

Ely Ratner: Dissertation Abstract

Reaping What You Sow: Democratic Transitions and Foreign Policy Realignment

Why do states realign their foreign policies? I argue that democratic transitions are an important cause of foreign policy realignment with the United States, and furthermore, that the nature of that realignment is conditioned by whether the United States supported the previous non-democratic regime. American support, or lack thereof, for the *ancien* regime structures the domestic politics of democratic transitions. In the absence of previous US support, democratic transitions commonly lead to positive foreign policy realignment towards the United States. Conversely, when the United States supports non-democratic regimes, democratic transitions rarely produce positive realignment. I use an original data set of country-year dyads with the United States from 1950 to 2000. Employing Markov Transition regression models, I find that the interaction of democratic transition and previous US support is a powerful determinant of foreign policy realignment. This research has important implications for international relations theory and American foreign policy.