.[33]

Figure 1.1 shows the structure of the theory and the predictions made in each historical case of nuclear acquisition. Because of the structure of the theory, some states appear twice—for example, the theory predicts that the United Kingdom would use nuclear weapons to facilitate independence from its senior ally (the United States), as well as bolstering of its junior allies and steadfastness in response to threats.

VARIABLE 1: SERIOUS TERRITORIAL THREAT OR ONGOING WAR

The first variable in the sequence is whether the state faces a serious territorial threat or is engaged in an ongoing war. States in such a precarious security environment enjoy little room for maneuver. Improving their position against the source of threat or in the war they are fighting is their political priority, and such states will therefore direct their nuclear weapons to foreign policies that serve that purpose.

For states in such a precarious environment, many of the six foreign policy behaviors are relatively unattractive. For example, pursuing independence

from allies is unattractive because states in dire security environments are eager to accept assistance from other states and do not wish to jeopardize their relationships with allies that may be able to help improve their security. Similarly, expansion and bolstering are generally less attractive because a state facing such threats has little latitude to engage in these behaviors. States facing serious threats do not typically seek to widen their interests in international politics or shore up the security of other states, because improving their own security must take priority.

While expansion, independence, and bolstering are less attractive, aggression and steadfastness are more attractive. States facing serious threats would generally like to more easily hold on to what they have against the threats they face, would like to take territory or other resources away from the source of threat (or be able to more credibly threaten to do so), and would like to be able to tolerate higher levels of escalation in crises. For such states, aggression and steadfastness toward the source of threat are, therefore, more attractive than the other foreign policy behaviors. Because such states find these behaviors attractive, states in this position are therefore likely to use nuclear weapons to facilitate aggression and steadfastness after nuclear acquisition, allowing them to both stand more firmly in defense of the status quo when challenged and push harder in pursuit of preexisting goals.

As shown in figure 1.2, this leads to the first prediction of the theory of nuclear opportunism: states facing severe territorial threats or involved in an ongoing war are likely to use nuclear weapons to facilitate both aggression and steadfastness against the source of the threat.[34] For example, Pakistan, facing a serious territorial threat from India, would be expected to use nuclear weapons both to pursue its offensive goals against India more belligerently (aggression) and to stand more firmly in defense of the status quo when challenged (steadfastness).

Identifying whether a state faces threats of this sort is straightforward. The threats that a state faces can be directly observed, although elite perceptions of the threat may sometimes deviate from the objective reality. This variable has several components.[35] First, the threat must be proximate—that is, it must either be on a state's borders or be able to threaten a state's borders in short order. Threats that are geographically distant, or that must pass over inhospitable terrain, do not count as severe territorial threats.[36] Second, the threat must have sufficient conventional military power (or the potential to raise such military power in short order) and a sufficiently favorable mili-

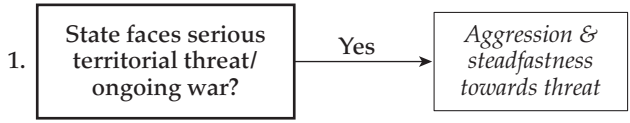

Figure 1.2. Predictions for states facing serious territorial threats or engaged in war

tary balance to threaten a substantial portion of the state's territory (that is, the threat must be able to project power offensively). Third, the threat must be perceived to have aggressive intentions. A state cannot be defined as facing a severe territorial threat if it does not feel threatened. All three of these criteria must be met for a state to face a severe territorial threat. Similarly, observing whether a state is involved in an ongoing war is straightforward.

It is worth noting that the nuclear status of the source of threat does not affect the predictions. If a state faces serious territorial threats or is involved in an ongoing war, then nuclear acquisition facilitates steadfastness and aggression *regardless* of the nuclear status of the opponent.[37] Whether or not the source of the threat possesses nuclear weapons, nuclear acquisition raises the level of escalation that the state is willing to tolerate (either in defense of the status quo or in pursuit of revisionist goals). For example, Pakistan would find improving its ability to engage in aggression and steadfastness toward India attractive, and would find that nuclear weapons facilitated those behaviors, regardless of whether India possessed nuclear weapons. In short, when facing a severe territorial threat, having nuclear weapons facilitates aggression and steadfastness, whether or not the state posing the threat itself has nuclear weapons.

VARIABLE 2: PRESENCE OF A SENIOR ALLY

States not facing serious territorial threats or engaged in an ongoing war continue down the decision tree in figure 1.1. Given the absence of severe threats or an ongoing war, the security environment faced by such states is less constricting. The second and third variables help explain how states in more permissive security environments change their foreign policies after nuclear acquisition.

The second variable in the sequence is whether the state acquiring nuclear weapons has a senior alliance partner that helps provide for the state's defense. States that reach this variable in the decision tree do not face severe threats, but states whose security is partly provided for by a senior ally are constrained if they wish to engage in behaviors that the senior ally opposes or does not support. Because the senior alliance partner plays a role in providing for the security of the junior state, the junior state must be cautious of acting in ways that may displease the senior state.[38] The support of an ally is always at least somewhat suspect, and so few states can act contrary to the interests of the senior alliance partner without at least worrying about potential reductions in support.[39] Such concerns impose constraints on the behavior of the junior partner.

The constraints imposed by dependence on a senior ally mean that states in this position are likely to be eager to increase their ability to act independently of their senior ally. As Avery Goldstein argues, "Those able to become more self-reliant often make the costly effort [to do so]. . . . Deference to a

security patron is likely to be politically unattractive for the leaders of sovereign states."[40] Because these states find independence to be an attractive behavior, we should therefore expect that states in this position would use nuclear weapons to facilitate independence after acquisition. When such states acquire nuclear weapons, we should therefore expect to see them having fewer compunctions about criticizing or failing to support their senior ally, acting in ways contrary to the ally's interests, defying their senior ally, or even withdrawing from the alliance altogether.

As shown in figure 1.3, this leads to the second prediction of the theory of nuclear opportunism: states that do not face severe territorial threats and are not involved in an ongoing war, but do have a senior ally that provides for their security are likely to use nuclear weapons to facilitate independence from their senior ally. For example, the theory predicts that both Britain and France—which did not face serious territorial threats when they acquired nuclear weapons—would use nuclear weapons to become more independent from their senior ally, the United States.

Identifying whether states have allies of this sort is straightforward. Many alliances are formalized in treaties and even those that are not are typically accompanied by resource flows and diplomatic support. Identifying which party is the senior ally in the alliance is also normally straightforward. Typically, the senior state in the alliance will be the more militarily powerful state and the one contributing resources and commitments to the other state, and will be recognized as such by both partners in the alliance.[41]

VARIABLE 3: POWER TRAJECTORY

Regardless of whether a state has a senior ally that provides for its security (that is, regardless of the value that the second variable takes), states that neither face serious territorial threats on their borders nor are involved in an

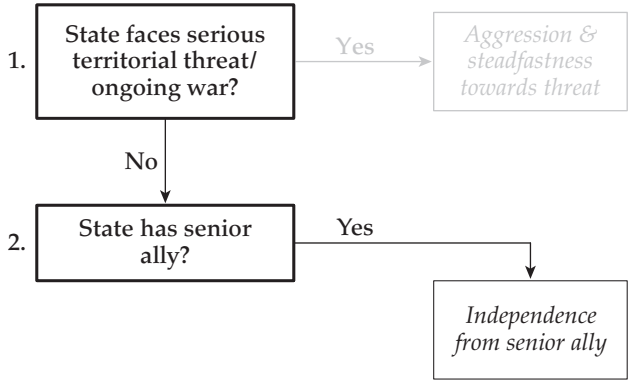

Figure 1.3. Predictions for states not facing serious threats but with senior allies

ongoing war continue down the decision tree to the third variable. This variable conditions the additional benefits they seek to gain from their nuclear weapons, and measures how a state's power position is changing over time.

Scholars have long recognized that states that are rising in power often look to expand their influence in international politics. For example, Fareed Zakaria states that "nations try to expand their political interests abroad when central decision-makers perceive a relative increase in state power," while Robert Jervis argues that "states' definition of their interests tend to expand as their power does."[42] Such states are therefore likely to find expansion attractive, and will use nuclear weapons to facilitate this behavior. For example, such states may widen their interests in international politics, initiate new rivalries, or take on new alliance commitments. Similarly, using nuclear weapons to bolster the state's existing allies and increase the power of the state's alliance networks is also likely to be attractive, as the state seeks to widen its influence. Finally, such states find steadfastness attractive—even rising states will continue to seek to safeguard what they already have.

Aggression is likely to be less attractive than expansion for states in this position. First, the threats that such states face are by definition not so immediate that they require the state's full attention (if they were, such states would have been defined as facing severe threats at the first stage of the decision tree). Rising states can afford to be patient in dealing with such threats because time is on their side: because they are increasing in power, any existing threats or rivalries will become easier to deal with over time. Second, rising states need to be careful as they increase their power not to give potential rivals too much cause to band together to oppose them.[43] Indeed, existing opponents of the state are likely to be particularly sensitive to any effort by the rising state to aggress against it. For rising states, aggression may, therefore, be more trouble than it is worth.

As shown in figure 1.4, this leads to the third prediction of the theory of nuclear opportunism: states that do not face severe territorial threats and are rising in power are likely to use nuclear weapons to facilitate expansion, steadfastness, and bolstering junior allies.

By contrast, what are the predictions for a state that reaches the third variable in the decision tree but is not increasing in relative power? Expansion and aggression are relatively unattractive for such states. Expanding a state's interests and alliances is unwise when a state does not have the ability to support such actions, and trying to acquire more in ongoing disputes is unlikely to be attractive when merely holding on to what the state already has is likely to prove sufficiently challenging as its relative power declines.

Instead, an important political priority for states in this position is to maintain the state's position. Bolstering and steadfastness are therefore attractive foreign policy behaviors. Bolstering the state's alliances is attractive because alliances help the state maintain its position in international politics even as its power declines.[44]

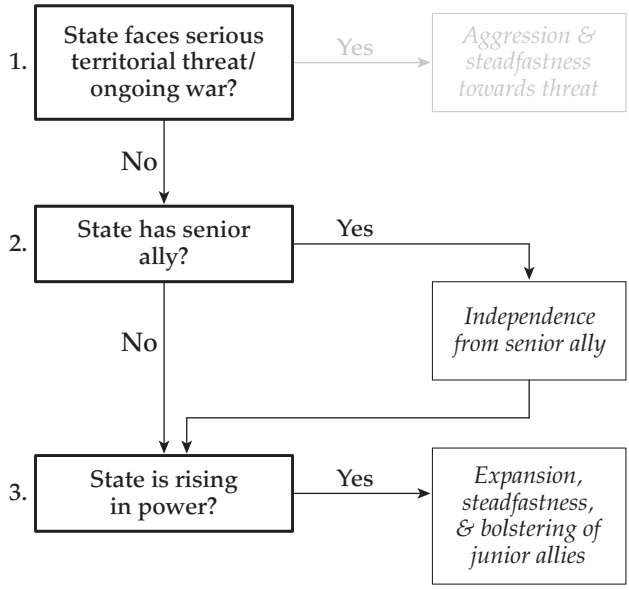

Figure 1.4. Predictions for rising states not facing serious threats

Similarly, steadfastness is attractive for states looking to maintain their position in international politics. Such states are particularly concerned with standing more firmly in defense of the status quo when challenged. Because maintaining the state's position is a priority, being able to stand more firmly in defense of the status quo is attractive, and such states are likely to use nuclear weapons to facilitate steadfastness. Overall, the theory therefore expects that when states not facing severe threats but declining in power acquire nuclear weapons, they will use them to facilitate the bolstering of existing junior allies and steadfastness in defense of the status quo.

As shown in figure 1.5, this leads to the third prediction of the theory of nuclear opportunism: states that do not face severe territorial threats and are declining in power are likely to use nuclear weapons to facilitate bolstering and steadfastness. Identifying whether a state is rising in relative power is reasonably straightforward. For example, the Correlates of War Project's Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) scores provide a measure of a state's share of total global power. One can, for example, examine how the CINC score has changed over the past five years, or take a moving average of a state's CINC score.[45] The variable can also be measured qualitatively by examining the speech evidence and writings of leaders and other elites in the state, because elites may have a strong belief that the state's relative power position is worsening, even if that is not in fact the case.[46]

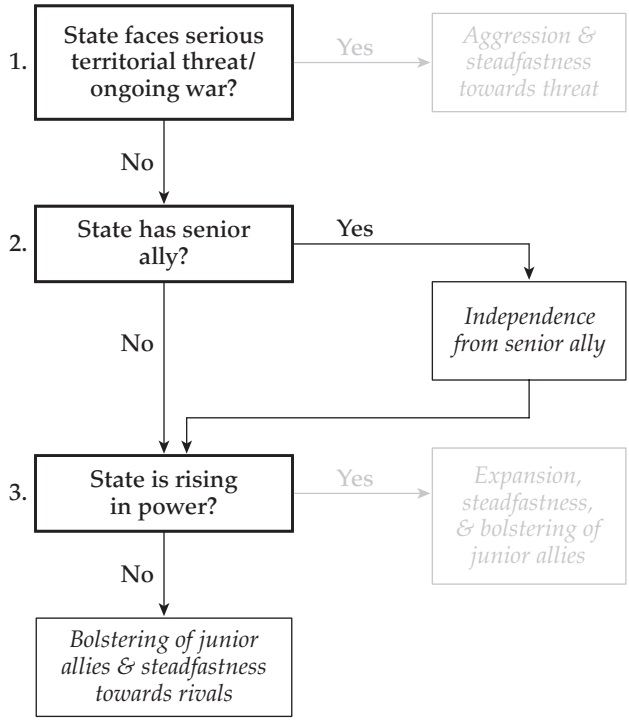

Figure 1.5. Predictions for declining states not facing serious threats

Potential Objections

There are, of course, potential objections to the theory laid out above.

First, it may be argued that while states do respond in this way to nuclear acquisition, these are brief effects that dissipate over time rather than endure. And, indeed, some scholars have argued that states experience brief periods of emboldenment or belligerence when they acquire nuclear weapons that gradually wear off as states come to realize the limited utility of their nuclear weapons.[47] Of course, even if the theory of nuclear opportunism applies to states only in the immediate aftermath of nuclear acquisition, this would still be important given that policymakers are particularly interested in the immediate effects of nuclear acquisition. For example, policymakers are likely to be more concerned about the effect that nuclear weapons would have on Iranian foreign policy immediately after acquiring nuclear weapons than they would be about what Iran might use its nuclear weapons for once it has had them for twenty years. More importantly, however, there are also strong theoretical reasons for thinking that states may only rarely reevaluate the role that nuclear weapons play in their foreign policy and, therefore, that

the effects of nuclear weapons will have a highly path-dependent character, enduring over substantial periods of time. First, scholars often emphasize the importance of civilian oversight in stimulating innovation, but the high level of secrecy that often surrounds nuclear weapons should be expected to hamper this process, making reevaluating the role nuclear weapons play in a state's foreign policy harder.[48] Second, the technical and military bureaucracies that often govern nuclear programs have been shown to be susceptible to assumptions and groupthink that may make such innovation difficult, and, indeed, may build and protect bureaucratic structures that ossify and reinforce particular ways of thinking about the utility of nuclear weapons.[49] Third, narratives about the utility of nuclear weapons may be resistant to change given that nuclear weapons are rarely used directly, meaning policymakers are unlikely to be confronted with unambiguous evidence of the utility or lack of utility of nuclear weapons in pursuing their foreign policy goals.[50] Ultimately, however, whether these effects endure is an empirical question. In the case studies, I therefore examine not only whether states change their behaviors in the way the theory anticipates after they acquire nuclear weapons, but also whether these behaviors, and the ideas about nuclear weapons that underpin them, appear to endure over a longer period of time.

Second, it may be argued that nuclear weapons do not cause the behaviors outlined here, but are rather caused by the same factors that lead states to acquire nuclear weapons in the first place. This is likely true, but it does not undermine the validity of the theory—in fact, it is consistent with, and anticipated by, the theory. According to the theory of nuclear opportunism, it may indeed be that states in particular strategic environments face incentives to engage in particular foreign policy behaviors. This in turn leads them both to acquire nuclear weapons to facilitate those behaviors and to engage in those behaviors when they do so. But if states acquire nuclear weapons to facilitate particular behaviors and then use nuclear weapons to facilitate those behaviors, this would be evidence for rather than against the theory: nuclear weapons would be having a direct effect on the state's ability to achieve its political goals as well as having a direct effect on its foreign policies. Indeed, this would be entirely consistent with the vision of nuclear weapons implied by the theory of nuclear opportunism: as useful tools for pursuing a state's preexisting political priorities.[51]

It is also worth emphasizing that the theory of nuclear opportunism is *not* a theory of nuclear acquisition.[52] The theory of nuclear opportunism specifies what a state is likely to use nuclear weapons to try to accomplish conditional on having made the decision to acquire, and acquired, nuclear weapons. In other words, the theory specifies what benefits a state is likely to seek from its nuclear weapons once the state has already concluded that the benefits of nuclear acquisition outweigh the costs. The theory does not have much to say about why some states will conclude that the benefits of nu-

clear acquisition outweigh the costs, or indeed, what those costs might be, and thus does not make predictions for which states will acquire nuclear weapons. Instead, it seeks to explain why those states that do acquire nuclear weapons behave in particular ways after having done so.

Third, it may be argued that the theory is a significant oversimplification of the complex and probabilistic interactions between a range of international and domestic variables that likely govern a state's response to nuclear acquisition in reality. This is certainly true for at least three reasons. First, by using three simple variables that can be measured prior to a state acquiring nuclear weapons, the theory remains relatively parsimonious. Second, the theory examines only the benefits that nuclear weapons offer states and does not examine the costs that may accompany nuclear acquisition. The process of proliferation can be dangerous for states, and nuclear weapons may also come with disadvantages. For example, Jervis argues that "the possession of nuclear weapons can decrease the state's freedom of action by increasing the suspicion with which it is viewed."[53] Third, the theory is a choice theoretic rather than a game theoretic or strategic one that ignores the actions that other actors can take to try to reduce the benefits that states gain from acquiring nuclear weapons. Naturally, as a result—and as is the case with all theories that aim to simplify a complex world—many potentially important factors are left out. For example, variables relating to civil-military relations, leader psychology, and political ideology and ideas about nuclear weapons, international norms, and regime type are all left out of the theory. This is not to deny that these variables may sometimes matter. For example, as I discuss in chapter 5, the distinctive ideas about nuclear weapons held by Mao Zedong and other Chinese leaders appear to have led to nuclear weapons having a limited effect on Chinese foreign policy.[54] However, any theory must simplify the complexity of the real world. Indeed, and as I discuss further below, if nuclear weapons bring with them serious costs in addition to benefits, or if other states act strategically to take actions that mitigate the benefits a state receives from acquiring nuclear weapons, then this should in fact bias against observing an effect at the point of nuclear acquisition.

Indeed, parsimony has virtues in this context. First, it is clearer whether the behavior of a given state supports or falsifies the theory if the predictions are clear. If a state that does not face serious territorial threats uses nuclear weapons to facilitate aggression, for example, this would clearly count against the theory. If a theory is more complicated, there may be more doubt about whether a given case supports or undermines the theory. Second, a simple theory that uses variables that can be measured prior to nuclear acquisition can be used to predict the effects of nuclear acquisition before it happens. For example, the theory could be used to make predictions about how Iran might behave if it acquired nuclear weapons. Third, given the small number of states to have acquired nuclear weapons, adding additional

variables to the theory quickly leads to the problem of "more inferences than observations."[55] More broadly, theorizing inevitably involves a trade-off between explanatory power and parsimony. One could create a theory that was more parsimonious but that could explain fewer cases, and one could equally create a theory that was more complex but that could account for more cases. The theory here aims to offer a middle ground by being flexible enough to explain a range of state responses to nuclear acquisition but nonetheless sufficiently parsimonious to allow the theory to be tested empirically.

Fourth, it may be argued that the theory ignores the diversity of political preferences that exist across states. For example, revisionist state preferences—emphasized in Kapur's account of how nuclear weapons affect foreign policy—are not included in the theory.[56] I choose to omit this variable because the theory suggests that nuclear acquisition may make revisionism of various sorts more attractive to states. Including revisionist preferences in the theory, then, would be close to using the outcome being explained as one of the factors in the explanation (that is, that revisionist states engage in more revisionist behaviors after acquiring nuclear weapons). Instead, the theory of nuclear opportunism tries to *explain* the type of revisionism that different states may engage in after nuclear acquisition using variables that can be observed and measured independently of that behavior.

Fifth, the theory predicts that states will not use nuclear weapons to facilitate one of the six behaviors in the typology: compromise. The behavior is nonetheless retained within the typology for two reasons. First, nuclear weapons do reduce the cost of this behavior, and the typology would therefore not be exhaustive if it were left out. Second, as discussed below, the idea that states will use nuclear weapons to facilitate compromise is a core prediction of the theory of the nuclear revolution: because nuclear weapons make states more secure, compromise should become less costly and more attractive once a state has nuclear weapons. A complete test of the theory of nuclear opportunism against its competitors therefore requires acknowledging the possibility that states may use nuclear weapons to facilitate compromise.

It is also worth making clear *why* the theory of nuclear opportunism does not predict states will use nuclear weapons to facilitate compromise. The theory suggests that states seek to use nuclear weapons to *better* their position in international politics, and use nuclear weapons as a tool with which to do so. This assumption—that states seek to gain benefits from having nuclear weapons—could be justified by reference to a range of theories of international politics, including classical or offensive realism, as well as theories based on bureaucratic politics or leader psychology. However, because of this assumption, it is unsurprising that the theory predicts that states would not acquire nuclear weapons only to then give up territory or other assets that they had previously wanted. While states may be coerced into compromise or make compromises voluntarily for a range of reasons, the theory of nuclear opportunism suggests that states are unlikely to deliber-

ately use nuclear weapons to facilitate this behavior. Ultimately, however, this is an observable implication of the theory that can be tested against the historical record. Consistent with the theoretical expectations, and as discussed above, there are few (if any) clear cases of states using nuclear weapons to facilitate compromise.

Testing the Theory

How should we best examine the validity of this theory? I test the theory using a series of historical case studies. In each case, the goal is to examine the state's foreign policy in the period immediately before and after the acquisition of the relevant nuclear capability, and to assess whether there are changes in the scale and nature of the state's foreign policies that occur at that point. (Exactly what the relevant nuclear capability is in each case is discussed in more detail below.)

If a state uses nuclear weapons to facilitate a particular behavior, this means that the state engages in a particular foreign policy behavior that it would not engage in if it did not have nuclear weapons, that the state engages in a particular foreign policy behavior to a greater degree than if it did not have nuclear weapons, or that a state uses nuclear weapons rather than other military tools to engage in a particular behavior (for example, using nuclear weapons rather than conventional forces to deter an adversary). In each case, using nuclear weapons to facilitate a particular behavior should lead to observable shifts in the way foreign policy is conducted or implemented at the point of nuclear acquisition: in the behaviors a state engages in, the levels or intensity of the behaviors that a state engages in, or the tools that the state deploys to engage in those behaviors. For example, evidence that a state is using nuclear weapons to facilitate aggression may include the state beginning to engage in operations it was previously deterred from undertaking, engaging in operations against an opponent of a type previously undertaken but doing so more frequently or with greater intensity, or explicitly using nuclear weapons to threaten and coerce an opponent it had previously used conventional weapons to threaten and coerce.

Examining changes in behavior at the point of acquisition is a good way to assess the effects of nuclear weapons because to the extent that other factors that might affect foreign policy behavior do not change over the period of acquisition, we can be more confident that any discontinuity we observe is caused by nuclear weapons rather than some other factor. For example, stable (or extremely slow moving) variables such as political institutions, strategic culture, or the polarity of the international system are unlikely to be able to explain any discontinuity that occurs in a state's foreign policy behavior at the point of nuclear acquisition, because such factors are stable over the period being analyzed.[57] Of course, a downside of examining

changes in behavior only at the point of nuclear acquisition is that it does not allow us to assess how the effects of nuclear weapons change over time. For this reason, while I focus the case studies on the period immediately before and after nuclear acquisition, I also examine whether the changes in behavior I identify and the ideas about nuclear weapons that underpin them appear to endure over time.

Adopting a historical approach offers additional methodological advantages. First, it allows us to incorporate evidence from the discussions and writings of elites to increase our confidence that it is indeed nuclear weapons that are causing any change in behavior we observe at the point of nuclear acquisition. For example, suppose that a country's elites repeatedly state prior to acquiring nuclear weapons that they wish to gain nuclear weapons in order to allow them greater independence from a patron, and we then observe them behaving more independently of that patron after acquiring nuclear weapons. If we observe this, it is more reasonable to attribute that change in behavior to nuclear acquisition than if we had simply observed the behavior change but did not observe the crucial historical evidence about the beliefs of political elites. Because the way in which leaders think about nuclear weapons represents an important observable implication of the theory of nuclear opportunism, a qualitative approach that allows that evidence to be incorporated provides substantial advantages. Second, the outcomes of interest—the various foreign policy behaviors identified above—are not easily adapted from existing large-*n* datasets. For example, whether a state pursues additional goals in an existing dispute (aggression) may not be fully captured by a change in the number of militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) or interstate crises (for example, the International Crisis Behavior dataset). While such existing datasets may offer insights into the foreign policy behaviors of states, they are insufficient on their own and do not allow us to test many of the observable implications of the theory of nuclear opportunism.[58]

Indeed, there are several reasons to think that this approach might *underestimate* the true effects of nuclear weapons. First, the fact that the theory largely ignores strategic interaction may lead us to underestimate the effects of nuclear weapons. If states anticipate nuclear acquisition by another state, for example, they may take actions that minimize any benefits that nuclear acquisition has for the acquiring state. For example, adversaries may build up their conventional forces or alter their military doctrines to undercut the benefits of nuclear acquisition for the acquiring state.[59] If so, such efforts by others will likely make it harder to observe the effects of nuclear weapons at the point of acquisition. Second, states may begin to receive some political benefits from their possession of nuclear technologies prior to the point of nuclear acquisition. For example, states may be able to use so-called nuclear latency to extract diplomatic concessions or support from other states.[60] Third, states may rationally and strategically seek to avoid taking full ad-

vantage of their nuclear weapons after acquiring them. States may be concerned about provoking reactive proliferation or provoking a balancing coalition forming against them.[61] Again, this would reduce the likelihood of seeing a substantial change in foreign policy behavior at the point of acquisition. All of this would suggest that if we nonetheless see a change in behavior at the point of acquisition, we can be more confident that nuclear weapons are indeed playing a causal role.

I choose cases based on two primary criteria. First, the three cases I use each provide hard cases for the theory. Picking hard cases allows for more confidence in the broader applicability or "external validity" of the findings—if we find support for the theory despite picking cases that we expect the theory will have difficulty explaining, it increases the likelihood that the theory will have some success in cases we do not examine in detail, or in cases that may emerge in the future. In particular, I look for cases with strong "countervailing conditions"—variables whose presence in a particular case makes it less likely that the outcomes posited by the theory of nuclear opportunism will be observed.[62] A second criterion is the availability of primary documents or interview evidence about the foreign policy process at the time of nuclear acquisition. This criterion increases the likelihood of identifying evidence about the precise point at which the state acquired the relevant capabilities, and about the process by which nuclear weapons affected (or did not affect) state foreign policy at the point of acquisition.

Chapter 2 examines the case of Britain. Britain provides a hard case for the theory because many theories of international relations expect a state like Britain—a status quo, democratic, conventionally powerful state with a nuclear-armed patron and large geographic buffers between the state and its primary rival—to have little need to prominently emphasize weapons of mass destruction in its foreign policy or to see a substantial effect of nuclear acquisition on its foreign policy. By contrast, the theory of nuclear opportunism anticipates that Britain would use nuclear weapons to facilitate independence from the United States, steadfastness in responding to challenges, and the bolstering of junior allies.

The second case is that of South Africa, examined in chapter 3. Again, a range of variables suggest that nuclear weapons would have a limited effect in the South African case: apartheid-era South Africa was more militarily powerful than its neighbors and had status quo preferences despite the racism and paranoia of the apartheid regime. South Africa's primary goal was to maintain its domestic political institutions in the face of internal and external pressure. Further, South Africa developed only a small, secret, and unsophisticated arsenal. By contrast, the theory of nuclear opportunism anticipates that South Africa—engaged in an ongoing war in Angola and facing the possibility of direct Soviet intervention in southern Africa that would overturn South Africa's military advantages—would use nuclear weapons to facilitate both aggression and steadfastness against the source of threat.

The third case is that of the United States, examined in chapter 4. The theory of nuclear opportunism anticipates that the United States—engaged in a brutal war when it sought and acquired nuclear weapons—would use nuclear weapons to engage in aggression against Japan (and would have used them for the same purpose against Germany had they been ready before the war in Europe ended). In the aftermath of World War II, the theory anticipates that the United States—not facing any territorial threats and rising in relative power—would use nuclear weapons to facilitate the bolstering of its allies and an expansion of its position and ambitions in world politics. Thus, because the variables that the theory of nuclear opportunism identifies as conditioning the effects of nuclear acquisition change dramatically at the end of World War II, the theory predicts that nuclear weapons would affect US foreign policy differently during World War II and in the aftermath of the war. The case of the United States thus offers an additional set of observable implications of the theory, making it a particularly useful test. The case is also highly historically unusual—the United States was the first nation to acquire nuclear weapons and did so in highly abnormal historical circumstances. If the theory can nonetheless shed light on the way in which nuclear weapons affected US foreign policy, this would provide an important validation of the scope of the theory's explanatory power.[63]

In each case, we need to identify the point in time at which nuclear acquisition occurred. This is important because the point of acquisition provides the point at which to look for changes in the state's behavior. What matters in each case is identifying the point at which the state's nuclear weapons can be deployed and used in the way the state intends. The technological requirements for this will vary from state to state according to its nuclear posture.[64] For example, South Africa—a country that intended to test nuclear weapons on its own territory in order to "catalyze" US intervention on its behalf—did not even require a fully deliverable weapon in order for nuclear weapons to affect its calculations about the risks of different foreign policy options. As soon as South Africa possessed a *testable* device, the country could threaten to conduct a nuclear test and use that threat to raise the probability of US intervention on its behalf, thus reducing the risks associated with a range of foreign policy actions.[65] On the other hand, for a country like Britain, which planned to deliver nuclear weapons to Soviet cities, a far more sophisticated capability was required before nuclear weapons began to affect British foreign policy calculations. Because Britain had to be able to deliver nuclear weapons to the Soviet Union, it was not until 1955 that Britain had the capabilities required—well after its first nuclear test in 1952. Thus, in each case, it is necessary to pay significant attention to the state's intended nuclear posture, the manner in which the state intended to use its nuclear weapons, and the particular technological requirements that such uses require. This enables us to accurately identify the relevant point of acquisition

for each state, and therefore the appropriate point in time at which to look for discontinuities in foreign policy behavior.

In each case, I also pay attention to whether alternative explanations perform better than the theory of nuclear opportunism. I examine whether the theory of the nuclear revolution, S. Paul Kapur's theory of "strategic pessimism," or case-specific explanations perform better than the theory of nuclear opportunism. The theory of the nuclear revolution anticipates that states would use nuclear weapons to facilitate steadfastness, compromise, and independence. Nuclear weapons facilitate steadfastness and independence because, according to the theory of the nuclear revolution, these weapons make threats against that state less credible, whether from allies or enemies. States should therefore be able to stand more firmly in defense of what they have (steadfastness), and in defying allies that disagree with them (independence). Similarly, the theory of the nuclear revolution would also anticipate that states with nuclear weapons should be more willing to make compromises than states without nuclear weapons because the security provided by nuclear weapons grants states the freedom to compromise on matters that would previously have been too damaging to the state's security.[66] However, states should not use nuclear weapons to facilitate aggression or expansion, because such theorists of the nuclear revolution view security as the primary goal of states, and view aggression or expansion as behaviors largely driven by insecurity. Because nuclear weapons make states more secure, they should make such behaviors less attractive. Similarly, because alliances are typically viewed as responses to threats and thus defensive in nature, states should not be expected to use nuclear weapons to facilitate the bolstering of allies.[67] S. Paul Kapur's theory of "strategic pessimism" makes predictions about only one behavior in the typology: aggression. He argues that it is only conventionally weak states with revisionist preferences that should be expected to use nuclear weapons to facilitate aggression.[68]

Chapters 2–4 assess whether the theory explains the cases of Britain, South Africa, and the United States. Chapter 5 then assesses the broader applicability of the theory by examining other cases of nuclear proliferation. While these descriptions inevitably contain less detailed analysis and process tracing than the three cases examined in chapters 2–4, they provide an initial assessment of whether the behavior of other states is consistent with the theory.