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Reaping What You Sow

Democratic Transitions and Foreign Policy Realignment

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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 nondemocratic regime. American support, or lack thereof, for the ancien régime structures the domestic politics of democratic transitions. In the absence of previous U.S. support, democratization commonly leads to positive foreign-policy realignment toward the United States. Conversely, when the United States supports nondemocratic 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. Using Markov Transition regression models, I find that the interaction of democratic transition and previous U.S. support is a powerful determinant of foreign-policy realignment. This research has important implications for international relations theory and American foreign policy.

Keywords: *democratization; foreign policy; foreign policy realignment; United States*

The end of the Cold War inspired scholars of international relations to begin searching for alternative conceptual frameworks to understand the nature of international politics. With America triumphantly atop the hierarchy of global power, much of this debate revolved around the reasons why states were aligning their foreign policies either with or against the United States. In turn, a wide array of theories emerged to explain the causes of foreign-policy realignment in the post-Cold War era, emphasizing factors such as the increasing predominance and resilience of democratic liberalism (Fukuyama 1992; Ikenberry 2001), the unleashing of cultural identity (Huntington 1996), the relative decline of American power (Huntington 1999), and the deleterious effects of American unilateralism (Pape 2005).

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Although these arguments help to illuminate particular phenomena, they too quickly assume that the end of the Cold War, the attacks of September 11, or the U.S. invasion of Iraq fundamentally altered the dynamics that govern international relations. Together, these approaches overestimate the stability of the Cold War and fail to explain the causal factors that have been systematically driving foreign-policy realignment for decades. In contrast, I offer a more general theory of foreign-policy realignment that is not confined to the post-Cold War era.

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 or not the United States supported the previous nondemocratic regime.¹ American support, or lack thereof, for the ancien régime influences the domestic politics of democratic transitions by shaping the foreign-policy preferences of the opposition, determining the nature of the nationalist claims that emerge, and affecting the domestic political strategies that ensue. Regardless of the mode of democratic transition—whether the opening is controlled and elite led, bottom-up and mass led, or the result of elite competition—the outcomes of foreign-policy realignment with the United States converge based on the politics of previous American support.

When the United States supports nondemocratic regimes, oppositions use anti-American strategies of externalization and diversion during democratic transitions to undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the ruling government. Incumbents, who are vulnerable to accusations of American puppetry, respond by distancing themselves from their pro-American policies of the past, with hope to parry the political challenge. The result is that in the wake of U.S. support, democratic transitions rarely lead to positive foreign-policy realignment toward the United States.²

In sharp contrast, when previous U.S. support is absent, it is politically viable to seek the substantial benefits that often accompany positive realignment toward the United States, what I call the “realignment bonus.” Regimes are able to embrace pro-American foreign policies without the heightened domestic political risks that otherwise exist when democratic transitions occur in the context of previous U.S. support. When democratic transitions are not bound by a legacy of U.S. support, my research indicates that it is up to ten times more likely that democratization will lead to positive foreign-policy realignment toward the United States. And although these findings may seem intuitive to some, they run counter to the predominant theories of international relations, including realist theories that focus on the primacy of power and threat as well as liberal theories that emphasize the assimilative nature of democratic liberalism.

This research also has important implications for U.S. foreign policy. Democracy promotion has been a cornerstone of American foreign policy for decades, and the belief that democratization abroad serves the foreign-policy interests of the United States is officially enshrined in America’s National Security Strategy (White House 2006). Nevertheless, policy makers have continued to argue that it is at times a necessity to bolster nondemocratic regimes. Referring to U.S.-backed president

Anastasio Somoza Garcia of Nicaragua, Franklin Delano Roosevelt admitted that “he may be a son-of-a-bitch, but he’s our son-of-a-bitch” (Schmitz 1999, 4). Similarly, John F. Kennedy defended U.S. support for the brutal Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic, by arguing that the United States had to back nondemocratic regimes to prevent the rise of dangerous adversaries.³ In the latter period of the Cold War, Jeane Kirkpatrick (1979), foreign-policy adviser to President Ronald Regan and U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, openly advocated U.S. support for authoritarian regimes. And more recently, the United States has continued working closely with nondemocratic regimes around the world to combat international terrorist networks, secure natural resources, and maintain regional security. This research speaks to the long-term consequences of this behavior.

The following section explains in further detail the mechanisms that underlie the relationship between previous U.S. support, democratization, and foreign-policy realignment. The third section outlines alternative theories of foreign-policy realignment, the fourth section lays out the research design to test these competing hypotheses, and the fifth section discusses the regression models and reports their results. The final section concludes by discussing the implications of this research for international relations theory and American foreign policy.

Democratization and Foreign-policy Realignment

The international consequences of democratization are not homogenous. In fact, there is considerable variation in the manner and degree to which democratic transitions have affected foreign-policy alignment with the United States. Examples abound in which political liberalization led countries realign their foreign-policy preferences more closely with those of the United States. Post-Cold War Eastern Europe provides familiar cases (the Czech Republic and Hungary, for instance) in which newly democratic regimes rapidly realigned toward the United States. Other examples include Anwar Sadat’s “Open Door” policy for Egypt in the mid-1970s and Robert Mugabe’s embrace of the Reagan administration in the early 1980s. Periods of political liberalization in a wide array of countries, such as Ethiopia, Honduras, Nepal, Ghana, Senegal, and Cambodia, all followed similar patterns of positive foreign-policy realignment toward the United States.

This, however, is not the end of the story. There are equally important cases in which states realigned *away from* the United States during democratic transitions, sometimes in ways that still haunt America today. In 1979, the short-lived government of Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan immediately terminated Iran’s special relationship with the United States. Similar patterns of negative realignment occurred not only during other popular revolutions in the likes of Nicaragua and Cuba but also in states that saw free and fair elections. In 1973, newly elected Argentine President Héctor José Cámpora quickly re-established diplomatic relations with Cuba and broke the

American-led blockade by providing the Castro regime with food assistance and industrial products. In 1974, following the collapse of the U.S.-backed military dictatorship in Greece, the nascent democratic regime withdrew its forces from the integrated military structure of NATO. Shortly thereafter, the socialist government of Andreas Papandreou was elected after promising to close American air bases on Greek soil. There have been several other instances—for example, in Algeria, Chile, Thailand, Nigeria, Peru, and Indonesia—in which democratic transitions either led to a backlash against the United States, or at the very least, failed to produce positive foreign-policy realignment toward the United States.

Existing empirical research has demonstrated that domestic regime change can alter a state's foreign-policy preferences (see Hagan 1989; Morrow 1991; Siverson and Starr 1994). Although this literature suggests that democratic transitions can lead to foreign-policy realignment with the United States, it is silent on the conditions under which that realignment is likely to be friendly or hostile. Similarly, there is substantial evidence that democratic transitions tend to induce powerful politics of nationalism (see J. Snyder and Ballentine 1996).⁴ But the message of these nationalist appeals, and the foreign policies that flow from them, can differ in important ways. In the foreign-policy context, they can range from calls for closer integration with the West to demands for a strongly anti-American posture.⁵

To be sure, popular appeals will arise when political space is cracked open; that is the very nature of democratic transitions (see O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Shain and Linz 1995). As the level of political competition increases, ruling elites, opposition figures, and civil society engage in a "legitimacy game" as they vie for popular support. The foreign-policy component of this legitimacy game presents a strategic choice for contestants in the domestic political arena. On one hand, pro-American strategies and realignment toward the United States can provide regimes with vital resources. Under certain circumstances, however, pursuing such policies can make actors highly vulnerable to political strategies that reject closer alignment with the United States. The legacy of U.S. support determines which of these strategies are dominant during democratic transitions. Looking more closely at the nature of this legitimacy game helps to explain the mechanisms through which U.S. support structures the politics of democratic transitions, thereby encouraging or precluding foreign-policy realignment toward the United States.

The Lack of Positive Realignment in the Wake of U.S. Support

When democratic transitions occur in the wake of U.S. support, anti-Americanism is both a common and effective domestic political strategy. One reason for this is that U.S. support shapes the preferences of the opposition, which blames the United States for propping up the incumbent nondemocratic regime. But the mechanisms at work go beyond the preconceived preferences of opposition elites. Democratization

is a vital component of this dynamic because periods of political liberalization provide the political context and motivation for foreign-policy realignment. This section describes a set of overlapping and mutually reinforcing strategies—externalization, incumbent response, and diversion—that emerge when democratic transitions occur in the context of previous U.S. support. The result is a convergence on the outcome that previous U.S. support prevents democratization from leading to positive foreign-policy alignment toward the United States.

Externalization

Externalization is a process whereby opposition figures exploit foreign-policy positions to rally the masses (R. Snyder 1999). As a U.S.-backed regime begins to crack, challengers use anti-Americanism to weaken both incumbents and moderates. When the United States buoys dictators, “domestic populations see those regimes as little more than American clients—extensions of U.S. power. Consequently, they do not view the ouster of a repressive autocrat as merely an internal political change, but as the eradication of American domination” (Carpenter 1985, 6). When democratic transitions are occurring in the wake of a U.S.-backed regime, anti-Americanism is a highly effective (if not obvious) strategy for undermining the legitimacy of incumbents. This approach has been particularly viable in the developing world, where Western penetration has been deep and memories of colonialism remain fresh.

A prominent example of this phenomenon occurred in the early stages of the Iranian revolution. After the fall of the Shah, a period of political liberalization ensued in which Islamic radicals won support for their constitution by presenting “the issue in stark terms: the liberals and leftists who opposed the constitution were lackeys of the West; only revolutionary Islam could humiliate the ‘Great Satan’ and defend the nation” (R. Snyder 1999, 278). It is important to note that the use of anti-American rhetoric to outflank and undermine opponents occurs in nonrevolutionary transitions as well. Although revolutionary regimes are more likely to radically realign their foreign policies (Stanger 1995), similar anti-American processes can also occur in contested elections.

Latin America, for instance, has seen a series of free and fair elections in which opposition elites boosted their popular support by criticizing their predecessor’s cozy relationship with the United States. Both Raul Alfonsín in Argentina (1983) and Salvador Allende in Chile (1970) used calls for a cooling of their country’s ties with the United States as an electoral wedge against their opponents. Given the potency and effectiveness of this strategy in the wake of U.S. support, it is extremely unlikely that the opposition will instead call for closer realignment toward the United States.

Incumbent Response

In the face of direct challenges to their legitimacy, U.S.-backed incumbents are forced to respond in a way that also makes pro-American realignment very unlikely.

A government that has been receiving strong support from the United States is vulnerable to nationalist claims that it is beholden to American interests, the results of which could be extremely damaging in a democratic contest. To undermine these accusations, incumbent regimes make nationalist and populist appeals that attempt to obscure the history of American support.

In making foreign-policy decisions, leaders must be cognizant of the “political sensitivity toward any symbol of external dominance or influence” (Barnett and Levy 1991, 375). Consider the example of present-day Egypt. After the Muslim Brotherhood’s surprising performance in the 2005 parliamentary elections, top officials in the Mubarak regime have “made aggressive public statements aimed at embarrassing, or challenging, the United States” (Slackman 2006). Mubarak himself delivered a blistering critique of American foreign policy at the Davos World Economic Forum in May 2006. To further demonstrate that it is not a puppet of the United States, the Mubarak government has permitted and even encouraged anti-American protests on university campuses. In the context of political liberalization and a surge in popular support for the Muslim Brotherhood, Mubarak has been forced to distance himself from the United States. As a result, the U.S.–Egypt relationship is seeing the “severest strain it has witnessed in nearly 30 years” (Cole 2006).

Given the opportunity for the opposition to use this potent wedge issue against the incumbent, it is extremely unlikely that U.S.-backed regimes will call for realigning more closely toward the United States during periods of democratization. In a highly contested election, doing so would be a form of political suicide. Despite the potential benefits of realigning toward the United States, such a strategy is too politically risky. Instead, gaining or retaining executive authority will be of ultimate importance, thereby further diminishing the likelihood of positive realignment toward the United States.

Diversionsary Tactics

In an effort to bolster domestic political support, ruling elites often use foreign policies to distract popular attention away from domestic sources of instability. This insight has a rich history in the study of international relations, often referred to as the diversionary theory of war or the scapegoat hypothesis (Levy 1989). Drawing from sociology and psychology, political scientists have argued that leaders use “in-group patriotism and out-group rivalry” to augment popular support (Snyder and Ballentine 1996, 5). The result is often a “rally-around-the-flag” phenomenon whereby publics identify with and support the nationalist sentiments of the ruling regime (Mueller 1973).

Diversionsary behavior often occurs in the context of democratic transitions, when public support is most prized and political competition most fierce (Ostrom and Job 1986). Furthermore, the weak institutional environment that commonly exists during democratic transitions is particularly prone to the kinds of nationalist appeals that accompany diversionary strategies (see, e.g., J. Snyder and Ballentine 1996;

J. Snyder 1999; Mansfield and Snyder 1995). In a study of revolution and war, Stephen Walt explained how both Cuban and Nicaraguan leaders “used their conflicts with the United States to justify the repression of domestic opponents and to excuse their own policy mistakes. In each case, an external enemy was used to solidify the regime’s internal position and blamed for continued internal problems” (Walt 1992, 327-28). The history of U.S. support for the outgoing regime provides perfect material for diversionary tactics. By placing blame on the patrons of the past, this anti-American strategy allows new regimes to legitimize their rule and explain away their shortcomings.

Although diversionary theories have primarily been used to explain conflict, we should expect such actions to be more commonly expressed through foreign-policy realignment. In fact, leaders pursuing diversionary strategies will generally stop short of war initiation, because ruling regimes will want to augment domestic political support without taking unnecessary risks in the international arena. As Leo Hazelwood (1975, 224) observed, “nations using diversion mechanisms to reduce domestic conflict will generally engage in that type of foreign conflict which is sufficiently intense to divert attentions from domestic to external matters but which is also sufficiently limited to control the costs to the regime.” This is particularly true during democratic transitions, when institutions and governing mechanisms are in flux. Foreign-policy realignment remains an effective way for regimes to use international relations for domestic purposes without taking external risks that would fundamentally threaten their survival.

In Sum

During democratic transitions, opposition figures use nationalist and populist appeals to their advantage. If the ruling regime was supported by the United States, the opposition will espouse powerful anti-American messages to isolate and weaken incumbents. It will do so not only to undermine its opponents but also to divert public attention away from unpopular or oppressive domestic policies. The incumbent regime will respond to these challenges by downplaying its pre-existing relationship with America, advancing nationalist and populist appeals, and even taking actions that stand up to the United States in an effort to subsume what is likely to be one of its opponents’ most potent issues. The result of these processes is that the nature of U.S. support causes a convergence of strategies with respect to foreign-policy realignment with the United States. Although anti-American strategies will differ in both degree and kind, the central hypothesis holds: during democratic transitions, if the previous regime was backed by the United States, pro-American strategies will be rare and subsequent realignment toward the United States is extremely unlikely.

Positive Realignment in the Absence of U.S. Support

In sharp contrast, democratic transitions that occur in the wake of *non*-U.S.-backed regimes do not contain the aforementioned mechanisms that lead to a convergence of anti-American strategies. The tactics of diversion and externalization that aim to

exploit the preexisting relationship with the United States are neither as available nor as effective when previous U.S. support is absent; anti-Americanism is far less potent in states where there has been little history of U.S. influence or interference. As a result, incumbents are less constrained in their ability to simultaneously open the political process and realign toward the United States. This is in part because pro-American preferences are more common in the absence of U.S. support, but more profoundly, because it will be politically viable to realign toward the United States.

The lack of U.S. support can pave the way for pro-American realignment in several ways. The first is that opposition leaders may hold pro-Western foreign-policy preferences before the democratic transition. I have argued that U.S.-backed dictators often produce anti-American oppositions. The corollary is true as well, in terms of the foreign-policy preferences of those who oppose anti-American autocrats. On this score, many of the foreign-policy realignments that occurred at the end of the Cold War in Eastern Europe were quite distinct from the anti-American shift that occurred after the fall of the Shah. In the wake of Soviet control, opposition leaders, such as Vaclav Havel in the Czech Republic, entered the transition with overtly pro-Western preferences.

Newly democratic regimes will also alter their foreign policies to reap the potential rewards that accompany realignment toward the United States. Internal instability, rather than external threat, often poses a more serious challenge to weak or illegitimate regimes in the developing world; although relatively few leaders have been replaced by external forces, hundreds have been overthrown by internal challengers (David 1991). The fact that civil wars have far outnumbered interstate conflicts in recent years further suggests an imbalance between domestic versus international threats to the security of most regimes (Fearon and Laitin 2003). From this perspective, what often looks like bandwagoning with the United States is actually a form of traditional balancing against internal threats (David 1991).

Most governments in the developing world also tend to face severe resource constraints. This has significant implications for foreign-policy decisions because it alters the tradeoffs between seeking security and wealth from abroad rather than through internal mobilization (Conybeare 1994; Sorokin 1994). The difficulties of autonomous self-defense and development are compounded by the aforementioned problem of instability, because yet-to-be-legitimate regimes may have to use scarce resources for purposes of patronage (Barnett and Levy 1991). The result is that these regimes must pursue external sources of support if domestic political constraints force them to spend their limited resources on butter rather than guns.

Given these threats and challenges at home, new regimes can realign toward the United States as a strategy for enhancing the likelihood of survival at the domestic level. As is the stuff of diplomacy, the United States regularly uses its vast military and economic resources to reward states that help to advance its international agenda. Whether in the form of increased military assistance, foreign aid, favorable trade deals, or other inducements, new regimes can expect that they will receive some kind of reward for realigning toward the United States. This is what I call the "realignment bonus."

In fact, there are several explicit policy initiatives built into the U.S. government that provide for these bonuses. For instance, in the 1980s, Congress gave President Reagan the authority to condition foreign aid depending on how similarly countries were voting with the United States at the U.N. General Assembly (Public Laws 98-164 and 99-190). Likewise, the current Millennium Challenge Account alters U.S. foreign assistance depending on how closely states adhere to American notions of civil liberties, democracy, and human rights. Membership in NATO and the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as favorable deals from international lending institutions, are also mechanisms through which the United States rewards countries for foreign-policy realignment.

In some instances, these bonuses can be quite large. Such was the case for Anwar Sadat, who instituted the *Infitah*, or “Open Door” policy, liberalizing the Egyptian economy, partially opening the political system, and eventually making peace with Israel. Although this was met with widespread criticism throughout the Arab world, Sadat reaped enormous rewards from the United States, which paved the way for Egypt to become the second largest recipient of U.S. foreign assistance. Robert Mugabe’s rise to power in the early 1980s tells a similar story. Mugabe brought Zimbabwe back from international isolation and rejected Moscow’s overtures for closer alignment. Although his Zimbabwe African National Union faced a formidable challenge from Joshua Nkomo’s Zimbabwe African People’s Union in the early 1980s, Mugabe had little to gain from realigning away from the United States, and Nkomo had little ability or reason to paint the United States as the source of Zimbabwe’s woes (Davidow [1982] 1983). Mugabe was in turn rewarded with a trip to the Carter White House in 1980, securing Zimbabwe’s position at the time as sub-Saharan Africa’s largest recipient of American aid (R. Snyder 1999).

In the absence of U.S. support, elites have less to gain by pursuing externalization and diversionary strategies that target the United States. Furthermore, new regimes can reap a realignment bonus from the United States without the heightened risk of being undermined by anti-American nationalism. Building on the previous sections, my central hypotheses are as follows:

- In the wake of U.S. support, pro-American strategies are rare, and positive realignment toward the United States is extremely unlikely.
- In the absence of previous U.S. support, democratic transitions are far more likely to lead to positive foreign-policy realignment toward the United States.

Alternative Hypotheses

The existing literature offers a series of alternative and competing hypotheses for the causes of foreign-policy realignment with the United States. Because the relationship between democratization and foreign-policy realignment has not previously been

tested, the following presentation of alternative hypotheses is necessarily a conglomeration of disjointed theoretical approaches rather than a coherent research agenda. According to structural realists, international behavior is the manifestation of an endless pursuit for external security (Morgenthau 1978; Waltz 1979). In this competitive environment, states selfishly align—balance against or bandwagon with power—to augment their security and defend against threatening pretenders to hegemony. These systemic-level analyses assume that states are undifferentiated and that domestic politics are irrelevant to the expedient security-seeking behavior that drives foreign policy. Neorealists explain the occurrence of alliances and war through the changing distribution of capabilities and predict that realignment should only occur in conjunction with a dramatic shift in the global distribution of power (Gilpin 1981). From this perspective, rising powers will realign against the United States to challenge American preeminence. An alternative formulation posits that following a period of American dominance, a decrease in the relative power of the United States will induce the formation of a counter hegemonic bloc (Huntington 1999).

Building on the realist tradition, Walt (1992) argued that states balance against threat rather than power. The contemporary extension of this argument is that states will realign away from the United States if American foreign policy is threatening in nature. From this perspective, “soft balancing” against the United States in the post-Cold War era is the result of disproportionate power and American unilateralism (Pape 2005).

In contrast to realist theories that highlight the role of external power and interstate threat, a number of scholars have offered domestic-level explanations for the seemingly pacific union between democratic states (see Doyle 1986; Russett 1993; Fearon 1994; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999; for critiques, see Layne 1994; Faber and Gowa 1995; Rosato 2003). One strand of Democratic Peace Theory posits that democracies do not fight each other because they share a set of common values: in particular, concern for human rights, economic liberalism, and respect for the rule of law (Owen 1997; Dixon 1994). Given that these are all salient issues in the international arena, the effects of shared values ought to reveal themselves at least as prominently in questions of foreign-policy alignment as they do in questions of war. Along these lines, Erik Gartzke (1998) has argued that the democratic peace exists not because democratic dyads are able to prevent escalation and resolve conflicts more peacefully, but rather because their shared preferences dramatically reduce the likelihood of conflict in the first place. Similarly, John Ikenberry (2001) has argued that the institutional thickness of the democratic liberal order is powerfully assimilative. Together, these analyses predict that democratization should produce closer realignment toward the United States as a result of converging international norms and practices.

An alternative liberal approach has emphasized the role of trade and interdependence (see Rosecrance 1986; Keohane and Nye 1989; Oneal and Russett 1999). These authors argue that decision makers and elites will avoid confrontations that would

severely disrupt the vital flow of commerce. This perspective has been used to explain the democratic peace, insofar as democracies, given their commitment to the rule of law and property rights, tend to provide more attractive environments for trade and investment. As a result, democracies become increasingly interdependent, thereby decreasing the probability of war between democratic dyads. These theories suggest that higher levels of trade and economic interdependence will increase the likelihood that states align more closely with the United States.

Finally, Samuel Huntington (1996) has argued that civilizational identity has replaced the East–West struggle of the Cold War as the defining feature of international politics. Particular attention has been paid to the rivalry between Western and Islamic civilizations, and there is growing evidence that Muslim countries have been systematically realigning away from the United States (Voeten 2000). These findings suggest that realignment with the United States may best be accounted for by civilizational differences.

Hypotheses in Sum

Taken together, these theories draw on the usual suspects of international politics: the distribution of power in the international system, relative capabilities, norms, regime type, economic interdependence, and civilizational blocs. These hypotheses, starting with my own, are summarized in Table 1.

Research Design

Data Set

To test my hypotheses, I examine the interaction of democratization and U.S. support on foreign-policy realignment with the United States from 1950 to 2000, controlling for other factors thought to influence levels of alignment. I use an original time-series cross-sectional data set composed of country–year dyads with the United States for all countries with a population of half a million or more.⁶

Key Explanatory Variables

Democratic Transition

I use the Polity IV data set to construct a series of dichotomous variables indicating whether a country was undergoing a democratic transition in a given year.⁷ To measure regime change, I use the polity score, which ranges from –10 to +10 and is a composite country–year variable derived by subtracting institutional autocracy scores from institutional democracy scores. Scholars of international relations have coded democratization in a variety of ways, including any increase in a country's polity score (see, e.g., Enterline 1996), any positive shift in regime type (see, e.g.,

Table 1
Causes of Foreign-policy Realignment: Hypotheses in Sum

Theory	Key Variable	Prediction
Author's hypotheses		
Democratization	Previous U.S. support	In the wake of previous U.S. support, it is extremely unlikely that democratic transitions will lead to positive foreign-policy realignment toward the United States In the absence of previous U.S. support, democratic transitions are far more likely to lead to positive foreign-policy realignment toward the United States
Alternative hypotheses		
Realism	Distribution of power	Shifts in the international distribution of power will cause states to balance against or bandwagon with the United States
	Power	A relative decline in American power will lead to counter-hegemonic balancing against the United States
	Threat	American foreign policies that are threatening and unilateral will lead to realignment against the United States
Liberalism	Norms/regime type	Democratic states externalize domestic norms and will therefore align with the United States
	Trade	Higher levels of trade and interdependence will lead to closer alignment with the United States
Clash of civilizations	Civilizational bloc	States composed of non-Western civilizations, particularly Muslim countries, will align away from the United States

Mansfield and Snyder 2002),⁸ and large-scale shifts from autocracy to democracy (see, e.g., Oneal and Russett 1997). I use six distinct measures of democratization to test whether different types of democratic transitions have different effects on foreign-policy realignment. I score each democratization variable from the beginning of the transition until five years into the new regime.⁹ Table 2 describes each measure of democratic transition, reports its frequency in absolute terms, and offers the total number of country-year observations when the full duration of the transition plus the five-year extension are added.

United States Support for the Previous Regime

My key independent variable indicates whether, during periods of domestic regime change, the United States supported the previous nondemocratic regime. To test my hypotheses, I examine the interaction between democratic transition and previous U.S. support. This reveals whether or not the effects of democratization on foreign-policy alignment with the United States are contingent on U.S. support for the previous regime.

Table 2
Measures of Democratic Transitions
and Their Frequencies, 1950–2000

Measure of Democratic Transition	Variable Name	Absolute Number	Total Observations
Any positive change in polity score	<i>DemMove</i>	281	1,225
Any positive change of regime type	<i>DemTr</i>	142	647
Change of regime type to consolidated democracy	<i>CompleteDemTr</i>	63	283
Change from autocracy to anocracy	<i>PartialDemTr (AutoToAno)</i>	78	362
Change from autocracy to consolidated democracy	<i>AutoToDemo</i>	27	129
Change from anocracy to consolidated democracy	<i>AnoToDemo</i>	36	154

n = 6,046

There are several ways—military, economic, and diplomatic—in which the United States supports particular regimes. The most direct measure of U.S. support is the supply of major conventional weapons.¹⁰ It is through this means that non-democratic regimes are able to defend themselves against both external threats and internal challenges. According to international relations theory, the provision of arms is a direct transfer of power and one that is relatively unexpected outside of tight alliances. In the anarchical international environment, “it runs against the grain of state behavior to transfer military power to others” (Mearsheimer 1990, 39). Because the sources of aggression are many and a state’s objectives can change rapidly, the distribution of arms is an inherently risky venture.¹¹ From a strategic standpoint, we should not expect states to carelessly distribute dangerous weapons.

Drawing on data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), I define U.S. support as the sale or transfer of “major conventional weapons.” SIPRI sets a high bar for this category, which includes the likes of fighter aircraft, missile launchers, surveillance radars, helicopters, tanks, and submarines. It does not include small arms. To qualify as having supported a regime, the United States had to provide major conventional weapons in two or more years of the regime.¹²

Dependent Variable

Level of Foreign-policy Alignment with the United States

Foreign-policy alignment is a dyadic measure of the degree to which two states share the same set of preferences, norms, and goals in the international system. States

seek to advance a basket of interests in world politics. Since the end of the Second World War, these issues have included decolonization, disarmament, multilateral intervention, political and human rights, social and economic rights, as well as a series of particular intrastate and interstate issues such as the Cold War, wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, apartheid in South Africa, and the China–Taiwan issue. High levels of foreign-policy alignment indicate that states share similar preferences across a wide swath of issues in the international political realm.

It is important that the concepts of U.S. support and level of foreign-policy alignment are kept distinct. The former describes a government-to-government relationship between the United States and a foreign regime; the latter describes the degree to which that regime's foreign policies are similar to those of the United States. The United States frequently supports governments that administer largely dissimilar foreign policies. The reasons for this range from maintaining regional security (as in the case of Egypt) and securing natural resources (as in the cases of Saudi Arabia or Nigeria) to preventing the rise of radical or communist regimes (as in any number of Cold War allies such as the Philippines or Chile).¹³ Note that the pursuit of these particular goals does not necessarily reflect the broader foreign-policy preferences of the state in question, nor do they ensure a willingness to work with the United States on a wider array of international issues. To further emphasize the distinction between these concepts, Table 3A shows the relationship between U.S. support and foreign-policy alignment.

My trichotomous dependent variable, annual level of foreign-policy alignment with the United States, is coded "Aligned," "Neutral," and "Divergent." This variable is adapted from the Affinity of Nations Index, which is derived from U.N. General Assembly votes.¹⁴ General Assembly votes are commonly used as a measure of foreign-policy preferences (see, e.g., Moon 1985; Gartzke 1998; Voeten 2000) and have the advantages of existing over a long period, covering a wide range of issues, and including most countries in the world.¹⁵

I selected the thresholds for each category of foreign-policy alignment to adhere to expectations about how closely states' preferences conformed to those of the United States¹⁶ and to capture significant instances of change.¹⁷ Robustness tests were performed to ensure that the regression results were not contingent on a particular set of thresholds.¹⁸ To give the reader a sense of the data, Table 3B shows the frequencies of the dependent variable as well as each type of foreign-policy realignment.¹⁹

Control Variables

I include a number of control variables to account for alternative explanations of foreign-policy realignment with the United States. Realists argue that relative power has a profound impact on international politics and that rising powers in particular are likely to realign against a single superpower. To test the effects of relative power, I use the Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC), which combines

Table 3A
Annual Tabulation of U.S. Support and Foreign-policy Alignment, 1950–2000

Level of Alignment:	Divergent	Neutral	Aligned
No U.S. Support	1,580 (.261)	1,198 (.198)	657 (.108)
U.S. Support	570 (.094)	889 (.147)	1,150 (.190)
<i>n</i> = 6,044			

Table 3B
Frequency and Percentage of Foreign-policy Alignment and Realignment with the United States, 1950–2000

	Frequency	Percentage
Static level of alignment (<i>n</i> = 6,144)		
Divergent	2,208	36
Neutral	2,094	34
Aligned	1,842	30
Positive realignments (155 total)		
Divergent to neutral	75	48
Neutral to aligned	66	43
Divergent to aligned	14	9
Negative realignments (214 total)		
Aligned to neutral	83	39
Neutral to divergent	120	56
Aligned to divergent	11	5

total population, urban population, iron and steel production, energy consumption, military personnel, and military expenditure.²⁰ Liberal theory predicts that countries with high trade dependence are likely to share foreign-policy preferences. My variable for trade dependence measures the ratio of a country’s total imports and exports with the United States as a percentage of GDP. I also include a distance variable to control for the manner in which geography affects relative power and external threat.²¹

The Interaction of Democratization and Previous U.S. Support

Descriptive statistics, regression results, and predicted probabilities for all measures of democratization are reported in full in the online appendix.²² Throughout the main text, I first report results for the *DemMove* variable because it is the most general measure of political liberalization and is frequently used by scholars of international politics as a measure of democratization (see, e.g., Enterline 1996; Oneal and Russett

Table 4A
Tabulation of Positive Change in Polity Score (*DemMove*),
U.S. Support, and Foreign-policy Realignment, 1950–2000

Prior Level of Alignment	U.S. Support	Foreign-policy Realignment
Aligned Total democratic transitions: 53 (.188)	No U.S. support: 22 (.078)	Positive change: n/a No change: 17 (.060) Negative change: 5 (.017)
	U.S. support: 31 (.110)	Positive change: n/a No change: 18 (.064) Negative change: 13 (.046)
Neutral Total democratic transitions: 118 (.419)	No U.S. support: 46 (.163)	Positive change: 8 (.028) No change: 31 (.110) Negative change: 7 (.024)
	U.S. support: 72 (.256)	Positive change: 14 (.049) No change: 36 (.128) Negative change: 22 (.078)
Divergent Total democratic transitions: 110 (.391)	No U.S. support: 68 (.241)	Positive change: 20 (.071) No change: 48 (.170) Negative change: n/a
	U.S. support: 31 (.110)	Positive change: 2 (.007) No change: 40 (.142) Negative change: n/a

n = 281

1997; Ward and Gleditsch 1998). Before moving to the regression models themselves, consider the descriptive statistics in Table 4A. The left-hand column indicates the level of alignment with the United States before the democratic transition. For each level of alignment, the second column breaks that total into two groups, depending on whether the previous regime was supported by the United States. The third column shows whether there was positive change, no change, or negative change in foreign-policy realignment as a result of the democratic transition. In parentheses is the frequency of each category per the total number of transitions.

These descriptive statistics support the hypothesis that the effects of democratization on foreign-policy alignment with the United States are often conditioned by the legacy of U.S. support. Under the previous conditions of Neutrality and Divergence, the presence or absence of U.S. support correlates quite strongly with changes in alignment. From 1950 to 2000, there were 110 democratic transitions in which the previous level of alignment was Divergent. Of the 68 that did not receive U.S. support, nearly 30 percent (20 out of 68) positively realigned toward the United States. In contrast, when the United States did support the previous regime, less than 5 percent of democratic transitions (2 out of 42) led to positive realignment. This is powerful evidence that previous U.S. support decreases the likelihood of positive realignment.

Table 4B
Tabulation of Positive Change of Regime Type (*DemTr*),
U.S. Support, and Foreign-policy Realignment, 1950–2000

Prior Level of Alignment	U.S. Support	Foreign-policy Realignment
Divergent	No U.S. support: 33 (.232)	Positive change: 13 (.091)
Total democratic transitions: 52 (.366)	U.S. support: 19 (.133)	No change: 20 (.140) Negative change: n/a
		Positive change: 1 (.007) No change: 18 (.126) Negative change: n/a

Similar patterns hold across nearly every measure of democratic transition used in this study.²³ For instance, Table 4B shows equally powerful results for democratic transitions that constitute a change from one regime type to another (*DemTr*). Under the Divergent precondition, nearly 40 percent of countries (13 out of 33) positively realigned toward the United States in the absence of previous U.S. support. In contrast, in the wake of U.S. support, only 5 percent (1 out of 19) saw positive realignment. The regression models that follow provide further evidence for this relationship.

Regression Models

I use Markov transition models to test the interaction of democratic transition and previous U.S. support.²⁴ Markov transition models are extensions of ordered probit models and are particularly useful for this analysis because I am seeking to model change in a discrete, ordinal dependent variable. In this case, I am asking the following: given the prior level of foreign-policy alignment with the United States, which independent variables account for change in that level of alignment? I estimate six types of realignment: divergent to neutral, neutral to aligned, and divergent to aligned, as well as the reverse of each. The models treat these as distinct realignments and identify causal factors associated with each.

Regression Results

I ran the model using all six measures of democratic transition previously described in Table 2.²⁵ In each instance, the interaction of previous U.S. support had a powerful effect on the relationship between democratic transition and foreign-policy alignment.²⁶ The bottom line is that democratization is far more likely to lead to positive foreign-policy realignment toward the United States when the United States did not support the previous nondemocratic regime. When states had either Divergent or

Table 5
Regression Results for Positive Change in Polity Score (*DemMove*)

	<i>t</i> - 1 = Divergent	<i>t</i> - 1 = Neutral	<i>t</i> - 1 = Aligned
<i>DemMove</i> (<i>Armpos</i> = 0)	0.538 (0.180) (.003 P)	0.226 (0.094) (.017 P)	-0.132 (0.279) (.634 P)
<i>DemMove</i> (<i>Armpos</i> = 1)	-0.687 (0.298) (.021 P)	-0.070 (0.122) (.563 P)	0.220 (0.254) (.387 P)
<i>Armpos</i> (<i>DemMove</i> = 0)	0.359 (0.186) (.054 P)	0.045 (0.098) (.644 P)	-0.547 (0.169) (.001 P)
<i>Armpos</i> (<i>DemMove</i> = 1)	-0.866 (0.279) (.002 P)	-0.251 (0.124) (.044 P)	-0.194 (0.338) (.567 P)
Capability ratio	-0.039 (0.036) (.280 P)	-0.026 (0.018) (.155 P)	0.525 (0.336) (.118 P)
Distance	0.159 (0.126) (.207 P)	-0.188 (0.046) (.000 P)	-0.318 (0.166) (.056 P)
Trade dependence	-0.703 (0.715) (.325 P)	-0.562 (0.298) (.060 P)	-1.692 (1.740) (.331 P)
Threshold1	3.152 (1.163)	-3.098 (0.428)	-7.398 (1.523)
Threshold2	6.150 (1.161)	-0.100 (0.415)	-4.400 (1.518)
<i>N</i> = 5,989			
Log likelihood: -1,708.625			
<i>DemMove</i> × <i>Armpos</i>	-1.225 (.341) (.000 P)	-.296 (.154) (.055 P)	.353 (.390) (.365 P)

Note: Across all models, robust standard errors are clustered over country to address the problem of serial correlation within units. For each precondition, the regression tables include the regression coefficient, the standard error, and the *p* value, in that order. Following Friedrich (1982), I report the combined coefficients of *DemMove* + *DemMove* × *Armpos* and *Armpos* + *Armpos* × *DemMove*. At the bottom of the table, I also report the interaction. *Armpos* = U.S. support of the previous regime.

Neutral levels of alignment before the transition, democratization correlates strongly with positive realignment in the absence of previous U.S. support. When the United States did support the previous regime, the opposite is true—the effects of democratic transitions on foreign-policy alignment with the United States are negative.

Under the precondition of Divergence, consider the two coefficients for *DemMove* in Table 5. The effects of democratization (*DemMove*) on realignment are positive

and significant when U.S. support was absent ($ArmPos = 0$).²⁷ This indicates that the probability of a positive realignment toward the United States increases substantially when there was no previous U.S. support ($ArmPos = 0$). In sharp contrast, when the United States did support the previous regime ($ArmPos = 1$), the effects of democratization on foreign-policy realignment are negative and significant. Not surprisingly, then, the interaction term between democratization and previous U.S. support is itself negative and significant.

These results strongly suggest that the effects of democratization on foreign-policy alignment with the United States are contingent on the political impact of U.S. support for the previous regime.²⁸ Democratic transitions are far more likely to cause realignment toward the United States when the United States does not support the previous nondemocratic regime. Similar patterns are evident, although less pronounced, under the Neutrality precondition.

Statistical significance in and of itself is of marginal importance unless the variables can be shown to have a substantive effect as well. This is the role of predicted probabilities. The regression results from Markov transition models can be used to estimate the probability that the dependent variable will have a particular value in time t , given its value in time $t - 1$. Across all five measures of democratization, the most striking substantive findings occur in states that were in a divergent level of alignment before the transition.²⁹ The probability that democratic transitions will lead to positive foreign-policy realignment toward the United States is consistently and substantially higher when the United States did not support the previous regime. Depending on the type of democratization, the absence of U.S. support makes realignment from a Divergent to a Neutral level four to ten times more likely. Table 6 reports these predicted probabilities for each measure of democratic transition.

Similar trends are decidedly missing from cases in which states were Aligned before the democratic transition. Under this precondition, none of the interaction terms across the various measures of democratic transition are statistically significant.³⁰ This suggests that the effects of democratization on countries that already share foreign-policy preferences with the United States are less sensitive to whether or not the United States supported the previous regime. In other words, there appears to be a stickiness to aligned preferences. To further investigate this finding, I added alternative economic variables to the model. This analysis showed that under the precondition of alignment, higher levels of GDP decrease the likelihood that countries will negatively realign away from the United States.³¹ Note, however, that both the theory and hypotheses are constructed around the factors that encourage or preclude positive realignment toward the United States. Countries already in the aligned precondition fall outside this purview.

The control variables did not confound these results. Capability ratios did not correlate with foreign-policy realignment. Similarly, trade dependence only mattered in cases that were Neutral before the regime change, and even then, in the opposite

Table 6
Predicted Probability That a Democratic Transition
Leads to a Realignment from Divergent to Neutral

Type of Democratic Transition	Without Previous U.S. Support (%)	With Previous U.S. Support (%)	Magnitude of Difference
<i>DemMove</i>	11.0	1.8	6.1
<i>DemTr</i>	15.4	2.8	5.5
<i>CompleteDemTr</i>	27.0	6.3	4.2
<i>PartialDemTr</i>	9.3	1.0	9.3
<i>AnoToDemo</i>	36.5	3.6	10.1

Note: *DemMove* = any positive change in polity score; *DemTr* = any positive change of regime type; *CompleteDemTr* = change of regime type to consolidated democracy; *PartialDemTr* = partial change of regime type to consolidated democracy; *AnoToDemo* = change from anocracy to consolidated democracy.

direction than would have been anticipated by the literature. These results contradict predictions that relative power capabilities and trade dependence have systematic effects on foreign-policy realignment. The distance variable is negative and frequently significant under the preconditions of Neutral and Aligned. This suggests that distant countries are more likely to negatively realign away from the United States.

Additional Tests of Robustness

Separate regression results for the Cold War and post-Cold War periods are reported in Table 7. The principal findings for both periods are similar to those for the full 1950 to 2000 period discussed above. That these results are robust across different historical periods with distinct international systems suggests that the mechanisms described herein are dependent on neither the bipolarity of the Cold War nor the unipolarity of the post-Cold War era.³²

It is also necessary to rebut an alternative explanation for the relationship between U.S. support, democratization, and foreign-policy realignment: namely, that the argument presented in this article has the causal arrows backwards and that the United States proactively supports regimes whose demise would invariably lead to an anti-American backlash. From this perspective, the expectation of a negative realignment causes U.S. support for the existing regime in the first place. Negative realignments are therefore overdetermined, and the subsequent domestic political effects of previous U.S. support are secondary.

An observable implication of this endogeneity critique would be that similar patterns of positive and negative realignment would hold under authoritarian transitions as well.³³ The data do not support this hypothesis: similar patterns of realignment do not exist during autocratic transitions.³⁴ Table 8 reports the regression results for

Table 7
Comparison of Cold War and Post-Cold War
Periods for Positive Change in Polity Score (*DemMove*)

	Cold War (1950–1987)			Post-Cold War (1988–2000)		
	<i>t</i> – 1 = D	<i>t</i> – 1 = N	<i>t</i> – 1 = A	<i>t</i> – 1 = D	<i>t</i> – 1 = N	<i>t</i> – 1 = A
<i>DemMove</i>	0.708	0.183	-0.019	0.573	0.216	-0.494
(<i>Armpos</i> = 0)	(0.304)	(0.089)	(0.525)	(0.225)	(0.110)	(0.319)
	(.020 P)	(.040 P)	(.917 P)	(.011 P)	(.050 P)	(.122 P)
<i>DemMove</i>	-0.552	-0.066	0.504	-0.510	0.025	0.076
(<i>Armpos</i> = 1)	(0.410)	(0.171)	(0.262)	(0.580)	(0.221)	(0.930)
	(.178 P)	(.697 P)	(.055 P)	(.379 P)	(.909 P)	(.934 P)
<i>Armpos</i>	0.306	0.119	-0.366	0.290	-0.164	-1.346
(<i>DemMove</i> = 0)	(0.178)	(0.124)	(0.181)	(0.529)	(0.179)	(0.787)
	(.086 P)	(.340 P)	(.043 P)	(.583 P)	(.361 P)	(.087 P)
<i>Armpos</i>	-0.954	-0.131	0.156	-0.793	-0.355	-0.775
(<i>DemMove</i> = 1)	(0.466)	(0.166)	(0.536)	(0.330)	(0.183)	(0.506)
	(.041 P)	(.430 P)	(.770 P)	(.016 P)	(.053 P)	(.126 P)
Capability ratio	-0.291	-0.003	1.968	0.044	-0.059	0.016
	(0.163)	(0.030)	(0.690)	(0.055)	(0.033)	(0.179)
	(.074 P)	(.909 P)	(.004 P)	(.427 P)	(.077 P)	(.928 P)
Distance	0.398	-0.360	-0.245	-0.118	-0.008	-0.750
	(0.201)	(0.082)	(0.187)	(0.185)	(0.079)	(0.381)
	(.048 P)	(.000 P)	(.191 P)	(.523 P)	(.917 P)	(.049 P)
Trade dependence	0.643	-0.510	-0.548	-3.213	-0.771	-1.342
	(0.748)	(0.524)	(1.922)	(2.891)	(0.487)	(4.839)
	(.390 P)	(.330 P)	(.776 P)	(.266 P)	(.113 P)	(.782 P)
Threshold1	5.218	-4.855	-6.825	0.782	-1.068	-11.058
	(1.855)	(0.767)	(1.717)	(1.734)	(0.744)	(3.423)
	8.668	-1.406	-3.375	2.919	1.069	-8.920
	(1.867)	(0.737)	(1.700)	(1.760)	(0.744)	(3.429)
		N: 3,927			N: 2,062	
		Log likelihood: -1,069.571			Log likelihood: -538.773	
<i>DemMove</i> × <i>Armpos</i>	-1.26	-0.250	0.523	-1.083	-0.190	0.571
	(0.489)	(0.205)	(0.581)	(0.615)	(0.240)	(1.033)
	(.010 P)	(.223 P)	(.368 P)	(.078 P)	(.427 P)	(.580 P)

Note: D = Divergent; N = Neutral; A = Aligned; *Armpos* = U.S. support for the previous regime.

AutMove, the most general measure of autocratization. The relationship between previous U.S. support and foreign-policy realignment presented to this point is particular to democratization and is not generalizable to regime changes writ large. This means that without knowing whether a future regime change will be either autocratic or democratic in nature (something almost certainly unknown to American policy makers), the existence of U.S. support alone cannot predict the variation in foreign-policy realignment after the collapse of a U.S.-backed regime.

Table 8
Regression Results for *AutMove*

	<i>t</i> - 1 = Divergent	<i>t</i> - 1 = Neutral	<i>t</i> - 1 = Aligned
<i>AutMove</i> (<i>Armpos</i> = 0)	0.267 (0.179) (.136 P)	-0.246 (0.086) (.004 P)	-1.032 (0.312) (.001 P)
<i>AutMove</i> (<i>Armpos</i> = 1)	0.578 (0.282) (.040 P)	0.135 (0.118) (.255 P)	-0.214 (0.253) (.397 P)
<i>Armpos</i> (<i>AutMove</i> = 0)	-0.330 (0.214) (.124 P)	-0.106 (0.090) (.241 P)	-0.359 (0.224) (.110 P)
<i>Armpos</i> (<i>AutMove</i> = 1)	-0.018 (0.238) (.939 P)	0.275 (0.125) (.028 P)	0.459 (0.330) (.164 P)
Capability ratio	-0.034 (0.038) (.366 P)	-0.026 (0.017) (.138 P)	0.577 (0.300) (.054 P)
Distance	0.123 (0.126) (.327 P)	-0.189 (0.046) (.000 P)	-0.318 (0.165) (.055 P)
Trade dependence	-0.950 (0.778) (.222 P)	-0.735 (0.295) (.013 P)	-1.690 (1.726) (.327 P)
Threshold1	2.748 (1.152)	-3.167 (0.435)	-7.405 (1.517)
Threshold2	5.737 (1.149)	-0.178 (0.417)	-4.416 (1.513)
<i>N</i> : 5,989			
Log likelihood: -1,709.8549			
<i>AutMove</i> × <i>Armpos</i>	0.311 (0.321) (.333 P)	0.381 (0.151) (.012 P)	0.818 (0.398) (.040 P)

Note: *Armpos* = U.S. support for previous regime; *AutMove* = Any negative change in polity score.

The evidence reported thus far supports the hypothesis that the interaction of democratic transition and U.S. support, under the Divergent and Neutral preconditions, has a systematic effect on foreign-policy realignment with the United States. To test the robustness of these results, I analyzed several variations of the model. These included trying every specification of the original model, changing the thresholds of the dependent variable, using alternative coding schemes for the U.S. support variable, testing alternative economic variables, adding a control variable for formal alliances, and including a control variable for Muslim populations. In each instance, the original results are robust.³⁵

Discussion

In this study, I have demonstrated 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 or not the United States supported the previous nondemocratic regime.³⁶ This research has several implications for international relations theory. First, these findings demonstrate a previously unexamined relationship between democratization and foreign-policy realignment. Second, by introducing the international political variable of previous U.S. support, this research suggests that studies of democratization and nationalism should not be limited to institutional explanations. Political–historical relationships also affect the content and directionality of the nationalist claims that emerge during democratic transitions. Third, this research contributes to debates about the causes and consequences of anti-Americanism.³⁷ Finally, from a macro perspective, these findings suggest that realist theories that focus only on the effects of external power and interstate threat are missing an important piece of the story. Therefore, concepts such as “soft balancing” are insufficient if they fail to account for the degree to which foreign-policy realignment is the product of domestic political dynamics.

This article also speaks to the consequences of U.S. support for nondemocratic regimes: what happens when America’s foreign-policy goals meet at the crossroads, when the need to support authoritarian regimes in the pursuit of particular national interests collides with the macro-strategy of promoting democratic liberalism?³⁸ Simply put, this research is an inquiry into whether the United States can have its cake and eat it too. My answer is that it cannot, that supporting nondemocratic regimes often undermines the potential benefits for the United States of democratization abroad. There is no doubt that the strategy of supporting current nondemocratic regimes in the likes of Saudi Arabia and Egypt provides vital short-term gains for the United States and must therefore be strongly considered. This research suggests, however, that such actions bring with them considerable risk and lost opportunity. This article provides the first evidence that this Hobbesian choice is a general phenomenon that occurs across time and space.

I have presented evidence that this dynamic is particularly poignant in countries whose foreign-policy preferences are largely dissimilar to those of the United States. Today, there remains a critical set of nondemocratic allies, adversaries, and competitors that fall into this category, including China, Iran, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Syria, Nigeria, Egypt, and North Korea. American foreign-policy makers face very serious tradeoffs when deciding to support nondemocratic regimes. Contrary to existing arguments, this research suggests that these trade-offs cannot be resolved by democratization, a reassertion of American predominance, or a return to more multilateral foreign policies. The legacy of U.S. support shapes the domestic politics of democratic transitions and ultimately conditions foreign-policy realignment with the United States.

Notes

1. I define democratic transition and democratization broadly, as political liberalization toward democracy, regardless of where along the autocracy–democracy continuum that change occurs. This includes but is not limited to full transitions to consolidated democracy.

2. Throughout this article, I use “positive” and “negative” alignment as descriptive, not normative, terms.

3. President Kennedy explained that “There are three possibilities in descending order of preference: a decent democratic regime, a continuation of the Trujillo regime, or a Castro regime. We ought to aim at the first but we really cannot renounce the second until we are sure that we can avoid the third” (Smith 1996, 142).

4. During democratic transitions, violent nationalism often results from the combination of weak representative institutions, undeveloped political parties, uncertain rule of law, and unprofessional media (J. Snyder 2000; Mansfield and Snyder 1995). As Mansfield and Snyder (2005, 10) explain, “the nearly universal emergence of nationalist ideology in the early stages of democratization suggest that its usefulness at this formative political juncture is generic and can be adapted for use by almost any would-be ruling group.”

5. *Pro-Western* and *pro-American* are sometimes used interchangeably. Erik Voeten (2000) has shown that during both the Cold War and post–Cold War periods, there has been a cluster of Western countries whose foreign-policy preferences have been quite similar to those of the United States. He defines the “Western countries” as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the countries of the European Union except the Nordic countries (Voeten 2000, 203).

6. The data set draws from the Polity IV (Marshall and Jagers 2002), Correlates of War, and Affinity of Nations (Gartzke 2006) data sets and includes additional data on arms transfers (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2005), religion (Fish 2002), trade (Gleditsch 2002), and gross domestic product (Gleditsch 2002). Correlates of War variables were incorporated using the EUGene data generation program (Bennett and Stam 2000).

7. I performed standard recoding of country codes for Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, Pakistan, and Vietnam. In keeping with the Polity IV coding, only Russia is considered a continuation of the Soviet Union. The other former Soviet republics are coded as new states. Note that coding these republics as regime changes away from the Soviet Union, which I did not do, would have biased the data in favor of my hypotheses.

8. Following Jagers and Gurr (1995), I devised three regime types: democracy (polity > +6), anocracy (+7 > polity > –7), and autocracy (polity < –6).

9. This five-year extension of the transition period accounts for the fact that the foreign-policy effects of regime change often take some years to occur as the new government consolidates and reformulates the state’s policies. For purposes of scoring the democratic transition, if another polity change occurred during this five-year window, the current transition ended and a new one began.

10. Economic assistance would not serve as a viable alternative measure of U.S. support. As compared to military assistance, it is a less accurate measure both theoretically and empirically. In 2004, for example, the United States had active economic assistance programs in Cuba, Zimbabwe, and the Sudan. The United States has a wide variety of economic assistance programs whose distribution patterns are not dictated by the exigencies of international politics. As compared to military assistance, the United States does not offer economic assistance to its wealthy allies and overprovides (from a strategic, not normative, perspective) to our nonvital partners.

11. Recall that the United States went to war with Iraq in 1991, within years of transferring major conventional weapons to Saddam Hussein.

12. To test the robustness of my results, I also derived and tested U.S. support variables that were both more restrictive (requiring multiple consecutive years of support) and less restrictive (requiring support in any single year of the regime). These alternative measures did not alter the principal findings. See the online appendix, available at www.elyratner.com/Reaping_What_You_Sow_Data/Data_Appendix.pdf, 36–38.

13. The particular motivations behind American foreign policy are beyond the scope of this analysis. Reasons why U.S. policy makers may choose to back nondemocratic governments range from strategically rational to organizational or bureaucratic to ideological or psychological. For example, Allison (1971) examines various theoretical lenses through which to view U.S. foreign-policy making during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

14. To control for fluctuations in the General Assembly's agenda, I subtracted the worldwide annual average of affinity with the United States from each score.

15. Alliance portfolios could be used as an alternative measure of foreign-policy similarity (see Bueno de Mesquita 1975), but this variable is of limited use for developing countries because of widespread nonalignment in the latter half of the twentieth century (see Gartzke 1998; Bennett and Rupert 2003).

16. The thresholds for the raw level of alignment with the United States (adjusted by the annual world average) were set at +.15 and -.15. Using this coding scheme, from 1965 to 1980, ten countries maintained divergent levels of alignment with the United States: Cuba, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, the USSR, Tanzania, Algeria, Syria, and Mongolia. This is in contrast to the eighteen countries that remained aligned during this entire period: Canada, Paraguay, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Spain, Austria, Italy, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, South Africa, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

17. For example, Cuba shifted from aligned to divergent in 1959, and Hungary shifted from divergent to aligned between 1988 and 1990.

18. See the online appendix, 33-35.

19. To control for ephemeral fluctuations, states had to maintain a new level of alignment for three consecutive years for the dependent variable to reflect any change. If they did maintain a new level for three consecutive years, the level of alignment was adjusted going back to the first of those three years.

20. As is convention, I created a capabilities ratio for each country-year by dividing the United States' CINC score by that of the target state.

21. I use the log of distance to temper the variance of the variable and reflect the effect of diminishing returns to distance. Walt (1985) considers close proximity to be a source of increased threat. Brian Lai and Dan Reiter (2000) argue the opposite, that proximity breeds cooperation because states are more likely to face common threats and are more able to intervene on each other's behalf.

22. See the online appendix, 7-20.

23. See the online appendix, 7-11.

24. See the online appendix (2-6) for a further discussion of Markov transition models as well as the specifications of the models used in this research. See Przeworski et al. (2000) and Epstein et al. (2006) for alternative applications of Markov models.

25. The model for *AutoToDemo* did not converge because of the infrequency of that particular type of transition. Although Epstein and O'Halloran (2005) offer a way out of this conundrum—substituting out particular variables until the models converge—I decided to use only the full models that naturally converged.

26. In Table 4, I report the full set of regression coefficients for *DemMove*. The online appendix (12-15) reports the regression coefficients for the other measures of democratic transition used in this study.

27. A positive coefficient implies that the probability of a realignment toward the United States increases when the independent variable increases ($Armpos = 1$). On the other hand, a negative coefficient implies that the probability of a realignment away from the United States increases as the independent variable increases ($Armpos = 1$).

28. I also ran the model without the U.S. support variable. As part of the robustness checks, the results are reported in the online appendix, 49. In each instance, the coefficients for democratization were insignificant, indicating that the effects of democratization alone on foreign-policy realignment are not well understood without the interaction of previous U.S. support.

29. Full predicted probabilities for each measure of democratic transition are available in the online appendix, 16-20.

30. *DemMove* is the only measure of democratic transition for which the interaction term is positive.

31. See the online appendix, 39-43. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is that if a country is doing well economically and elites are committed to the continuation of current policies, they may seek to maintain the foreign-policy orientation of the ancien régime (see Haggard and Kaufman 1997; Haggard and Webb 1994). This finding shadows the finding of Przeworski et al. (2000) that although high levels of economic development do not cause transitions to democracy, they do tend to prevent democratic backsliding. In a similar vein, the results here suggest that high levels of GDP do not cause countries to positively realign toward the United States, but they do tend to prevent negative realignment once a country has entered the aligned category. This remains a topic for future research.

32. The results presented in this study are robust across the Cold War and post-Cold War eras. That being said, it is likely that the existence of alternative patrons affects the realignment decisions of new regimes. This may be particularly true in multipolar systems, which could offer both numerous sources for realignment bonuses and multiple outlets for hostile externalization and diversion. In the years ahead, the rise of alternative sources of power in the likes of the European Union or China may provide an opportunity to further test these systemic factors.

33. For this not to be true, U.S. policy makers would have to know in advance whether regime change would lead either to democratization or autocratization. This is a question with which political scientists have struggled, with limited success, for decades.

34. I use five distinct measures of autocratization. The full regression results and associated predicted probabilities of autocratic transition are available in the online appendix, 21-30.

35. Full regression results for all the robustness tests are available in the online appendix, 31-49.

36. An extension to this argument could examine whether a similar phenomenon occurs with other superpowers, such as the Soviet Union, or other great powers or regional powers, such as France, England, or China. In this initial study, I chose to focus on the United States for three reasons: First, the substantive contradiction—that between democracy promotion and support for nondemocratic regimes—is most poignant and relevant to the United States. I would find no burning puzzle in the finding that nascent democratic regimes did not realign more closely with the Soviet Union. Second, a similar study of European powers would necessitate a rather different analysis, likely centering on the socioeconomic and cultural legacies of colonialism. Finally, the scope of U.S. support allowed for a worldwide examination that would not be possible with other countries. That being said, the effects of government-to-government support on future foreign-policy realignment with non-U.S. great powers remains an area for future research.

37. For a comprehensive analysis of anti-Americanism, see Katzenstein and Keohane (2007).

38. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as the “friendly tyrants dilemma” (see Pipes and Garfinkle 1991; Staniland 1991).

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