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Why Can't We Be Friends?
Rapprochement in US Foreign Policy

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The US has pursued ineffective foreign policies toward some countries for decades. In other cases, the US has changed foreign policies frequently or reversed policies quickly, even before allowing the chance to see the policy come into fruition. North Korean policy and the global gag rule represent US foreign policies subject to change depending on the political party of the president. By contrast, there are foreign policies that seem impossible to alter even if the president desires a change of course, such as the US commitment to Israel and the Cuban embargo. Policies that sever and normalize diplomatic relations are significant because they impact the entire population of a targeted country. What broader policy goals can explain major shifts in US foreign policies, such as severing or normalizing bilateral relations? What drives the US to change the course of its foreign policy, and what conditions must exist for changes to occur? During the Cold War, the answers to these questions seemed simple; the US attempted to contain communism and vied for power with the Soviet Union. These explanations no longer apply to today's unipolar system, and there is a need to understand policy reversals in recent decades. In this study I explore what specific factors lead the US to reverse its policy toward a previously hostile country and establish a policy of rapprochement in a post-Cold War world.

Understanding the attempts at rapprochement between the US and Vietnam, Iran, Libya, and Cuba is important because these policy changes were not inevitable, and unlike several other cases of US rapprochement, they occurred in a post-Cold War, unipolar system. A country's relationship with the US is a defining factor for its economic and political success, and by extension its very survival. Therefore, understanding when, how, why, and to what extent of success the US reverses its foreign policy in regards to another state in general is critical for

decision-makers not only in the US, but abroad as well. This research also has implications for future rapprochement between the US and North Korea, Russia, and Iran.

Two particular factors were chosen to be the focus of this study since they are likely critical in US policy in the pursuit of rapprochement. The first factor examined in this study is a perception of potential gains for the economic interests of the US. As economic gains become more apparent in a previously hostile country, the US is more likely to pursue rapprochement. This idea is formed on the basis that the perception of economic interests produces domestic pressures which influence US foreign policy decision-makers. The second factor arises from international pressure for a shift in US policy. When such pressure increases, the US is more likely to pursue a policy of rapprochement. At the core of this idea is the conception that the structure and institution of the international system can sway US foreign policy decisions.

The first section of this paper reviews the existing literature on the cases of US rapprochement in recent decades, theoretical understandings of change in foreign policy, and international relations theory. The next section describes the logic behind choosing the case of Libya, Iran, Vietnam, and Cuba to analyze and compare, as well as the primary and secondary sources for my research. For each case, I first provide historical background and the timeline of rapprochement, then evaluate the presence and degree of influence of the two factors, perception of gains for economic interest and international pressure to change policy. The last section includes discussion and analysis of my results, including implications for future US rapprochement and international relations theory.

Literature Review

Theory on foreign policy-decision making can offer some insight on the necessary factors and conditions for changing the course of a policy, but there is a lack of research on rapprochement specifically. In the theoretical literature, there is a significant divide between actor-specific analysis and structure-specific analysis, and this divide dictates the way foreign policy decision-making is studied and is worth more exploration. The major theoretical approaches to international relations are reliant on a structural understanding of analysis.

Structural Analysis in International Relations Theory

The most significant division in the international relations theory literature is a disagreement on which level of analysis should be used to analyze international politics and produce theory. Essentially, scholars are split into two factions: those in favor of analysis of the state actor (referring to the state's president or government), and those in favor of analysis on the structure of the international system. The division over state-specific analysis and structure-specific analysis is crucial not only for understanding the literature on international relations theory, but also because any study using international relations theory must determine which mode of analysis to pursue, or how to integrate the two appropriately.

Structural analysis of foreign policy decision-making is represented by the four major approaches to international relations theory, from which much of the rest of the body theory is based. These theoretical approaches are realism, liberalism, constructivism, and Marxism (Nye and Welch 2013, 62). Of these approaches, realism and liberalism have historically been the most accepted and are the most influential. Considering the scope of this study is post-Cold War

US foreign policy, Marxism does not apply to this context. Constructivism, as a hybrid of actor and structural analysis, will be discussed in the next section.

Realism is characterized by the beliefs that states are the most important actors in the international system, the international system is anarchic, and the goal of politics is to attain power (Nye and Welch 2013, 62). International relations are driven by states' self interests, mainly security and power (Nye and Welch 2013, 64). Neorealism emphasizes the importance of structure in the international system, especially in terms of balance of power among states. Liberalism, by contrast, views humans as less selfish, and therefore state interests include welfare and justice as well as security. Unlike realists, liberalists do not perceive international relations as a zero-sum game. Liberalism emphasizes cooperation, and neoliberalism stresses the importance of international institutions for the pursuit and establishment of international peace. Neoliberalism is also associated with free-market economics and the international pursuit of economic gains (Nye and Welch 2013, 64-67).

Much of international relations theory scholarship acknowledges realist interpretations, especially in terms of state interests in security and power. Glenn Palmer and T. Clifton Morgan identify themselves as realists because their original theory focuses on a state's self-interest; however, they claim neorealism is mistaken in identifying only one primary national interest for a state. Instead they propose a "two-good" theory, which argues a state pursues two goods: change in the international status quo if it suits a state's preferences, and maintenance of the international status quo if change does not suit a state's preferences (Palmer and Morgan 2010, 15). The two-good theory succeeds where neorealism fails in explaining counterintuitive and

self-contradicting state behaviors. This is because the two-good theory evaluates foreign policy behaviors as a larger portfolio (Palmer and Morgan 2010, 17), which is a useful approach for a comparative case study.

Like Palmer and Morgan, Mark Beeson and Richard Higgott identify themselves as realists, but they highlight the limitations of theory based on structural analysis. Beeson and Higgott argue US foreign policy has changed due to the unipolar structure of the international system after end of the Cold War (Beeson and Higgott 2005, 1175). At the same time, Beeson and Higgott claim that US foreign policy has always been mediated by US domestic interests rather than the logic of the international system (Beeson and Higgott 2005, 1175). By maintaining that the US exercises its economic policy as an arm of its security policy in contradiction of its liberal principles (Beeson and Higgott 2005, 1180-1181), Beeson and Higgott argue that a state can switch between a liberalist structure and a realist structure. David Welch uses this argument as a rejection of both realism and liberalism, as they can only explain “the behavior of the states whose leaders choose to subscribe to them” (Welch 2005, 7), rather than the structure of the international system itself. Beeson and Higgott’s and Welch’s arguments establish a need for refined, specific, and testable international relations theories to exceed the limits of realism and liberalism.

Realist and liberalist theories use the structure of the international system to explain and predict a state’s foreign policy, and thus states that the international system influences the US to change course in its foreign policy. However, many scholars argue that the main structural explanations for state behavior are too simplistic and fail to account for anomalies or historical

and cultural context. Many scholars favor actor-specific analysis instead of structural analysis, and increasingly scholars are exploring constructivist combinations of the two.

Actor-Specific Analysis

In Valerie Hudson's literature review of developments in actor-specific theory, she argues that international relations are between countries, which are made up of humans, and as such, human decision-makers are the crucial actors (Hudson 2005, 1). Hudson categorizes the interdisciplinary, integrated explanations of actor-specific analysis into individual characteristics and national/societal characteristics (Hudson 2005, 10). National characteristics of an actor include culture and domestic political imperatives, the most influential of which are elite and public opinion (Hudson 2005, 12). This establishes domestic pressures as a factor of actor-specific analysis, an important distinction for deciding whether a researcher should choose to perform an actor-specific analysis or a structural-specific analysis. It also supports my hypothesis that the perception of economic interests, especially by the elite, applies domestic pressure onto an individual US foreign policy decision-maker to make a change.

A number of scholars agree with Hudson and have executed the type of integrative explanations she posits. Welch agrees with Hudson's emphasis on actor-specific analysis, claiming individual decision-makers can take cues from any level of analysis (Welch 2005, 13). While Ambrose and Brinkley incorporate both actor and structural explanations into their historical analysis, they apply a heavier focus on actor-specific analysis (Ambrose and Brinkley 2011, 362-7). Similarly, Eugene Wittkopf and Christopher Jones structure their US foreign

policy textbook to focus on the bureaucracy and individuals as foreign policy decision-makers (Jones and Wittkopf 2008, 325, 453, 491).

Some scholars attribute foreign policy decision-making to domestic forces themselves, rather than attributing agency to the actor, but these understandings still work within the framework of actor analysis. Jack Holmes's defense of mood/interest theory argues that US foreign policy is ultimately dictated by the moods or interests of the American public; the American public creates a domestic environment or pressure to which government leaders respond (Holmes 1985, 20). Frank Gadinger and Dirk Peter's analysis of feedback takes the importance of public opinion a step further, arguing that information itself acts as the source ultimately responsible for foreign policy decisions, as it is the link between the environment and the decision-maker (Gadinger and Peter 2016, 259-260). These arguments are important in this body of literature because they represent domestic factors which influence foreign policy decision-makers.

Recent scholarship shows a growing trend towards a combination of actor and structural analysis, inspired by constructivism theory. Constructivism maintains that actors and structures interact and social interaction causes changes in the nature of the international system (Nye and Welch 2013, 70). Social constructivist scholars attempt to incorporate a role for actor-specific theory within a structural context using sociological and psychological concepts. Hafner-Burton, Kahler, and Montgomery present network analysis as complementary to the structural approach (Hafner-Burton et al. 2009, 560). They argue that patterns of association between states define, enable, and restrict foreign policy while recognizing human actors as the building blocks of the

international system (Hafner-Burton et al. 2009, 583). Harnisch claims role theory is intended to explain the interaction between actors and structure by identifying the roles states ascribe to each other and the roles they achieve for themselves, mirroring the socialization of individual humans in a society (Harnisch et al. 2011, 11). It is important to understand these perspectives not only because they can be applied to cases of foreign policy change, but also because they act as models for combining structural and actor analyses. This may be the most holistic approach to understanding foreign policy changes. While the two hypotheses of my research seem to take opposing sides on the actor-structure debate, this literature demonstrates it is possible for both to be valid and inclusive of each other.

Change in Foreign Policy Theory

The majority of this review has focused on characteristics of international relations theories in order to identify theories which can help explain why the US reverses its foreign policies to pursue rapprochement. This was necessary because international relations theory specifically addressing rapprochement is either too rare to find or does not exist. However, there is theoretical work on general changes in foreign policy, and while this work has largely been used to explain wars and trade deals, it can be useful for understanding rapprochement.

Charles Hermann's work defines major changes in foreign policy as changes in adjustment, program, goals, and international orientation. Hermann defines four decision-making forces when a need for policy change becomes apparent: individual leaders, the bureaucracy, domestic restructure, and external shock (Hermann 1990, 13). He describes the necessary conditions for change to occur and the details of the decision-making process (Hermann 1990,

5). One of the main theories he posits is that decision-makers must perceive a change in the status quo for a change in government policy to be triggered (Hermann 1990, 3). This change could be domestic popular opinion, threat perception, or a change in the economic-political system (Hermann 1990, 12). While this work has valuable implications for US policy reversal and rapprochement, Hermann's definitions of potential policy-influencing shifts in the status quo are untested and ambiguous. The required conditions for a decision-maker to begin contemplating changing policy as described by Hermann are too vague to use as anything other than a starting point for understanding why the process of rapprochement begins.

Unlike Hermann, Welch posits just three specific hypotheses and tests them empirically, and he considers the results positive enough they can be considered theory (Welch 2005, 184). His theoretical conclusions are: foreign policy change is less frequent in highly bureaucratic states; changes in foreign policy occur when the existing policy fails either repeatedly or catastrophically; and leaders are more likely to take the risk of changing a policy in order to avoid losses than they are to take a risk in order to realize equal gains (Welch 2005, 30).

Hermann's work complements Welch's work well. They both produce theories that can be widely applicable, are not restricted to the conceptions of realism or liberalism, and can be integrated with each other well. Welch's theory that policy change is less common in more bureaucratic states can be explained by Hermann's complex decision-making model, which Hermann claims is more difficult for bureaucracies than it is for single actors to follow because policy change becomes easier the more consensus there is (Hermann 1990, 19).

Implications for US Rapprochement

With the main theoretical questions and their implications for rapprochement now discussed, scholars' representation of the historical, political, and theoretical contexts the Iran, Libya, Vietnam, and Cuba cases can be evaluated for their contributions to the study of US foreign policy.

Matthew Fehrs tests several hypotheses to illustrate certain conditions required for US rapprochement. He analyzes the success of early US-Vietnamese rapprochement and compares it to the failed US-Iranian rapprochement. Fehrs argues that both economic interests and a change in threat perception improved rapprochement in the case of Vietnam, but there was not a significant perception of economic incentives in the case of Iran for rapprochement to succeed there. Frederick Brown's analysis of US-Vietnamese rapprochement differs from Fehrs's conclusions; while he acknowledges China's rising power as a concern of the US, Brown explicitly rejects the notion that rapprochement continued during the Obama administration purely due to a geopolitical strategy to balance regional power with China, which is the popular neorealist understanding of the policy (Brown 2010, 333). Instead, Brown emphasizes context and the wide array of relevant actors and influences. Unlike Fehrs, Brown does not propose a hypothesis based on a theory of rapprochement, but he does make his understanding of the nature of rapprochement clear; it is a long, gradual process, consisting of small steps and spanning decades. Fehrs does not consider rapprochement in this way and ends his study of US-Vietnamese rapprochement after 1995, abandoning two decades of potential analysis. Brown's work includes this time frame, but it lacks the theoretical contributions of Fehrs's work.

Fehrs's account of the failed attempt at rapprochement between the US and Iran lacks thorough analysis of the case study as well as significant insight on rapprochement. According to Fehrs, US rapprochement with Iran failed because neither economic opportunity nor shared fear of a common threat were present (Fehrs 2016, 142). He also acknowledges alternative explanations: the likelihood of rapprochement was perceived as small from the beginning, and hawkish leadership failed to create incentives for either side to want to continue reconciliation (Fehrs 2016, 142).

Since the success of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, another, more successful wave of US-Iranian rapprochement seems possible. Najimdeem Bakare analyzes the beginning of a new US-Iranian rapprochement, arguing it was made possible by multilateral efforts in Europe. Unlike Fehrs, Bakare combines this structure-specific argument with an actor-specific argument claiming policy-makers in both the US and Iran want to sustain rapprochement (Bakare 2016, 159-160). Bakare identifies both leadership personalities and shifts in domestic public opinion, both in the US and in Iran, as theoretical grounds for upholding rapprochement (Bakare 2016, 155). Assuming the continued success of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, more research needs to be done on transforming US-Iranian relations and the process of rapprochement. For now, scholars should explore a more thorough, comprehensive analysis of the previous failed attempt at rapprochement between the US and Iran.

Scholarship on US rapprochement with Libya differs very little, and shares some commonalities with the case study of Iranian rapprochement. Like Bakare, Jentleson and Whytock's detailed account of the efficacy of US coercive diplomacy in their analysis of the

2003 US-Libyan rapprochement emphasizes the importance of multilateralism in establishing rapprochement, especially in regards to implementing economic sanctions (Jentleson and Whytock 2005, 82). Wittkopf and Jones also argue it was the sanctions that pushed Libya toward cooperation in renouncing its nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons (Jones and Wittkopf 2008, 66). Interpreting the aftermath of Libya's disarmament proves to be more useful for the study of rapprochement as a process. Dana Moss outlines important lessons from the US-Libyan rapprochement, one of the most prominent of which claims that Libya gained more from the new positive relationship than the US did. Moss argues Libya enjoyed a significant increase in international status by agreeing to disarmament (Moss 2010, 15). Moss approaches this case with a cost-benefit perspective; the US saw little benefits for itself after Libya's renouncement of its weapons, while Libya utilized its elevated international status to promote its own national interests (Moss 2010, 15).

Explanations for US-Cuban diplomatic normalization are not widely available since it is the most recent of these case studies and because the continuation of rapprochement is in danger in the current political situation of the US. Both Jiménez and LeoGrande provide international, security, economic, and domestic contexts for US-Cuban relations. Jiménez thoroughly explains the obstacles which had prevented the US and Cuba from normalizing relations (Jiménez 2012, 362). Similarly, LeoGrande analyzes the factors which maintained the same, ineffective US foreign policy for decades (LeoGrande 2015, 478). They both focus largely on negative pressures which prevent change in foreign policy, rather than the positive factors for change which would be meaningful for understanding the causes of rapprochement.

LeoGrande's focus on international pressure, especially from Latin American states, to soften US approach to Cuba implies the influence of the international community impacts US foreign policy change (LeoGrande 2015, 476). Jiménez offers a different approach in her analysis of the national interests and benefits that the US and Cuba could share if they pursued rapprochement. Unlike Moss, Jiménez conveys that US-Cuban rapprochement would be mutually beneficial in realist and cost-effective terms (Jiménez 2012, 368). Jiménez's and LeoGrande's works cover much of the necessary background for understanding US-Cuban relations prior to normalization, but they are extremely limited in their ability to explain the US motivation for rapprochement. Generally, there is a need for more scholarly research on US-Cuban rapprochement, its causes, its theoretical implications, and its future prospects.

This literature review has evaluated the main theoretical divide among international relations theorists and its implications for future theoretical research. The theory is limited in regards explanations which can be applied to rapprochement. By interpreting theory on foreign policy changes and integrating theories from different theorists, I suggest that alone these theories were insufficient, but together they could offer insight on why US rapprochement occurs. Finally, I reviewed the historical, political, and theoretical contexts and implications of the cases of Vietnam, Iran, Libya, and Cuba. Historical interpretations and explanations for rapprochement in these case studies are available, but there is an absence of political and theoretical explanation. Therefore, there is a need for a comparative case study to identify main factors in US foreign policy decision-making and its implications for international relations theory. In the following section, I discuss how my research is designed to accomplish that goal.

Research Design

To analyze the the first main factor of this study, US perception of economic benefits in the targeted country, I evaluate relevant statements from presidents and Congressional committee hearings; examine significant changes in the trade markets of Iran, Libya, Cuba, and Vietnam in the relevant time periods; and identify any interest of US businesses to work in these countries. If these factors demonstrate US businesses and the US government perceive economic opportunities in the case study countries, this perception acts as a domestic political and economic incentive to normalize relations.

The second factor, international pressure and support for changing policy, is analyzed using presidential and government official statements, and Congressional committee hearings. I also evaluate positive or negative American sentiment abroad, international leaders' opinions regarding US policy which are available through press conferences with the US president and news releases concerning international organizations, including statements from leaders in United Nations and regional international bodies such as the Organization of American States.

The domain of reversal of US foreign policy and pursuit of rapprochement includes the cases of rapprochement with Iran, Libya, Vietnam, and Cuba. These cases were chosen because they all occurred in an international system no longer dominated by Cold War bipolar politics. Therefore they can provide insight on US policy toward other countries in a unipolar, US-dominated system. While they share some economic, security, and geopolitical explanations, the policy changes occurred under different presidents of different political parties, in different regions, and at different paces.

This research will be conducted through a comparative case study. This is appropriate because my research is exploratory, as changes in rapprochement with Vietnam and Cuba are quite recent. A comparative case study is also useful for this research because it is primarily explanatory, as it attempts to find a causal relationship for a phenomenon (Johnson and Reynolds 2012, 196). Including four cases in this study strengthens the study's internal validity because the analysis will be repeated four times, and including the case of failed rapprochement with Iran could provide valuable evidence through a method of difference approach (Johnson and Reynolds 2012, 198).

This study is non-experimental, as I have no control over the subjects or the environment of the study. A disadvantage of this design is that it will be difficult to know that I have included all the important antecedent variables; there are complicated histories between the US and the other four countries included this study, and there could be bias in determining what historical information is included in the study. The internal validity of this study could be weakened by interaction of variables which were not included in my hypotheses, such as personal relationships between diplomats, the interests of third-party mediators, or domestic pressure from within the isolated countries. The external validity could be weakened by the assumption that the causation found is too deterministic and cannot be applied generally (Johnson and Reynolds 2012, 200).

To evaluate both factors, I look primarily at official statements from US presidents, Congressional hearings, and US government documents, which are used to measure the US government's perceptions of historical events, strategic concerns, and official descriptions of subsequent policy changes. While these are strong primary sources, they are limited in their

scope. There is important information which I cannot gain access to, such as private conversations between American and foreign diplomats, or intentions of leaders in private businesses. Furthermore, presidential statements are prone to framing information, including president's perception of information, for political purposes and require some analysis. So analysis of official statements must also be careful to avoid misinterpreting or over-analyzing the relevant remarks.

In addition to official statements and Congressional hearings, to specifically address economic factor, I also use statistics from secondary sources on relevant market trends and where appropriate, domestic public opinion polls. To investigate the factor of international pressure, I will look at official statements from joint presidential press conferences and international organizations. Like presidential remarks, careful analysis and contextualization of these statements are necessary but could pose a challenge. Another logistical challenge of using these sources is choosing which statements to include, considering the multitude of options and large scope of international bodies. Finally, I will include polling data on global attitudes toward the US in the relevant periods. Because I cannot prove a causal relationship between US foreign policy and international opinions alone, this data will act as secondary evidence to support my analyses of international statements.

Case 1: The US and Libya

Background

In December 1979, a mob attacked and set fire to the United States embassy in Tripoli, Libya. Embassy officials returned to the US, and the embassy was closed, thus severing

diplomatic ties between the US and Libya. The US placed Libya on the list of state sponsors of terrorism, closed the Libyan embassy in Washington, and expelled Libyan officials by 1981. In response to Libya's support of international terrorism, President Ronald Reagan declared a National Emergency with respect to Libya, ordered military air strikes against Libya, froze Libyan assets in the US, and imposed economic sanctions, banning most trade and travel to Libya by 1986 (Jentleson and Whytock 2005). In 1996, the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act gave the president the power to impose sanctions on foreign companies with significant investments in Libya's oil industry (Newnham 2009). Secret negotiations between British, Libyan, and US officials had begun late in the Clinton administration but met little success. By late 2002, the international community was aware that Libya repeatedly received illegal shipments of technology for the development weapons of mass destruction. In March 2003, Libyan intelligence officials approached British officials to propose entering negotiations to dismantle Libya's WMD program, and a new round of negotiations were established between British, Libyan, and US officials (Indyck 2004).

In response to Libya's disarmament efforts and Gaddafi's renunciation of terrorism, in 2004 the US terminated Libya's subjection to the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, lifted most of its remaining travel and trade sanctions on Libya, ended the national emergency, ended the freeze of Libyan assets, and allowed the import of Libyan oil into the US. In May 2005, the Bush administration removed Libya from the list of state sponsors of terrorism and announced full normalization of diplomatic relations with Libya (Jentleson and Whytock 2005).

Factor 1: Perception of Economic Gains in Libya

Libya's economy is almost entirely reliant on oil and gas exports, so it is likely that oil was perceived by elites and the public alike as a potential economic benefit of strengthening a US-Libyan relations. Libya experienced a rise of 200 million exported oil barrels per day between 2000 and 2004, as well as a 29% growth in trade from 2002 to 2003 (International Monetary Fund 2017). American interest in new sources of foreign oil during Bush's first presidential term is understandable given the context of the Iraq War; after years of a consistent annual rise in oil imports from Iraq, the years 2000, 2001, and 2003 experienced the largest fluctuations, including the largest drops, in the past two decades (US Energy Information Administration 2017). This inconsistency would form a political environment concerned about oil importers. Concern about energy among the American public, however, was at a record low, with only 22% of Americans reporting they believed the energy situation in the US was very serious in 2002 (Newport 2017).

The national economic interest in oil among elites was present from the earliest discussions future of US-Libyan relations. On February 26, 2004, two months after US-Libyan rapprochement began, in a hearing before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations titled "Libya- Next Steps in US Relations," Assistant Secretary of State William Burns informed the committee of the low cost, high quality, and magnitude of Libya's oil reserves, citing research that concluded Libya was the second best oil and gas prospect in the world. Burns stated with confidence there was enormous interest in Libya among American oil companies. On March 16, 2005, in a hearing before the House Committee on International Relations, Burns was asked to

speak about the developing opportunities to access Libyan oil and about the fact that early in 2003 Gaddafi had called on other Arab oil-producing states to invoke an oil embargo on the US. Burns claimed that preparing for this embargo had “given way to plans for doubling Libyan oil production in the next few years,” which considering the 11 new oil exploration contracts in Libya won by US firms at that point, was a good sign for US oil imports from Libya.

Not only were Congress and the State Department open about interest in Libyan oil, President Bush publicly spoke about Libyan oil before rapprochement began. In 2001, Bush was asked if the US should look at easing economic sanctions on Iran, Iraq, and Libya in the interest of importing more oil into the US. Bush responded he had “no intention as of this moment for taking sanctions off of countries like Iran or Libya...” (George W. Bush 2001). This response is committed to the UN Resolutions on Libya’s sanctions and does not demonstrate any urgent interest in Libya’s oil. However, the fact the a reporter chose to ask this question not only demonstrates an existing speculation that the US would alter its policy toward a hostile state to pursue an economic interest, but it also suggests the existence of a perception that prioritizes US economic interests more than commitment to international agreements. Similarly, a 2002 interview for the *Wall Street Journal* asked Bush if he was concerned about the possibility of losing oil import partners and if Libya could ever be a viable source of oil for the US. Bush responded, “Well it could, absolutely.” It is clear that Bush intended this answer to be supportive of US energy policy reform in order to encourage “diversification away from places like Iraq” (George W. Bush 2002); however, the president’s initial response of “absolutely” demonstrates he understands there was a high perception of US interests in Libyan oil.

Factor 2: International Pressure to Normalize Relations with Libya

At the time of the beginning negotiations between the US and Libya, US foreign policy, especially in the Middle East, was viewed in the context of the Iraq War. Global attitudes toward the US worsened in response to the Bush administration's actions in Iraq; from 2000 to 2002, the percent of populations with a favorable view of the US decreased in twenty out of twenty-seven countries studied. Notably, favorability of the US in allies Argentina, Germany, and Turkey fell by 16, 17, and 22 points respectively in that two year period. 75% of French respondents, 54% of Germans, and 44% of British respondents believed the US used force in Iraq to control Iraqi oil (Heimlich 2002). After the 2003 invasion of Iraq, anti-American and anti-Bush sentiments flourished. French and German leaders spoke against the Iraq War at the United Nations, and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan described the war as illegal (MacAskill 2004). This unpopularity amongst US allies and the larger international community created international pressure for the Bush administration to succeed in nonproliferation and counterterrorism in the Middle East in order to justify its hardline approach to Iraq.

As rapprochement with Libya began, Bush and his administration frequently cited it as an example of larger success in the region, made possible by the Iraq War. In three different public statements in January 2004, Bush claimed that Libya chose to give up its weapons of mass destruction and renounce terrorism because the invasion of Iraq gave the US credibility: “Nine months of intense negotiations...succeeded with Libya, while twelve years of diplomacy did not [with Iraq]. And one reason is clear: For diplomacy to be effective, words must be credible, and no one can now doubt the word of America” (George W. Bush 2004). Successful disarmament

and rapprochement with Libya, then, could justify the US position in the Iraq. Similarly, Assistant Secretary of State Paula DeSutter testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on February 26, 2004 attributes Libya's decision to disarm to the efforts the State Department made to change the "cost-benefit calculations of proliferators and would-be proliferators around the world." As a senator on the Foreign Relations Committee, Joe Biden agreed with DeSutter and stated that the agreement with Libya could represent a model for future relations with other rogue states, demonstrating an understanding that improving relations with Libya would help to improve other US bilateral relations.

Case 2: The US and Vietnam

Background

US-Vietnamese diplomatic relations were severed in 1975 when the DVR took Saigon in the Vietnam War, and US tightened the trade restrictions of the embargo on Vietnam. After the war ended, the first attempts at diplomatic normalization occurred under President Carter in 1977. These negotiations failed in 1978, when Vietnam signified continued hostility towards the US by signing a security pact with the Soviet Union. Between 1978 and 1989, the US held little interest in normalizing bilateral relations because Vietnam was aligned with the Soviet Union, was occupying Cambodia militarily, and was not cooperating on issues concerning prisoners of war (Brown 2010, 350).

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989, Vietnam lost its major trading partner and its promise of security, which led it to withdraw its military from Cambodia. In response, Washington presented to Vietnam a plan for normalization in 1991. This plan included US aid

for political and economic development in Vietnam in return for Vietnam's cooperation in the UN-supported peace settlement for Cambodia. Vietnam cooperated with these terms between 1991 and 1993, signifying a willingness toward compromise and cooperation. In 1993, the US Senate cleared the way for Vietnam to receive aid from the IMF and World Bank, and President Clinton officially lifted the trade embargo on Vietnam in 1994. Official rapprochement was announced, and embassies were opened in 1995, despite the fact that prisoners of war issues were still unresolved and seen as a major obstacle for normalizing relations. Throughout the early 2000s, there were successful diplomatic visits between the two countries, aid and trade increased. Despite these improvements in relations, human rights remained an obstacle in US-Vietnamese rapprochement. In 2004, the US declared Vietnam a Country of Particular Concern because of their human rights abuses (Brown 2010, 321).

Significant developments in US-Vietnamese relations were made during Obama's administration. In 2014, Obama eased restrictions of an arms ban which originated from the Vietnam War, and in 2016, Obama fully lifted the arms embargo despite little progress on the human rights issues in Vietnam. Obama continued to significantly build military ties with Vietnam for the rest of his administration (Harris 2016).

Factor 1: Perception of Economic Gains in Vietnam

In a 1993 speech, Secretary of State Warren Christopher stated there were "strong business incentives" for improved relations with Vietnam. Prominent US companies, including Citibank, Bank of America, General Electric, Caterpillar, and Mobil Oil lobbied Congress for better relations with Vietnam as they saw the success of Vietnam's economic reforms (Brown

2010, 321). They were correct in their assessment of Vietnam's economic success; between 1991 and 1993, Vietnam's private sector grew by about \$1.5 billion which marked its most significant growth since 1985 and one of two periods of growth in the past three decades (World Bank 2017). These companies were concerned other states would invest in Vietnam and US businesses would be left out because of US economic sanctions. This pressure from the business community soon outweighed the (Fehrs 2016, 143). This is a key reason for lifting the embargo on Vietnam just one year after rapprochement began and before the settlement of the prisoners of war issue.

When Clinton announced the end of the trade embargo on Vietnam, he was asked if the decision was giving up leverage over Vietnam in regards to their unresolved issues, to which he responded that the purpose of ending the embargo was to make positive steps toward resolving those issues. He was then asked about the size and opportunities of Vietnam's market, and he responded that he knew nothing of Vietnam's market: "I wanted to make sure that the trade questions did not enter into this decision. I never had a briefing on it, and we never had a discussion about it" (William Clinton 1994). While Clinton may have wanted to keep discussions of new trade possibilities separate from the decision to end the embargo itself, this question and Clinton's preparedness for this question demonstrate that the president, US businesses, and the media perceived real economic benefits at the time of significant steps toward rapprochement.

Obama's administration also saw increased economic opportunities in Vietnam at the time that Obama loosened and then ended the arms embargo. From 2010 to 2014 private sector investment and trade in Vietnam increased by \$60 billion, the sharpest increase Vietnam has seen (World Bank 2017). In a joint news conference in 2016 with Vietnamese President Quang,

Obama stated that the US was currently the seventh largest investor in Vietnam, but he hoped the US would become the first largest investor. He claimed this was one of the goals of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (Barack Obama 2016).

Factor 2: International Pressure to Normalize Relations with Vietnam

When Clinton began normalizing relations with Vietnam in 1994-1995, there was not significant, clear international pressure to do so. In his remarks regarding lifting the trade embargo February 3, 1994, Clinton attributed the decision only to progress on domestic concerns. In his declaration of normalized relations with Vietnam on July 11, 1995, Clinton mentioned “bringing Vietnam into the community of nations,” and “working for a free and peaceful Vietnam in stable and peaceful Asia,” but this is the extent of his discussion of the international implications for what rapprochement with Vietnam could mean for the international system (William Clinton 1995).

Pressure to continue rapprochement and reverse US policy created by the international system is much easier to identify during the Obama administration. China’s growing power and assertiveness in Southeast Asia influenced Obama to “pivot” to Asia and strengthen military ties in the region, including with Vietnam (Brown 2010, 330). In his May 2016 press conference with President Quang, Obama stated that both the US and Vietnam were committed regional order in the South China Sea (Barack Obama 2016), which China increasingly encroached into over the course of the Obama administration. When asked if the end of the arms embargo was related to China’s increased assertiveness, Obama claimed it was not. However, Nguyen Ngoc Truong, president of Vietnam's Center for Strategic Studies and International Development, claimed the

development was symbolic of a larger “development of strategic partnership,” and that “China should think twice over anything they can do to Vietnam or the South China Sea” (Liptack 2016). By improving its relationship with Vietnam and ending the arms embargo, the US could strengthen its military ties with Vietnam as well as its military presence in the region in order to combat China’s growth as a hegemon.

Case 3: The US and Cuba

Background

In May 1959, the newly empowered Castro regime enacted the Agrarian Reform Law which expropriated land owned by US businesses and compensated them for the value they had reported on their taxes. In response, the US established an economic embargo with Cuba banning all trade except for food and medicine in 1960, and President Eisenhower authorized the CIA to train Cuban refugees to overthrow the Castro regime. In 1961 the US severed all diplomatic relations with Cuba in an attempt to economically sabotage Fidel Castro’s regime and ultimately cause the failure of the socialist revolution from within. Later that year, President Kennedy sent trained Cuban refugees to invade Cuba through the Bay of Pigs, an embarrassing failure for the US. After the invasion, Castro deepened Cuba’s ties with the Soviet Union, especially in terms of security and defense, which led to the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. In order to ensure Cuba’s economic collapse and damage the Castro regime, after the fall of the Soviet Union the US Congress passed the Helms-Burton Act which made the embargo federal law that only Congress can lift .

In 2009, Obama lifted all restrictions on family travel and remittances to Cuba, and he loosened general travel restrictions. Two years later, he allowed non-family remittances to Cuba and allowed some flights to Cuba. In 2014, Cuba and the US released all remaining prisoners, and the two countries announced they would begin to normalize US-Cuban relations. Cuba was removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism in 2015, commercial flights between Cuba and the US were restored, some trade restrictions were loosened on major Cuban exports. In 2016 Obama visited Cuba, becoming the first US president to visit in 85 years and in the same year the US and Cuba officially reopened their embassies.

Factor 1: Perception of Economic Gains in Cuba

Since 2008, Cuba made significant efforts towards reform in an effort to restore Cuba's economy after the Special Period of particular hardship occurred when the Soviet Union collapsed. Raul Castro's regime pursued market socialism by expanding the small private sector as well as restructuring and diversifying agricultural market in order to decrease Cuba's foreign food dependency (LeoGrande 2015, 478). These reforms have inspired US businesses, especially in agriculture and tourism, who desperately want to reach Cuba's untapped market, because this development made legal trade with Cuba possible through small private Cuban businesses.

Perception of significant economic opportunity was high among the president and the Congress. After Obama loosened restrictions on remittances in 2009, he wrote an op-ed entitled "Choosing a Better Future in the Americas" in which he argued advancing prosperity throughout the western hemisphere, including in Cuba, would help the US confront the economic crisis of 2008-2009 (Barack Obama 2009). Obama repeatedly remarked that there was significant interest

from US businesses to work in Cuba, but nearly every time he spoke about economic interests in regards to Cuba, it was framed to mean Cubans, not Americans, would benefit economically. At Obama's historic first visit to Cuba, he brought with him dozens of US business leaders to demonstrate the interest and commitment the US had in working with the Cuban people (Barack Obama 2016). In a Congressional hearing before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on February 4, 2015, it was discussed whether improving the US relationship with Cuba was to benefit Cuban economic interests or US economic interests; the testifying witness answered it was for the interests of both countries, but when she was pressed to choose, she chose the economic interests of the US.

It is also important to note that the Cuba-American demographic in Florida has changed after the second and third waves of Cuban immigration to the US in 1980 and 1994. The Cuban-American demographic now is generally younger people who came to the US for economic opportunities, unlike the older Cuba lobby who came to escape persecution and who held powerful influence over US policy toward Cuba (Jiménez 2012, 367). This is important because it was a necessary shift that made the pursuit of economic interests in Cuba outweigh the domestic political costs.

Factor 2: International Pressure to Normalize Relations with Cuba

International pressure on the US to change its policy toward Cuba was high, especially from Latin American leaders. Latin America's growing frustration with the US for isolating Cuba and attempting to dictate Latin America's relations with Cuba could have led to confrontation at the next Summit of the Americas and a confused hemispheric policy as a whole

(LeoGrande 2015, 483). Pressure applied by both leftist regimes and US allies in Latin America signify the mounting frustration toward the US policy of isolating Cuba from the Organization of American States (OAS) and Summits of the Americas (LeoGrande 2015, 476). Some Latin American leaders, including close allies of the US, refused to continue to attend summits if the US policy of excluding Cuba from the summits did not change (LeoGrande 2015, 476).

In Obama's joint news conferences with Latin American leaders, almost all of the leaders recognize their differences when it comes to the Cuba issue and stated a hope that US-Cuban relations would improve. Mexico's presidents stated repeatedly throughout Obama's administration that Mexico was a friend of Cuba and wished to someday be a friend of both Cuba and the US, urging the US to end the embargo on Cuba (Barack Obama and Felipe de Jesus Calderon 2009). After Obama loosened restrictions in 2009 and after he announced the beginning of normalization with Cuba in 2014, he was met with much praise from leaders international leaders, including the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon, and others. In an interview in 2016, Obama claimed that the US "restore[d] diplomatic relations with Cuba in a way that didn't just transform our relationship with Cuba, but has put our relationship with all of Latin America on its strongest footing, maybe in history" (Barack Obama 2016). This signifies that Obama had larger regional goals in mind when revisiting the US policy on Cuba. Finally, the growing influence of Iran, still a rival of the US, in Latin America and in Cuba specifically created an international pressure to maintain US hegemony in the western hemisphere (Villafañe 2012, 378).

Case 4: The US and Iran

Background

US-Iranian relations deteriorated in 1979 when Iran's revolution forced the Shah to flee to the US and Ayatollah Khomeini became the supreme religious leader. Students seized the US embassy in Tehran and held the American staff hostage demanding that the US return the Shah to Iran for trial. The US severed diplomatic ties with Iran, froze Iranian assets, and banned most trade with Iran in 1980. The hostages were released when Reagan was inaugurated in 1981, but US-Iranian relations only worsened. The US identified Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism and passed the Iran-Iraq Arms Nonproliferation Act and the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, imposing severe sanctions on Iran. The Reagan administration's Iran-Contra negotiations led to a slight improvement in US-Iranian relations, but when the scandal was exposed relations soured again. Terrorist attacks on a US air base in 1996 were believed to be supported by Iran, but the US refrained from a military retaliation in order to avoid war with Iran.

An opportunity for US-Iranian rapprochement appeared when Mohammad Khatami was elected president of Iran in 1997. In a CNN interview, Khatami spoke positively about the US and expressed desire open a new relationship; President Clinton returned the sentiment, and attempts at warming US-Iranian relations began. Some sanctions on Iranian goods were loosened, and while they did not meet with each other, the US and Iran talked directly in UN discussions centered on Afghanistan. The Clinton administration made several attempts at meeting with Iranian officials, but domestic pressure from anti-American hardliners in Iran prevented Khatami from accepting any invitations to meet directly without first engaging in

people-to-people rapprochement. In 2000, Secretary of State Albright apologized for the US involvement in the 1953 Iranian coup, declared the lifting of some sanctions, and offered to settle legal claims on frozen Iranian assets.

The possibility of rapprochement dissipated as Bush named Iran as part of the “axis of evil” and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a hardline leader, became Iranian president in 2005. The US Congress passed the Iran Nonproliferation Act in 2000, allowing the president to punish individuals or groups known to be supplying Iran with nuclear materials. Between 2005 and 2009, Iran made major developments towards creating nuclear weapons, and multilateral nuclear negotiations with Iran stall until 2012. However, secret talks between the US and Iran began in 2012, continued in 2013 when Hassan Rouhani was elected Iran’s president, and in 2015 Iran and six powers including the US came to an agreement to reduce Iran’s nuclear power in return for easing multilateral and bilateral sanctions. As of 2016, Iran has stayed true to the agreement, and the success of the nuclear deal allows for more possibilities for US-Iranian rapprochement.

Factor 1: Perception of Economic Gains in Iran

US officials saw some opportunity for economic gains in rapprochement with Iran but not enough to effectively improve diplomatic relations. Oil made up 80% of Iran’s exports in the late 1990s, and oil was understood to be the main economic benefit of cooperating with Iran. However, while some US oil companies pressed for access to Iranian oil, this pressure was relatively little and subdued. Trade with Iran lacked appeal for US businesses because of Iran’s failure to reform its economy, which was confusing to work with (Fehrs 2016, 129).

There was no significant change in oil production or economic growth in Iran between 1994 and 1999 (Energy Information Administration 2017), and there was a decrease in Americans who believed the US energy situation was “very serious” between 1996 and 1998, signifying little to no incentive for the US to pursue Iranian oil (Newport 2017). Neither did Iran’s oil industry become more appealing when the Obama administration began negotiating the nuclear deal with Iran; from 2012 to 2014 Iran’s oil production actually decreased by over one million barrels per day, its sharpest decrease since the 1970s (Energy Information Administration). By the time of the Obama administration the US had become less reliant on foreign oil as it had increased oil production domestically.

Speeches in Congressional committee hearings on Iran demonstrate a commitment to avoiding economic interaction with Iran. In a hearing before Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on April 17, 1997 Senator Alfonse D’Amato of New York reminded the committee that the Iranian oil infrastructure was outdated and difficult to work with. He also expressed a desire to end all backdoor imports of Iranian oil which occurred despite the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act. In a hearing before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on May 14, 1998, Middle East affairs analyst Steven Emerson reported to the committee that Khatami was elected because international sanctions on Iran had created discontent among the Iranian people, and therefore loosening sanctions would only re-solidify the power base of the radicals which the US wanted to keep out of power. In three different Congressional committee hearings between 1997 and 1999, lengthy discussions were held on the possibility of persuading US allies to further limit their oil imports from Iran. These conversations show that rather than being motivated by

economic interests in Iranian oil, the opposite was true; US elite perceived some amount of economic opportunity in Iran but decided it was in the national interest of the US not to pursue it, at least in part because the economic gains would have been minimal.

Factor 2: International Pressure to Normalize Relations with Iran

International pressure on the US and Iran to pursue rapprochement was low. Iran did not have significant motivation to concede to US demands, as Libya did in 2003. The US historically sided with Iran's opponents, namely with Israel and Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war. Iran's major threats in the international system, Russia and Iraq, had diminished, and the US became Iran's most significant threat, providing little incentive to pursue rapprochement (Fehrs 2016, 129). The US did not feel significant pressure to improve relations with Iran at the time because its international approval was relatively high at the time, and the international community approved of isolating Iran (Bakare 2016).

International pressure to change policy toward Iran increased during the Obama administration, as Iran's development as a nuclear power increased. Much about Iran's nuclear program was not known until 2009, but as the international community slowly learned more about Iran's developing nuclear threat, engaging with Iran to improve relations became a security issue not just for the US, but for the European Union and the Middle East as a region (Kaya and Şartepe 2015, 5)

Discussion

Table 1: Perceived Economic Interests and International Pressure

Country	President at initial normalization attempt	Perceived economic interests for US	International pressure	Change in policy realized	Rapprochement completed
Iran	Clinton	Medium	Low	No	No
Vietnam	Clinton	High	Low	Yes	No
Libya	Bush	High	High	Yes	Yes
Cuba	Obama	High	High	Yes	No

In each of the cases, both a high perception of economic interests for the US and high amount of international pressure seem to be required actual change in US foreign policy to occur and rapprochement to complete. The Libya case supports this interpretation, and the Cuba case may as well if the US and Cuba continue on the path laid out for them during the Obama administration. It may be too soon to tell with Cuba, since the developments Obama made in US-Cuban relations may be reversed by the current president.

The failure to implement a significant change in policy toward Iran during Clinton's administration compared to the success of the Obama administration suggests two things: first, international pressure on the US to make a change increases the likelihood that a significant change occurs. A change in international pressure was the most significant factor observed here that changed between the Clinton and Obama attempts at improving relations with Iran. Second, it may not be necessary to have a high perception of economic interest. Most US businesses did not perceive Iranian oil as a realistic goal for logistical reasons, and some businesses applied

some pressure to policy decision-makers, it was not highly substantial. Levels of economic interest in Iran did not increase between the Clinton and Obama administrations, yet Obama negotiated and implemented nuclear nonproliferation deal with Iran. Therefore, at least in the case of Iran, change international pressure may be a more significant factor than economic interests.

However, Table 2 suggests that when Iran and Vietnam are compared, the difference between a medium amount of perceived economic interests and a high amount could be a determining factor for whether or not rapprochement reaches full completion. These two cases did not finish normalization relations with the US during the administration of the president who initiated rapprochement, but they experienced a second wave of policy change late in Obama's presidency. International pressure increased in both of these cases, but only Vietnam saw full rapprochement.

Table 2: Second Wave of Policy Change, Obama 2014-2016

Country	Perceived economic interests	International pressure	Change in policy realized	Rapprochement completed
Iran	Medium	High	Yes	No
Vietnam	High	High	Yes	Yes

It is surprising that there are not more similarities in the patterns of rapprochement between the Iran and Libya cases and the Vietnam and Cuba cases. Both Iran and Libya were hostile countries developing weapons of mass destruction and state sponsors of terrorism; they even faced sanctions under the same law, the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, because of their

transgressions and their statuses as major oil producers. However, rapprochement with the US took a significantly different path for each of them. This could be due to certain historical events, such as the international community's discovery of Libya's supplier of WMD materials just two months before Libya renounced its WMD program. But the difference could also be due to different regime structures. Iranian president Khatami wanted to reform US-Iranian relations, but he faced too much domestic political pressure to be able to do so and was not re-elected to the presidency. Libya, by contrast, was ruled by the dictator Gaddafi, who was able to make major foreign policy decisions, such as disarmament and renunciation of terrorism, without internal political repercussions.

Similarly, the cases of Cuba and Vietnam share historical similarities but experienced rapprochement with the US quite differently. For both countries, relations with the US were severed during the Cold War, and after the Cold War, US policies toward them was rather outdated but continued until significant economic interests pushed the US to reexamine these policies. Still, they are different; rapprochement began with Vietnam relatively soon after the Cold War ended without significant international pressure. At the same time the US was normalizing relations with Vietnam, however, the US decided to write Cold War-era sanctions on Cuba into law, moving even further away from the possibility of rapprochement and ignoring mounting international pressure to change the policy for decades. These differences are likely due to the power of the Cuban-American lobby, which Vietnamese-Americans never matched. But they could also be due to the different roles these countries played in their relationships with the US. For instance, the US was historically accustomed to its access and control of Cuba's

resources, and for decades it was thought that Cuba would naturally become a state or territory of the United States. Ultimately, this discussion shows there are many more factors which can be evaluated when attempting to explain rapprochement with the US: regime structures, regime changes, population demographics, and historical roles are only a few.

The theoretical implications of these results are mixed. If perception of economic interests acts as a pressure on the actor-level analysis and international pressure represents structure-level analysis, then these results imply that both levels of analysis are necessary and work with each other. Ultimately, more factors need to be examined to come to more specific and accurate explanations of US rapprochement. This interpretation of the results of this study reinforces the theories of several constructivist scholars, but it is more vague than what is preferable. However, the implications of this study for future rapprochement are more clear. If the US can ensure successful rapprochement with Iran, North Korea, or Russia, clear economic benefits for decision-makers and the American public should be present, and pressure from the international system should be applied.

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