Interests, Institutions, and Foreign Policy Change*

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What follows is not a traditional paper. We are currently working on a book project, and we wish to take this opportunity to receive feedback on our argument. Below we (a) outline our general argument; (b) identify some of the important questions that we think our research can address; (c) discuss the concept of a change in source of leader support (SOLS) that is crucial to our project and some of the dependent variables for our analyses; and (d) discuss our preliminary conclusions. Imagine this as part of the introduction and part of the conclusion--in other words, basically what you skimmed from a book in graduate school. We appreciate your patience and feedback.

An Outline of the Argument

When President Obama first took office in 2009 observers speculated about the implications of his election for U.S. foreign policy. Would the new administration pursue more cooperative relations with the United Nations and other international institutions? Would the new Democratic president abide by existing commitments regarding NAFTA, despite potential pressure from unions? In the 2016 election cycle, positions taken by Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump and his supporters have raised questions regarding the U.S.’s willingness to stand by its alliance and trade commitments and the extent to which a Trump administration would re-structure relationships with long-term partners as well as adversaries. Similarly, after the 2015 election upset of Sri Lanka’s long-time President Mahinda Rajapaksa, questions emerged about whether the incoming president Maithripala Sirisena would seek to distance his country from China, a major ally and investor under Rajapaksa, and how Sirisena would handle the country’s substantial foreign debt. As is well-known, the assumption of office of the new Iranian President, Rouhani, in 2013 spurred speculation over whether Iran might
finally yield to international sanctions and compromise on, or possibly abandon, its nuclear ambitions. By comparison, more muted were the speculations around potential changes in Saudi Arabia’s oil policy and regional postures under the new ruler, King Salman, who took power in January 2015.

When do leadership changes lead to a redirection of a country’s foreign policy and under what conditions can we expect new leaders to stick to the course charted by their predecessors? What role do international and domestic institutions play in decisions to pursue foreign policy continuity or change? Can international institutions constrain foreign policy change? Do some domestic political institutions induce greater foreign policy continuity than others? And to what extent might international and domestic institutions interact to produce continuity or permit change? These are the fundamental questions that motivate this project.

While we agree that foreign policy responds to, and is often constrained by, systemic factors, such as a country’s geography and relative power, we postulate that foreign policy derives in large part from domestic political dynamics. Within polities, different societal groups with different interests and preferences over both domestic and foreign policy compete with one another (Moravscik 1997). Whoever gains control of the state, whether in an election or through force, influences the orientation and content of the country’s international policies. Because in all systems leaders are fundamentally accountable to the segments of the population that bring them to power and, more importantly, maintain them in power, they will tend to pursue policies in line with their supporters’ interests and preferences (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). This means that if a new leader comes to office who depends on different societal sectors for support than her predecessor, we may observe a shift in the country’s international positions, alignments, and foreign policy initiatives.
Changes in a country’s leadership can be a powerful engine of foreign policy change. However, we should not expect all leadership changes to have the same effect. When a new leader is responsible to the same groups as her predecessor, the potential for significant shifts in a country’s foreign policy is muted. New leaders with different personal backgrounds and new teams of advisors may diverge from their predecessors in some respects, but more significant changes in a country’s policies, both domestic and foreign, should occur when not only the leader is different, but the interests that she is accountable to are different as well. For instance, a leadership change from a left of center to a right of center president or a military leader to a personalist one should carry a greater potential for significant foreign policy change than a transition from one leftist president to another or a monarch to his son.

While leadership changes that coincide with changes in the domestic sources of leader support set the stage for significant foreign policy change, whether such change actually occurs also depends on the international and domestic institutional context and the interaction between international and domestic influences.

Leaders should find it harder to change policies that are codified in formal international agreements than policies for which no binding commitments exist. When changing foreign policy entails violating international commitments, leaders have to weigh the benefits of adjusting the country’s foreign policy to their domestic supporters’ preferences against the costs of violating international law. While some supporters may prefer an aggressive representation of their interests abroad, others might disapprove of leaders who disregard existing putatively binding commitments. As a result, leaders may suffer domestic audience costs for violating international law (e.g. Tomz 2008; Wallace 2013). In addition to domestic disapproval, treaty violation can carry international consequences as well. The country or the specific leader may
develop a reputation for untrustworthiness, and others may be less inclined to cooperate with the
country in the future (e.g. Gibler 2008; Crescenzi et al. 2012; Allee and Peinhardt 2011). Given
the potential costs of violating international agreements, we should expect that leaders are more
circumspect when changing policies that are formalized through agreements and treaties with
other states. Foreign policy change as a result of changes in the interests the leader represents
should be felt more acutely in areas in which there are no binding international constraints than
in areas in which there are.

Similarly, policies that are sponsored by international institutions to which a country
belongs may have more sticking power than policies developed independently of institutional
affiliations. Because states receive benefits from their engagement with and participation in
international institutions like the United Nations, the World Bank, and NATO, for instance,
policies entered into jointly with other members through decisions taken within international
organizations may be perceived as more costly to change even when new domestic political
interests come to power. To the extent that changing policy risks damaging relations with the
institution or its members, new leaders may be more willing to stay the course, even when
existing policies are not the ones their supporters would otherwise prefer.

In addition to international institutional and legal constraints, domestic political
institutions also limit the extent to which new leaders can pursue radically different policies.
Both rules regarding leader selection and rules concerning the process of policymaking affect the
probability that a change in a leader’s domestic support group results in a change in policy. In
regimes in which new leaders need to maintain the support of a broad spectrum of the populace
rather than curry the favor of small powerful groups it is less likely that a new leader will pursue
radically different policies than her predecessor (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). Similarly, in
regimes in which policymaking is constrained by a need to cooperate with other powerful domestic actors, significant departures from existing policy should be less likely, even if an incentive for new policy initiatives exists (e.g., Tsebelis 2002, Gaubatz 1996, Lipson 2003).

Democracies exhibit both of these institutional features that limit foreign policy change. To be elected and re-elected, democratic leaders have to pursue policies that are palatable to the median voter. This means that the policy initiatives of new leaders are unlikely to diverge significantly from their predecessors’ (McGillivray and Smith 2008; McGillivray and Stam 2004). Democratic leaders also often face powerful veto players in the form of legislatures and coalition partners that can inhibit abrupt departures from existing policy, and democratic leaders need to work within the constraints of the rule of law (Martin 2000).

By contrast, we expect nondemocracies on average to display a greater potential for foreign policy discontinuities. In systems in which leaders depend only on a small subset of the population for support, new leaders may represent drastically different domestic interests than their predecessors and may thus pursue foreign policy positions that are more clearly distinct. In many nondemocratic systems, individual leaders also enjoy significant flexibility in decision-making and can more easily, and single-handedly, undo existing commitments. Of course, there is variation in nondemocracies (as in democracies) regarding the extent to which leaders are constrained by other political actors, and we expect that nondemocratic polities that feature some checks on the leader’s power will lead more stable foreign policies than systems that lack such constraints.

While international and domestic institutions may operate as separate influences on the foreign policy behavior of states, we also expect them to interact with one another to produce some distinctive patterns. Because democratic elites and publics value the predictability of the
law and the protections it provides, democratic leaders should be compelled to abide by their country’s international legal commitments even when there may be some incentives to defect. Democracies should not only lead more stable foreign policies overall, but continuity should be especially pronounced in issue areas in which international legal commitments exist. On the other hand, while existing international obligations impose some constraint on the policies of nondemocratic leaders, leaders operating in nondemocratic systems should value adherence to international law less. Leaders of nondemocracies are more insulated from the domestic political disapproval that treaty violation might spawn, but they still have to consider the adverse international reputational effects for violating their country’s commitments. As a result, we expect institutional constraints to exert some pull over nondemocratic leaders, but we also expect that the effect of international commitments on foreign policy continuity is weaker in nondemocracies than in democracies. The likelihood of foreign policy change in heavily institutionalized versus non-institutionalized areas of foreign policy should not differ as significantly for nondemocracies as for democracies.

What Core Questions Does This Project Address?

By illuminating the interaction between changes in the core societal groups with influence over policy, international institutions, and domestic institutions, our project seeks to shed light on important questions and core debates in the field.

International relations scholars have long debated the role of international institutions in shaping state behavior. On the one side of the debate liberals argue that one of the core reasons for why states sign international treaties and join international organizations is because their membership in these institutions constrains their future policy choices (e.g., Moravcsik 2000;
Simmons and Danner 2010; Mattes 2012). Even when they later have an incentive to defect on their commitments, the fact that they are formally bound by these commitments and stand to experience costs for defection deters leaders from reversing course. On the other side of the debate, realist scholars counter that international agreements and institutions are epiphenomenal, that they simply codify principles and policies that the signatories would follow in any case (e.g., Mearsheimer 1994/1995; Downs, Rocke, and Barsoom 1996). In the realist view, institutions are pure screening devices with little real effect on state behavior.

The question of whether international institutions constrain or not is difficult to answer, because of the endogeneity of international institutions. Realists are correct that international agreements and membership in international organizations are not randomly assigned—states choose to participate and they can also often determine the specific terms they commit themselves to. This makes it very hard to evaluate whether when we see states acting in accordance with their international commitments they are doing so because of the constraints imposed on them through the international institution or because it is in their interest to do so.

Scholars have employed a variety of mostly statistical tools to pin down an answer to the question of whether international institutions constrain. Selection models, instrumental variables, and matching have all been used in this quest (e.g. von Stein 2005; Simmons and Hopkins 2005; Conrad and Ritter 2013; Mattes and Vonnahme 2010). In this project, we take a different path. We suggest that a promising way to examine the constraining effect of international institutions is to isolate instances in which a government’s foreign policy interests might have changed and the country’s leadership might thus have an incentive to do something other than comply with the terms of the agreement (see also, Grieco, Gelpi, and Warren 2009). Focusing on situations in which interests have changed removes some of the analytical difficulties associated with the
endogeneity of the decision to form agreements and the design of agreements and allows us to shed more light on the question of whether and when international institutions have an effect on state behavior. If we observe continuity in foreign policy despite such incentives for change this provides evidence suggestive of a constraining effect of international institutions. It would suggest that international agreements and the force of international law can help state leaders make credible commitments to international cooperation even as circumstances change. If, by contrast, we observe that changes in domestic preferences coincide with foreign policy change despite the presence of international commitments and obligations to the stay the course, then this would undermine the liberal argument that international institutions constrain state behavior. If international agreements do not exhibit any independent constraining force on policy change, one should then question the extent to which international law serves as a stabilizing force in international politics.

Similar to the debate regarding the constraining effect of international institutions, there is a long-standing scholarly disagreement about whether democracies are prone to fickle foreign policies or whether they make for reliable international partners. Arguments about democracies’ volatility date back to Alexis de Tocqueville (1835) and fault frequent leadership turnover and the need of leaders to be responsive to the vagaries of public opinion for the inability of democracies to stay the course (e.g., Gartzke and Gleditsch 2004). By contrast, numerous scholars have put forward the view that the policy-making constraints and the rule of law inherent in democratic systems predispose democratic leaders to pursue more rather than less stable policies (Gaubatz 1996; Martin 2000; Lipson 2003; Leeds, Mattes, and Vogel 2009). Some concern has even been voiced that the institutional constraints imposed on the executive in democracies might inhibit leaders’ ability to be responsive to voter needs and preferences and
thus undermine key principles of the democratic system (e.g. Linz 1990; Wlezien and Soroka 2011, 2012).

The extent to which democracies can make for reliable international partners while they also preserve the democratic imperative of representation of the public’s interests constitutes an important question for IR scholarship and political science more generally. In our project, we seek to shed more light on democratic (un)reliability by looking at the behavior of democracies in the aftermath of changes in leadership that bring to power new leaders with different domestic support groups than their predecessors. These are the exact circumstances that de Tocqueville and others consider to be the cause of democracies’ potentially mercurial policies.

It will be particularly illuminating to examine the effect of these leadership changes in several different areas of international policy, including areas in which any continuity we might observe should be the result of domestic rather than international institutions and areas in which tendencies toward policy consistency may be reinforced by international institutions. Liberal international relations theory concerning international institutions and law may be particularly relevant to liberal states; that is, those that are designed with significant influence for the broad interests of society in selecting and constraining leaders. Similarly it may be that domestic policy constraints need support from international law and institutions in areas in which states most wish to be able to make long term commitments to policy consistency and are concerned that changes in their future interests might jeopardize this.

The Empirical Innovation that Makes this Work Possible

We are in the position to provide new evidence regarding fundamental questions about when to expect foreign policy consistency and change, about the constraining role of
international institutions, and about the influence of different domestic political contexts as a result of our original data collection effort, the Change in Source of Leader Support (CHISOLS) project (Mattes, Leeds, and Matsumura 2016). For countries with a population of more than 500,000 we have collected information about all leadership transitions between 1919-2008 to distinguish between leadership changes that brought to power a new leader with a different societal basis of support than her predecessor from leadership transitions in which the new leader represented fundamentally the same interests and preferences as the leader before her. These two different types of leader transitions are typically treated as equivalent in the IR literature, and for many questions this is appropriate. However, if the goal is to understand foreign policy change and the extent to which, as well as the conditions under which, international and domestic institutions might create a pull toward policy continuity, we need to focus on those leadership transitions that have the potential to be most disruptive—those leader transitions that signal a shift in domestic preferences. In our analysis we thus focus on leadership transitions that go hand in hand with a change in the source of leader support, which we term SOLS changes.

We explain the logic and procedures behind the CHISOLS data collection in Mattes, Leeds, and Matsumura (2016) and our detailed coding rules are available in the CHISOLS Data Users’ Manual. Here we highlight some key aspects of our coding rules. Our data collection began with the list of effective rulers provided by the Archigos dataset (version 2.9, Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza 2009) and we extended these data through 2008. For each leader transition, we then coded whether the new leader had the same or a different SOLS than her predecessor.

1 The completed CHISOLS data (v. 4.0) and associated files are available for download at www.chisols.org.

2 CHISOLS v. 4.0 is compatible with the newest release of the Archigos data v.4.1.
predecessor. The rules for coding SOLS changes depend on the domestic political institutions in place, specifically on whether a country is a democracy or not. We identify democracies primarily based on the POLITY IV data; periods in which a state is coded a six or higher on the democracy scale are considered democratic (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2012). Within democracies, SOLS changes occur when the political party of the chief executive changes, with exceptions for interim (caretaker) governments for whom we code no SOLS change. In cases in which leaders do not have political party affiliations, we examine secondary sources to determine whether the new leader is the pre-designated successor of the prior leader, in which case we do not code a SOLS change. If the new leader is not a predesignated successor, we evaluate whether the societal groups who voted for two consecutive leaders were similar or different.

In nondemocracies, we first identify whether the state-year corresponds with one of the autocratic types identified by Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2014). While Geddes et al. provide data primarily for the post-1945 period, we have followed their rules in coding autocratic types for state-years in our dataset that they did not consider, namely most nondemocratic state-years before 1945 and nondemocratic state-years involving countries with less than one million population (but more than 500,000). Geddes’ et al.’s classification scheme is well suited to our project because their conceptualization of regimes “emphasizes the rules that identify the group from which leaders can come and determine who influences leadership choice and policy (2014: 314)”.

Given the overlap between Geddes et al.’s concept of regimes and our concept of source of leader support (SOLS), we code transitions from one autocratic type to another as SOLS
changes. Within single party systems and monarchies, we code SOLS changes only when the party or dynasty (respectively) changes. We do not code SOLS changes while a single oligarchy rules, or while a military regime is in place. Within personalist systems, however, transitions from one leader to another more commonly constitute SOLS changes. We distinguish cases in which a new leader with his own clique comes to power from cases in which a personalist dictator is succeeded by her own predesignated successor. Predesignated successors are leaders appointed by the outgoing leader, vice presidents, or close family members (e.g., brother or son).

There are also a number of state-years in our dataset that do not qualify as cases of consolidated democratic or autocratic rule. Some of these are periods of warlordism or foreign occupation during which no single domestic group has clear control of foreign policy. We do not code SOLS changes during these periods. Others are periods of transition, during which an interim or caretaker government is in power. We do not code SOLS changes during periods of interim government. Cases that do not fit any of these criteria—that is, they are not democracies, but also are not characterized by any consolidated autocratic regime type, nor warlordism, foreign occupation, or interim government—are coded based on a predesignated successor rule. If a leader is replaced by her predesignated successor, we do not code a SOLS change. Otherwise we do.

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3 Geddes et al. (2014) also identify some regimes as hybrids of more than one autocratic type. While we code minor SOLS changes in cases in which a hybrid type transitions to a pure component type or vice versa, in our analyses, we treat these cases as regular SOLS changes.

4 Note that we have specific rules as to what constitutes an interim government, one of which requires that no interim government last more than 18 months. Military governments who claim to be interim but rule for extended periods, therefore, do not qualify as interim for our coding.
The Dependent Variables

In order to examine the relationship between SOLS changes, domestic institutions, and international institutions we consider foreign policy change in four distinctive areas: UNGA voting, economic sanctions, trade, and alliances. These four domains of foreign policy not only span different issue areas, including both high politics and low politics concerns, but also vary in the international constraints imposed on a state’s actions and thus might help us to gauge whether leaders behave differently in the face of changes in domestic interests when formal international commitments exist than when they do not. In each of these four policy arenas we can also contrast the behavior of democracies and nondemocracies, and in some cases, it is possible to explore further institutional variation within democracies and within nondemocracies.

Voting in the UNGA is mostly expressive and states are under no legal obligation to vote the same in one year as they did in the last. If we observe continuity in a country’s UNGA voting patterns, this should mostly be due to domestic political dynamics rather than international ones. In addition, UNGA voting is largely within the control of the executive branch; while an executive may take the preferences of other actors, like legislatures and subnational governments, into account, other actors can not directly determine policy concerning UNGA voting. Thus, UNGA voting is a policy area featuring limited domestic constraint.

In the case of economic sanctions, senders’ choices to carry on with sanctions or capitulate are often made in the absence of binding international commitments. Because domestic pressures to change course after a SOLS change should be stronger in the case of sanctions than for UNGA voting—given the greater economic and political significance of sanctions policy for the leaders’ supporters—sanctions provide a valuable opportunity to assess the workings of domestic policy-making constraints. Economic sanctions are also an interesting
arena to examine because there is some variation in both the domestic and international institutional involvement. In democracies, in some cases, legislatures are involved in sanctions efforts, while in other cases the executive single-handedly determines sanction policy. We thus have the opportunity to observe whether sanctions with legislative involvement are more likely to persist when there is a SOLS change than sanctions without legislative involvement. Furthermore, there is variation with regard to international constraints on a country’s sanctions policy. While participation in sanctions is only very rarely binding, many sanctions are instigated by and/or coordinated through international organizations, and we can thus contrast state behavior when international institutions are involved and when they are not.

Maybe even more so than economic sanctions, trade policy is an area intimately entwined with domestic politics, with strong domestic distributional effects and salience. In addition, there is significant variance in whether states have made binding international commitments to the GATT/WTO and/or preferential trade agreements, thus allowing us to gauge the effects of international treaty commitments within a single issue area. We can also examine the power of different international commitments with different design features (GATT, WTO, and regional trade agreements) to induce stable trade policies in the face of domestic preference changes.

Alliances are another realm in which countries adopt legally binding commitments. Violation of or premature withdrawal from these agreements violates international law. Alliances are thus an arena of foreign policy in which we should observe a constraining effect of international law. In addition, as a key component of high politics, alliances are an area in which some have argued that variance in domestic political interests should be relatively unimportant in explaining behavior; finding that changes in domestic political interests affect even a clear component of security policy like military alliances would give increased weight to the view that
domestic political change can result in broad change in foreign policy in all areas. In addition, we can leverage the fact that alliance treaties are designed differently to understand whether particular features of agreement design are associated with more robust agreements.

Some of the questions we are interested in are best examined within each issue area separately. We are able, for instance, to contrast the effect of SOLS changes in democracies and nondemocracies on foreign policy within each of these issue areas. In some cases, we are also able to look at the impact of more finely grained domestic institutional differences. Other questions—for instance the influence of international institutions and international legal agreements on behavior—can sometimes be examined within a single issue area (economic sanctions and trade), but may also be evaluated by comparing effects across issue areas.

Similarly, weighing the effects of domestic political salience and issue specific constraints on the chief executive (which are related to, but not solely conditioned by, international legal status) can sometimes be done within issue areas (e.g., economic sanctions), but may also involve cross-issue comparisons.

Preliminary Results

We previously published two studies on alliance termination and UN General Assembly voting (Leeds, Mattes, and Vogel 2009; Mattes, Leeds, and Carroll 2015). We have updated both studies with new data (and in some cases quite different statistical models) for our book. We have also conducted analysis of data on economic sanctions and trade. All of these analyses should still be seen as preliminary: several theoretically interesting analyses are not yet completed and while we have conducted some robustness checks, more remains to be done.
We do not have space here to review all of our preliminary statistical findings in detail. Each empirical analysis comprises a chapter in our book, and each would be a full conference paper in itself. Given space constraints, we provide brief summaries of our findings for the four policy areas we focus on: UNGA voting, economic sanctions, trade, and alliance termination.

For each of these dependent variables, we conduct at least four separate analyses that are common to the four issue areas. First, we analyze a simple model with SOLS change and democracy (or, more precisely, a dummy variable that is coded 1 if the country is democratic both before and after the SOLS change) as explanatory variables. In this analysis we also contrast the effects of SOLS change with leader transitions that do not constitute SOLS changes. We refer to this model as our pooled model. Second, we analyze a model that includes SOLS change, democracy, and the interaction between the two. Third, we analyze a model that adds a set of control variables that we think could plausibly have an influence both on our key independent variables and on the dependent variable to check that our findings are not spurious. Fourth, we analyze a model that includes all the variables in the third analysis, plus control variables that help explain variance in the dependent variable, but that we do not think are related to the key independent variables. Models 2-4 are referred to as interaction models. In addition to these four basic models, we also conduct a variety of additional analyses specific to each DV. Below we offer a summary of the basic set-up of each test and a discussion of our findings up to this point.

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5 We do not expect democracy to constrain new leaders who might want to deviate from the policies of a nondemocratic predecessor.
UNGA voting:

In our UNGA voting chapter, the unit of analysis is the state-year. We consider all countries with a population larger than 500,000 that voted in the United Nations General Assembly during the period 1946-2008. Using data on UNGA voting ideal points from Bailey et al. (forthcoming), we code as the dependent variable the log of the absolute change in a country’s ideal point from t-1 to 1. We estimate OLS regression models with country fixed effects and robust standard errors clustered on the country. Apart from the baseline models that include only our key variables of interest, we also estimate models that control for regime change from democracy to nondemocracy or vice versa, the end of the cold war, economic turmoil, and whether the country was a US or USSR ally during the cold war.

Across our models, we find that the relationship between SOLS changes and UNGA ideal point change is positive and statistically significant, while non-SOLS change leader transitions do not have a statistically significant effect on the DV. Wald tests show that in most models the effect of SOLS changes is not statistically different from that of non-SOLS change leader transitions. However, it is notable that SOLS changes appear to be consistently related with UNGA ideal point changes, while there is no such systematic association between non-SOLS change leader transitions and UNGA ideal point changes.

Focusing in on SOLS changes and their effects in different regime types, we find that SOLS changes have a statistically significant positive effect on ideal point change in nondemocracies, but not in democracies. The interaction between SOLS changes and democracy is negative and statistically significant (at the 95% level in the baseline model and the 90% level in the control variable model), suggesting that the size of the effect of SOLS changes is significantly larger in nondemocracies than in democracies. We find that democracies are also
less likely to experience shifts in their year-to-year UNGA voting patterns when no SOLS changes occur.

We also conducted several preliminary analyses to assess whether more nuanced measures of regime type might provide additional insights into which types of countries are most likely to change their UNGA voting patterns in the face of domestic preference changes. We did not find any differences among democratic subtypes (parliamentary vs presidential regimes) or among autocratic subtypes (personalist vs. non-personalist regimes as measured by Weeks 2014).

**Economic sanctions:**

For our chapter on economic sanctions, we rely on the *Threat and Imposition of Economic Sanctions* (TIES) data v. 4 which covers all bilateral and multilateral sanctions that were threatened and/or imposed between 1945 and 2005 (Morgan et al. 2009; Morgan et al. 2013). Our unit of analysis is the sanction-month and the dependent variable, sender capitulation, is a dummy variable coded 1 if the sender terminates the sanction without concessions by the adversary. We estimate logit models with corrections for temporal dependence (Carter and Signorino 2010) and robust standard errors clustered on the sanctions case. In addition to our baseline model, we estimate two additional models. The first controls for changes in the sender’s military capabilities, economic turmoil in the sender, regime transition in the sender, the end of the cold war, and whether the sender is a U.S. or USSR ally during the cold war. The second model controls for all of the factors of the first model as well as change in the target’s military capabilities, SOLS change in the target, regime transition in the target, sender-to-target GDP
ratio, sanction costs to the sender, the absolute difference in the sender and target’s UNGA ideal points, whether the sanction involves security-related issues, and sender commitment.

There are peculiarities to the sanctions data that are important for the interpretation of our results: a single country, the U.S., accounts for a large share of sanction observations (66%) and, more generally, the far majority of observations (86%) involve democratic senders. Given the dominance of U.S. sanctions in the data, we run all analyses with and without the U.S. and in some cases the results are slightly different. We will provide a full discussion in our chapter and focus on some key elements here.

In our pooled models, we generally find that neither SOLS changes nor non-SOLS change leader transitions have a statistically significant effect on sender capitulation and that their coefficients are not significantly different. This appears to be the result of the fact that democracies far outnumber nondemocracies in the full data. When we interact SOLS changes and regime type, we find a statistically significant positive effect of SOLS changes in nondemocracies but (usually) not in democracies. A SOLS change in a nondemocracy increases the relative risk of sender capitulation by 7.8 and the effect of SOLS changes in democracies and nondemocracies is statistically different.\(^6\)

The paucity of nondemocratic observations is a limitation in this analysis and makes us cautious about our conclusions regarding this set of cases. Fortunately, however, the large number of democratic cases (33 countries in addition to the U.S.) provides us with the opportunity to further examine SOLS changes in democratic senders. This is useful in light of the fact that we found no effect of SOLS changes in democracies. One possible explanation for this

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\(^6\) All substantive effects reported here are based on the baseline model with no controls including the U.S.
is that our analysis groups together high-profile sanctions, such as the U.S.-Cuba sanctions, with lower-profile sanctions targeted e.g. at minor trade policies. Voters are likely to have better information about, and stronger preferences regarding, the former than the latter. To examine this possibility we focused additional analyses on high politics sanctions that involve security-related issues (Bapat and Morgan 2009).

Focusing on security-related sanctions only, we also investigate whether the international and the domestic institutional setting affect sanction capitulations by democratic senders. Specifically, we examine whether decision-making of democratic senders differs 1) for sanctions that involve international institutions and 2) for sanctions in which domestic legislatures participated in the sanctions effort. We find a positive correlation of SOLS changes and democratic sender capitulation in security-related sanctions in some of our models, especially when international institutions are not involved in the sanction efforts and when domestic legislatures were not part of the sanction decision. However, these results appear to be driven by one particular case: France. When dropping this outlier case, we find that SOLS changes have no significant effect on sanctions capitulations in democracies. Democratic sanctions policy appears to be quite stable in the face of changes in domestic interests.

Trade:

In our trade chapter, we examine states’ imports from partner countries for the period 1948-2000. The unit of analysis is the directed-dyad-year. To code our dependent variable, the absolute change in logged imports to A from B measured in constant U.S. dollars, we rely on data from Gleditsch (2002). We use only those observations for which import data stems from the IMF Direction of Trade (DOT) data and where we have either “custom and freight included”
(c.i.f.) or “freight on board” (f.o.b.) data for both t and t-1. Consistency of sources and measurement units minimizes the possibility that year-to-year volatility is the result of differences in coding rather than real change. We estimate OLS regression models with directed dyad and year fixed effects and robust standard errors clustered on the directed dyad. All our models also include the lagged log value of A’s imports from B to correct for the compression of large values of trade as a result of using the logged value of imports as DV. In addition to our baseline model, we estimate two control variable models. All control variables are lagged by one year. The first set of control variables includes: domestic conflict in A, armed conflict between A and B, and regime transitions in A. The second model controls for all of previously listed variables and adds measures for joint GATT/WTO membership, PTA ties, SOLS changes in B, regime transition in B, domestic conflict in B, A’s GDP, B’s GDP, and the distance of A’s and B’s ideal points in the UNGA.

In our pooled models, we consistently find that SOLS change is positively associated with year-to-year change in trade, while the non-SOLS change leader transition variable is not statistically significant. Wald tests further indicate that the effect of SOLS changes and non-SOLS change leader transitions is statistically different, whether control variables are included or not. We also find that countries that are democracies are significantly less likely to display volatility in their import patterns.

When we examine the effect of SOLS changes across regime types, we find that SOLS changes are positively correlated with import volatility in both democracies and nondemocracies. In fact, the size of the effect of SOLS changes is similar in the two regime types.

As our next step, we examined the role that joint membership in the GATT/WTO plays in containing trade volatility. Across our models, SOLS changes in both democracies and
nondemocracies appear to have a positive and statistically significant effect on greater year-to-year changes in imports when the two countries are not members of GATT/WTO. When they are both members of the GATT/WTO, the association of SOLS changes and import volatility remains positive, but it is statistically weaker. In a split sample analysis, once control variables are included, we find SOLS changes to be significant in both regime types only when the countries are not both members of GATT/WTO. When the two countries are constrained by their GATT/WTO commitments, SOLS changes do not have a statistically significant effect for either democracies or nondemocracies. Again, this suggests that membership in international institutions and treaty commitments mitigate against foreign policy change even when domestic political conditions are conducive to change.

**Alliance Violation:**

For our alliance chapter, the unit of analysis is the alliance member year. Our sample includes members of all bilateral alliances concluded between 1919 and 1989 (with exception of nonaggression pacts) (Leeds and Mattes 2007). We observe alliances formed during that period through 2001 or until they end as a result of violation of their terms. Our dependent variable, alliance violation, is coded 1 if a member violates a key alliance provision and the alliance terminates as a result or if a member voids the alliance before its negotiated expiration date. We estimate logit models with corrections for temporal dependence and robust standard errors clustered on the alliance. Apart from the baseline model, we estimate two additional models. The first controls for change in the member state’s (A’s) military capabilities, a decrease in threat for A, regime transition in A, the end of the cold war, and whether A was an ally of the U.S. or the USSR during the cold war. The second model includes these control variables and adds several
additional ones: whether A formed a new outside alliance, whether the alliance is asymmetric, whether the alliance requires nonmilitary cooperation, whether the alliance takes the form of a treaty that requires ratification, whether the alliance is institutionalized, changes in power in the ally (B), increase in threat for B, regime transition in B, and SOLS change in B.

In our pooled models we find that the relationship between SOLS changes and alliance violation are positive and statistically significant. By contrast, the coefficient for non-SOLS change leader transitions is not statistically significant in the baseline model or when the first set of controls is included and has a negative effect (p<.1) in the model with the full set of controls. The coefficients of SOLS change and non-SOLS change leader transition are statistically different in all of these models.

Focusing on the effect of SOLS changes in different kinds of regimes, we find that SOLS change is positively associated with alliance violation in nondemocracies, but not in democracies. The effect of SOLS change is statistically different in these two sets of cases. The relative risk of alliance violation is 5.8 times higher when there is a SOLS change in a nondemocracy than when there is not. We also find that, compared to nondemocracies, democracies are not only more likely to stick to their alliance commitments when there is a SOLS change but also when there is no SOLS change.

**Summarizing Results and Comparing Across Issue Areas**

Across our four issue areas, there are some very consistent findings, particularly about the relationships between domestic political institutions, changes in sources of leader support, and foreign policy change. In this section, we wish to highlight those common findings, but also draw conclusions about how the effects of changes in sources of leader support, perhaps
mediated by domestic political institutions, varies across issue areas. Doing this requires that we find some way to standardize our results. Given that our dependent variables are measured in different units, and our analyses use different statistical methods, there are significant challenges to creating a metric of comparison. To facilitate comparisons across all of the issue areas we investigate, we have constructed a Cohen’s D statistic for each individual effect of interest.

Briefly, Cohen’s D is a measure of the standardized effect size of a variable with the standardization made in terms of the variation in the dependent variable under analysis. This measure allows one to view the marginal effect of an independent variable in terms of how many standard deviations it moves the dependent variable. For example, consider two regressions using the same independent variable which exhibit absolute effect sizes of 1 and 100 for dependent variables $y_1$ and $y_2$ respectively. While the effect on $y_2$ may seem more important at first glance, if the variability in $y_2$ is very large compared to the variability in $y_1$, one may find that the independent variable under investigation exerts a much larger effect on $y_1$ than $y_2$.

**TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE**

Comparisons of the effects of primary interest in this study using Cohen’s D statistics are provided in Table 1. All of these analyses were calculated using our basic interaction models (excluding control variables). For each issue area noted in the columns, each cell displays the number of standard deviations the dependent variable would move if the independent variable noted in the row changed from 0 to 1, with the other independent variable held at the described

\[ D = \frac{E[y|x=1] - E[y|x=0]}{\sigma_y}. \]

The expectations in the numerator can be predicted values from a regression and $\sigma_y$ is a measure of the standard deviation of the dependent variable.
value (these means are based on 1000 simulations, with 95% confidence intervals in parentheses below). Thus, row 1 shows the effect of a SOLS change in a nondemocracy on the dependent variable, and row 2 shows the effect of a SOLS change in a democracy on the dependent variable. In row 3, we examine the difference between nondemocracies and democracies given a SOLS change, and in row 4 we examine the difference in change in the dependent variable between nondemocracies and democracies in time periods without a SOLS change.

Looking across the rows, we see a fairly consistent story. In all four issue areas, SOLS changes in nondemocracies result in changes in foreign policy behavior (row 1), but SOLS changes in democracies have no statistically significant effect on foreign policy change, except in the area of trade (row 2). In all four issue areas, democracies exhibit more stability in foreign policy than nondemocracies both when there are SOLS changes and when there are not (rows 4 & 3 respectively). There is quite a bit of evidence here in support of the argument that democratic political institutions mitigate the effects of domestic political change on foreign policy change, and also that democracies pursue more consistent foreign policies overall. In addition, while this is not reported in this table, leader transitions that are not accompanied by SOLS changes do not show a statistically significant effect on foreign policy change in any of these four issue areas. Thus, at least in these four issue areas, it is not only the personal characteristics of leaders but their sources of societal support that influence foreign policy change.

Our motivation in testing our argument across different issue areas, however, was to consider the impact of two additional factors: the role of international law and institutions in constraining domestically motivated foreign policy change, and the domestic salience of
different issue areas (and related variance in domestic competition). We now turn to consider these issues.

In two of our four issue areas (sanctions and trade) we were able to evaluate the effect of international institutions on foreign policy consistency. With regard to economic sanctions, there are too few cases of nondemocratic senders to allow for systematic analysis, but we examined whether democratic senders behaved differently in the face of SOLS changes when an IGO is involved or not. Once we dropped an influential outlier case, we found no significant effect of SOLS change whether an IGO was part of the sanctions effort or not. By contrast, in our trade analyses we found that SOLS changes are correlated with trade volatility when the states are not members of the GATT/WTO but not necessarily when they are. This finding applies to both democracies and nondemocracies.

Our theory and the within sample result for the trade analysis would suggest to us that issue areas that are highly constrained by international law might demonstrate more foreign policy consistency with SOLS changes than those less constrained by international law. Alliances by definition are formed through international legal agreements, whereas UNGA voting is never bound by international law. If we compare these two issue areas, we find that in both cases SOLS changes in democracies have no statistically significant effect (row 2). SOLS changes in nondemocracies have a larger mean effect on alliance termination than on UNGA voting, although the confidence intervals overlap (row 1). In addition, when there is no SOLS change, democracy has a bigger constraining effect on change in UNGA voting than on alliance termination (row 3). When there is a SOLS change, the constraining effect of democracy is similar in the two policy areas (row 4).
We are finding it hard to draw clear conclusions about the effects of international law across these issue areas, however, because there is another factor that varies simultaneously—the salience of the issue to groups within society and the competition among them. Our theory relies on the assumption that groups within society have different preferences over policy, and we make the case that there is good reason to believe that competition among groups extends beyond domestic policy. We do not believe, however, that the salience of different foreign policies is equal. It is more likely, for instance, that in a society in which cleavages are largely on an economic dimension trade policy would be a very salient issue. In a society in which ethnic or ideological cleavages influence preferences on international alignments, alliances may be highly salient. For both societies with economic and with ethnic and ideological cleavages, economic sanctions can be highly salient. UNGA voting, on the other hand, is likely to be an issue of lower salience to domestic groups.

Given the high salience in many different cleavage environments, it is not surprising that we find the strongest mean effects of SOLS changes in nondemocracies (row 1) and the strongest mean effects of democracy given SOLS changes (row 4) in economic sanctions, although there is overlap in confidence intervals with some of the other policy areas. We are cautious about these results, however, given the small number of nondemocratic cases in the sanctions analysis. The fact that the effects of SOLS changes on trade are small relative to the other policy arenas is puzzling, but perhaps is influenced by the fact that institutions have been created to minimize the effect. Turning back to the comparison between alliances and UNGA voting, we would expect more change in alliances with SOLS change given the higher salience, but less given the constraining effects of legalization. Given these competing hypotheses, it is hard to draw clear conclusions. We welcome any suggestions readers might have.
Our Conclusions

International cooperation has the potential to provide efficiency gains for states as they benefit from economies of scale and comparative advantage, to increase the provision of public goods and limit negative externalities, to result in changes in norms of legitimate behavior, and to resolve conflicts that could result in militarized conflict and war. Yet, effective international cooperation often depends on the ability of leaders to make credible commitments about their successors’ future behavior. As a result, some scholars have been quite skeptical about the possibilities of deep and lasting cooperation, arguing, for instance, that such commitments are incompatible with principles of democracy that allow for change in policy whenever the preferences of citizens change, and that without external enforcement, international institutions and law are “mere scraps of paper”. Others have been optimistic about the role of some domestic political institutions to help structure political competition in ways that permit some consistency without unduly undermining accountability, and about the role of international institutions and law to change incentives of state leaders such that they can encourage consistent commitment through self-enforcement.

These questions have been very difficult to study, in part because it is easy to identify times when states change their foreign policy significantly, but it is not easy to identify cases in which states might have changed foreign policy and opted not to. When we witness consistency in foreign policy, it could be because the interests and preferences of citizens do not vary, or it might be that interests and preferences vary, but international and/or domestic constraints on foreign policy change exist. Thus, in questions about domestic political change, we have some who argue that “politics stops at the water’s edge” and national preferences over foreign policy
are essentially homogenous because they are driven by largely international factors; if we witness no change in foreign policy, that is because interests have not changed, and not because of any international or domestic constraint. When it comes to international institutions and law, some argue that because leaders select which agreements and institutions to participate in, they likely only commit to positions they would have taken anyway, and continued commitment to such positions is not due to any effect of the institutions and agreements, but rather to underlying (unchanged) interests. Because any deviation from policy can be traced to changes in interests, it might appear that every time interests change, these interests take precedence over past commitments.

In our project, we bring new evidence to these debates by identifying periods in which we have reason to believe a change in foreign policy is most likely. These are times in which a new leader comes to power who relies on a different source of societal support than the prior leader. When the results of domestic political competition bring to power groups with different interests, ideologies, and/or preferences, conditions are ripe for change not only in domestic policy, but in foreign policy. Societies have many different types of cleavages—economic, regional, ethnic, and ideological to name a few—and there is good reason to believe that members of different groups should have different preferences over such factors as international economic policy, international alignments, and the management of relations with rivals. By identifying conditions ripe for domestically motivated change, and then observing across a number of issue areas whether change occurs, we can speak more directly to the constraining effects of domestic and international institutions.

Our results in many of these areas are compelling. First, there is substantial evidence that our concept of change in source of leader support is capturing cases in which there is a
change in domestic interests or preferences. In every issue area we studied, leader transitions without SOLS changes have no statistically significant effect on foreign policy change; when the leader changes but the core groups supporting the leader do not, policy consistency is generally similar to the level of consistency within a single leader’s rule. In contrast, leader transitions that involve SOLS changes are often associated with change in foreign policy. Second, in all of the four issue areas we find that SOLS changes in nondemocratic states are associated with significant changes in foreign policy, but only in the area of trade are SOLS changes in democracies consistently associated with changes in foreign policy. We thus find fairly consistent evidence that democratic political institutions help to increase stability in policy outcomes. As we probe the effects of differences within democratic and nondemocratic institutions, we hope to be able to shed more light on the relative weight of the two causal mechanisms that we have identified—rules regarding the size of the leader’s winning coalition and rules regarding shared power with other political actors.

In our trade analysis, we also find that international institutions and agreements may be associated with less foreign policy change. We find little evidence of a significant effect of SOLS changes on dyadic trade when both members are committed to the GATT or the WTO, whether the states are democratic or nondemocratic. On the other hand, when states are not members of the GATT or WTO, SOLS changes have a statistically significant effect on changes in imports in the following year.

We find it harder to draw clear conclusions when we compare an issue area that involves a legal commitment (alliance termination) with an issue area that gives leaders significant domestic and international latitude to determine policy without constraint (UNGA voting). The problem is that these two issue areas vary not only on the dimension of constraint, but also on the
dimension of salience. Domestic publics simply care more about alliances and are more likely to compete over alliance policy, than they care about UNGA voting.

We think, therefore, that our project provides strong evidence (a) that foreign policy preferences are influenced by domestic political competition; and (b) that democratic political institutions mitigate against policy change, thus helping leaders to make credible commitments to long term cooperation. We also think we have some evidence that international institutions and agreements help to promote consistency in foreign policy even when domestic political change occurs; they have some binding effect on successors, even when those successors have different sources of societal support.
Works Cited:


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Note: Cells show Cohen’s D value and associated 95% confidence intervals. Estimates are from baseline interaction models without control variables.