To Agree or Not to Agree

Hawks, Doves, and Regime Type in International Rivalry and Rapprochement

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Amid the United States' unexpected rapprochement with the Soviet Union in the 1980s, the award-winning author Russell Baker asked, "Why is it that to improve relations with the Communists we have to have conservative Red-baiters in the White House?"[1] At the start of his presidency, Ronald Reagan was widely seen as a national security hard-liner. But Reagan ended his term as a strong proponent of arms control and East-West diplomacy. Scholars provide compelling explanations for Baker's counterintuitive observation. Hawks are well-positioned to navigate the domestic politics of rapprochement because they can signal the wisdom of compromise more credibly than doves, and voters view hawks who pursue cooperation as moderates.[2]

Yet the Reagan case remains puzzling. Although Reagan played against

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1. Russell Baker, "Rising Above Self," *New York Times*, May 28, 1988, https://www.nytimes.com/1988/05/ 28/opinion/observer-rising-above-self.html.
2. Alex Cukierman and Mariano Tommasi, "When Does It Take a Nixon to Go to China?" *American Economic Review*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (1998), pp. 180–197, https://doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.275627; Tyler Cowen and Daniel Sutter, "Why Only Nixon Could Go to China," *Public Choice*, Vol. 97, No. 4 (1998), pp. 605–615, https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1004907414530; Sarah E. Kreps, Elizabeth N. Saunders, and Kenneth A. Schultz, "The Ratification Premium: Hawks, Doves, and Arms Control," *World Politics*, Vol. 70, No. 4 (2018), pp. 479–514, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887118000102; Michaela Mattes and Jessica L. P. Weeks, "Hawks, Doves, and Peace: An Experimental Approach," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (2019), pp. 53–66, https://doi.org/10.1111/

International Security, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Fall 2025), pp. 162–192, https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC.a.15

type to make peace, his counterpart in the Soviet Union did not. Mikhail Gorbachev was a dove and acted like one to achieve a rapprochement with the West.[3] How can we square the conventional wisdom of a hawk's advantage in peacemaking with Gorbachev's key role in ending the Cold War? The U.S.-Soviet case highlights an important gap in the literature. Existing theoretical and empirical work on hawkishness and rapprochement focuses on electorally accountable leaders, even though most international rivalries feature at least one leader who faces no meaningful electoral check.[4]

In this article, I analyze how political considerations at the domestic and international levels affect which type of leader—a hawk or a dove—is best positioned to achieve a rapprochement with an international rival. Consistent with the literature, I define hawks as leaders who favor coercive or confrontational strategies in international politics and doves as those who favor cooperation and compromise.[5] Rivalries are characterized by frequent militarized crises, limited diplomatic contact, major unresolved disputes, and persistent antagonism.[6] Following Michaela Mattes and Jessica Weeks, I define rapprochement as the establishment of better working relations by erstwhile rivals.[7]

To achieve a rapprochement, leaders must be (1) able to deliver peace domestically and (2) willing to make peace internationally.[8] Hawks and doves have symmetric advantages and disadvantages in satisfying these two conditions.

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ajps.12392; Kenneth A. Schultz, "The Politics of Risking Peace: Do Hawks or Doves Deliver the Olive Branch?" *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (January 2005), pp. 1–38, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818305050071. For review, see Michaela Mattes and Jessica L. P. Weeks, "From Foes to Friends: The Causes of Interstate Rapprochement and Conciliation," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 27 (2024), pp. 185–204, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-041322-024603.

3. Michael A. Goldfien, "Essays on Leadership, Domestic Politics, and Diplomacy" (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2023).

4. Notably, while theoretical work on the topic assumes some form of electoral accountability, authors do sometimes imply that the logic of hawks' advantage should apply in contexts that do not feature competitive elections. See Cukierman and Tommasi, "When Does It Take a Nixon to Go to China?" Note that "hawkishness" and "leader foreign policy preferences" are sometimes used interchangeably.

5. For work specifically on leader hawkishness and rapprochement making this distinction, see, for example: Mattes and Weeks, "From Foes to Friends," p. 195; Schultz, "The Politics of Risking Peace," p. 9.

6. Paul F. Diehl, Gary Goertz, and Yahve Gallegos, "Peace Data: Concept, Measurement, Patterns, and Research Agenda," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 38, No. 5 (2021), p. 609, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27112632.

7. Mattes and Weeks, "From Foes to Friends."

8. Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 427–460, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027697.

Hawks enjoy a *credibility* advantage—an edge in convincing the domestic public that rapprochement is in the national interest—because the public views hawks as reluctant to pursue cooperation in the first place.[9] Doves' *motivation* to cooperate makes them more willing to pursue diplomacy internationally, but this eagerness undermines their credibility with the public, who may fear that a dove would pursue diplomacy even if the moment were not ripe. Put differently, the effects of credibility and motivation push in opposing directions.

I argue that electoral accountability, the opportunity to reward or punish leaders at the ballot box, influences the relative importance of credibility and motivation at both the domestic and international levels.[10] In the domestic political arena, electoral accountability heightens the importance of credibility with the domestic public, resulting in the hawks' advantage that existing work identifies. In low electoral accountability regimes, however, the importance of credibility with the domestic public decreases.[11] Indeed, if the domestic public is entirely unable to hold leaders accountable, a leader's capacity to convey the benefits of rapprochement becomes immaterial to policy outcomes. In these contexts, doves have the political space to act on their dovish preferences.

At the international negotiating table, electoral accountability also tends to affect whether foreign counterparts prefer to deal with a hawkish or dovish leader. Counterparts prefer negotiating with electorally accountable hawks because they appreciate the value of the latter's credibility at home. By contrast, leaders prefer to deal with electorally unaccountable doves for two reasons. First, leaders anticipate that domestic credibility is less salient in such settings. Second, doves engage in diplomacy more enthusiastically. Overall, then, in low electoral accountability settings, it is likely that doves, not hawks, will more reliably achieve a rapprochement with international rivals.

9. This notion of credibility is widely embraced in the literature. See, for example: Cukierman and Tommasi, "When Does It Take a Nixon to Go to China?"; Kreps, Saunders, and Schultz, "The Ratification Premium." As Schultz notes, the logic flows from Randall Calvert's work on the utility of biased advice. See: Schultz, "The Politics of Risking Peace," p. 4; Randall L. Calvert, "The Value of Biased Information: A Rational Choice Model of Political Advice," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (1985), pp. 530–555, https://doi.org/10.2307/2130895.

10. See Scott Ashworth, "Electoral Accountability: Recent Theoretical and Empirical Work," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 15 (2012), p. 184, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-031710-103823.

11. I use the term "low electoral accountability regime" to describe a political regime in which leaders are not accountable to voters. I used the term "high electoral accountability regime" to describe a regime in which leaders are accountable to voters.

Given the close link between electoral accountability and democracy—defined narrowly here as a system in which leaders are selected via competitive elections—hawks should be best positioned to achieve rapprochements in democracies, whereas doves ought to be best positioned to achieve rapprochements in autocracies.[12] This pattern should hold even though some autocratic leaders are accountable to regime elites, since these accountability relationships are unlikely to feature the information asymmetries about the international landscape that exist between leaders and the public. As I explain in the next section, the logic of hawkish credibility rests on the assumption that leaders know more about the state of the world than do the actors who hold them to account. Yet this assumption is unlikely to hold in elite-constrained or non-personalist dictatorships because, as Weeks notes, the type of regime elites who hold some dictators accountable tend to be experienced and knowledgeable about foreign affairs.[13] Indeed, these sorts of dictators often rely on regime elites for information.[14] In the absence of an information asymmetry, hawkish leaders should not have a special ability to convince elites that rapprochement is in the national interest.

I test the theory by analyzing two prominent cases of rapprochement: the end of the Cold War under Reagan and Gorbachev in the late 1980s; and the end of the Egypt-Israel rivalry in the late 1970s under Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat. These cases each feature rapprochement under a democratic hawk and autocratic dove. But they differ on many other dimensions, permitting a "least-similar" case comparison that accounts for alternative explanations for why rivalries terminate and provides insight into the argument's applicability across diverse cases.[15] In addition, by selecting cases that have received attention in the existing literature,[16] I am able to assess whether my theory incorporating regime type offers additional explanatory power

12. Jose Antonio Cheibub, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Raymond Vreeland, "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited," *Public Choice*, Vol. 143 (2010), p. 72, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-009-9491-2.
13. See Jessica L. P. Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp. 8, 22.
14. See Tyler Jost, *Bureaucracies at War: The Institutional Origins of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), pp. 2–3, 24.
15. Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), pp. 50, 82.
16. For work that considers these cases, see, for example: Michaela Mattes and Jessica L. P. Weeks, "Reacting to the Olive Branch: Hawks, Doves, and Public Support for Cooperation," *International Organization*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (Fall 2022), pp. 957–976, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818322000170; Mattes and Weeks, "Hawks, Doves, and Peace"; Cukierman and Tommasi, "When Does It Take a Nixon to Go to China?"; Miroslav Nincic, "The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Politics of Opposites," *World Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (1988), pp. 452–475, https://doi.org/10.2307/2010314.

beyond the theoretical contributions on which I seek to build.[17] Consistent with the observable implications of the theory, I find that though a hawkish reputation was crucial for Reagan and Begin to secure support for a deal at home, the dovish Gorbachev and Sadat had latitude to boldly pursue cooperation by virtue of their limited electoral accountability. Further, although Gorbachev and Sadat understood the value of working with hawks such as Reagan and Begin who could secure domestic support for cooperation in the United States and Israel, it was Gorbachev's and Sadat's dovishness that made them appealing partners for Reagan and Begin.

This article advances the literature in several ways. First, it provides a general theory of leader preferences and international rapprochement, covering all political regime types. Existing research on leader hawkishness and rapprochement implicitly or explicitly centers on democracies. Yet because democracies almost never find themselves in conflictual security relationships with one another, it is essential to investigate how leader foreign policy preferences intersect with regime type in international rivalry.[18] I conclude that the salience of hawkish credibility depends on electoral accountability. Notably, the theory also suggests that rapprochement, in contrast to crisis initiation and escalation, is a type of strategic interaction in which accountability imposed by authoritarian elites may not substitute for electoral accountability.[19] This article therefore responds to Susan Hyde and Elizabeth Saunders' call for researchers to recapture regime type in the study of international politics.[20]

Second, the article offers the first attempt to understand how different types of leaders—hawks and doves—interact across the negotiating table. Existing work on leader hawkishness and peace does not fully consider the counterpart with whom hawkish or dovish leaders must negotiate. Similarly, other research on leader attributes tends to focus only on the biography or worldview

17. Steven Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 83.
18. Though scholars still debate the causes of this relationship, the correlation is very strong. For discussion, see Allan Dafoe, John R. Oneal, and Bruce Russett, "The Democratic Peace: Weighing the Evidence and Cautious Inference," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (2013), pp. 201–214, https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12055.
19. Jessica L. P. Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve," *International Organization*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2008), pp. 35–64, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818308080028; Jessica L. P. Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 106, No. 2 (2012), pp. 326–347, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000111; Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace.*
20. Susan D. Hyde and Elizabeth N. Saunders, "Recapturing Regime Type in International Relations: Leaders, Institutions, and Agency Space," *International Organization*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (Spring 2020), pp. 363–395, https://doi. org/10.1017/S0020818319000365.

of a single leader in a given analysis.[21] By highlighting leader pairings as part of a strategic interaction, this project advances the literature on not only hawkishness and peace but also leader attributes more broadly.

Finally, the article provides a fresh take on diplomacy and leadership in notable instances of rapprochement. Prior research illuminates how a hardliner like Reagan could produce a rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Yet it does not explain how Gorbachev's dovishness simultaneously made an equal if not larger contribution to ending the Cold War. Similarly, the literature on leader hawkishness and rapprochement offers insight into the role of a hawkish Begin at Camp David, but it does not equally capture the essential role played by a dovish Sadat. The moderating role of electoral accountability on the link between leader hawkishness and international rapprochement presented in this article reconciles the seeming contradiction of these prominent historical cases.

This article is organized as follows. First, I survey the literature on hawks' advantages in rapprochement. Second, I construct a theory of regime type, leader preferences, and rapprochement. Third, I use case studies of the end of the Cold War and the Egypt-Israel rapprochement to test the observable implications of the theory. Finally, I close by reflecting on the article's findings and offering suggestions for further research.

Foreign Policy Orientations and International Rapprochement

Since Richard Nixon's surprising visit to China in 1972, scholars have sought to understand how leaders implement major policy shifts such as rapprochement—the establishment of better working relations with a rival—by

21. For reviews of the leader biography literature, see: Michael C. Horowitz and Matthew Fuhrmann, "Studying Leaders and Military Conflict: Conceptual Framework and Research Agenda," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 62, No. 10 (2018), pp. 2072–2086, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002718785679; Daniel Krcmaric, Stephen C. Nelson, and Andrew Roberts, "Studying Leaders and Elites: The Personal Biography Approach," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 23 (2020), pp. 133–151, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050718-032801. For exceptions, see: Michael A. Goldfien, Michael F. Joseph, and Daniel Krcmaric, "When Do Leader Backgrounds Matter? Evidence from the President's Daily Brief," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (2023), pp. 414–437, https://doi.org/10.1177/07388942231196109; Michael A. Goldfien and Michael F. Joseph, "Perceptions of Leadership Importance: Evidence from the CIA's President's Daily Brief," *Security Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2023), https://doi.org/10.1080/ 09636412.2023.2200203; Michael C. Horowitz et al., "Sizing Up the Adversary: Leader Attributes and Coercion in International Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 62, No. 10 (2018), pp. 2180–2204, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002718788605.

playing against type.[22] A prominent theoretical perspective argues that leaders who play against type can more credibly signal the wisdom of a policy choice.[23] In the literature, credibility refers to a domestic audience's trust in a leader's claim that rapprochement is an appropriate policy given the state of the world.[24] The standard story is as follows: Leaders have better information about global affairs than the voting public. This information asymmetry arises because leaders have "access to the advice of specialists, and in some cases, they possess classified information."[25] Because doves are intrinsically more inclined to cooperate, when a dovish politician pursues rapprochement, voters are unsure whether they do so because of objective domestic and international conditions or the politician's bias. By contrast, when a hawk contends that rapprochement is the right policy, it must be so; hawks hold an intrinsic value for confrontation and so would not propose cooperation unless it was optimal. Hawks' against-type behavior resolves the information asymmetry between leaders and the public. As a result, the public will be more likely to conclude that rapprochement is aligned with the national interest when it is a hawk that undertakes diplomacy rather than a dove.

Importantly, hawks may have additional political incentives to seek rapprochement with a rival. For leaders of hawkish parties, as Kenneth Schultz notes, pursuing diplomacy represents a pivot to the middle, which may appeal to the median voter.[26] Doves, by contrast, may face political incentives to take more hawkish positions to guard against the charge that they are too soft on national security.[27]

22. Mattes and Weeks, "From Foes to Friends." Consistent with Mattes and Weeks, I distinguish between rapprochement and reconciliation. I exclusively focus on the former, that is, cases where rivals establish relatively normal and working relations, but do not necessarily develop warm or close ties. Rapprochement is a first step and may simply result in a cold peace rather than deep cooperation.

23. For theoretical work taking this perspective, see, for example: Cukierman and Tommasi, "When Does It Take a Nixon to Go to China?"; Cowen and Sutter, "Why Only Nixon Could Go to China"; or Kreps, Saunders, and Schultz, "The Ratification Premium."

24. See, for example: Cukierman and Tommasi, "When Does It Take a Nixon to Go to China?"; Cowen and Sutter, "Why Only Nixon Could Go to China"; Kreps, Saunders, and Schultz, "The Ratification Premium"; Mattes and Weeks, "Hawks, Doves, and Peace." For review of this literature, see Mattes and Weeks, "From Foes to Friends."

25. Cukierman and Tomassi, "When Does it Take a Nixon to Go to China?" p. 181. Similarly, Tyler Cowen and Daniel Sutter justify this assumption with reference to secret nonpublic information and access to "sage advisors." See Cowen and Sutter, "Why Only Nixon Could Go to China," p. 607.

26. Schultz, "The Politics of Risking Peace."

27. Elizabeth N. Saunders, *The Insiders' Game: How Elites Make War and Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2024). For leaders of dovish parties, it is conflict or confrontation that can represent a pivot to the political center.

There is considerable empirical support for the theoretical claim that hawks have a credibility advantage over doves among the domestic public. Several quantitative[28] and qualitative[29] studies find that rapprochement and other cooperative policies garner greater domestic support when carried out by hawkish leaders. Furthermore, scholars find that domestic sanction awaits leaders perceived as "over-cooperating" with rivals,[30] and that dovish leaders may pursue diplomacy with rivals when comfortably ahead in the polls in anticipation of this risk.[31]

Although much of the literature emphasizes hawks' credibility with the domestic public, it is important to recognize that doves' greater intrinsic preference for cooperation may also contribute to rapprochement. In particular, two recent studies argue that doves' sincere commitment to diplomacy may make them attractive negotiating partners to foreign governments[32] and foreign publics.[33] More generally, these studies underscore that there is a trade-off between doves' motivation to cooperate and hawks' credibility in selling cooperation at home, which raises anew the question of whether hawks or doves are "ultimately more likely to achieve peace."[34]

An important gap in the literature is its inattention to variation in the extent to which leaders face electoral accountability. Existing work implicitly or explicitly focuses on political contexts in which electoral accountability is high, even as most notable international rivalries feature at least one leader who faces limited electoral checks. I argue that addressing this gap in the literature is key to identifying in what circumstances hawks or doves are ultimately

28. Mattes and Weeks, "Hawks, Doves, and Peace"; Robert F. Trager and Lynn Vavreck, "The Political Costs of Crisis Bargaining: Presidential Rhetoric and the Role of Party," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (2011), pp. 526–545, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00521.x; Christopher W. Blair and Joshua A. Schwartz, "The Gendered Peace Premium," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (2023), https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqad090.
29. Kreps, Saunders, and Schultz, "The Ratification Premium"; Nincic, "The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Politics of Opposites."
30. Michael Colaresi, "When Doves Cry: International Rivalry, Unreciprocated Cooperation, and Leadership Turnover," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (2004), pp. 555–570, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0092-5853.2004.00087.x; Graeme A. M. Davies and Robert Johns, "The Domestic Consequences of International Over-Cooperation: An Experimental Study of Microfoundations," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2015), pp. 343–360, https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894215577556.
31 . James D. Kim, "Presidential Hawkishness, Domestic Popularity, and Diplomatic Normalization," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (2024), pp. 83–103, https://doi.org/10.1111/psq.12863.
32. Joe Clare, "Hawks, Doves, and International Cooperation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 58, No. 7 (2013), pp. 1311–1337, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002713498705.
33. Mattes and Weeks, "Reacting to the Olive Branch."
34. Mattes and Weeks, "From Foes to Friends," p. 195.

best positioned to achieve a rapprochement. When electoral accountability is high, the salience of credibility with the domestic public gives hawks a crucial advantage. When electoral accountability is low, by contrast, leader credibility at home is not salient, and doves thus have the political space to act on their cooperative preferences. Moreover, these dynamics carry over to the international level, such that counterparts prefer to negotiate with electorally accountable hawks and electorally unaccountable doves. Given the tight link between electoral accountability and democracy—or a political system in which "those who govern are selected through contested elections"—hawks should be best positioned to achieve rapprochements in democracies, whereas doves should be best positioned to achieve rapprochements in autocracies.[35] I develop this argument in greater detail in the next section.

A Theory of Hawkishness, Regime Type, and Rapprochement

For leaders to produce a rapprochement, they must be (1) able to deliver peace domestically and (2) willing to make peace internationally.[36] Because the domestic public views hawks as unmotivated to pursue rapprochement in the first place, hawks enjoy domestic *credibility*.[37] Hawks are often unwilling to make peace, even though they have the ability to do so. By contrast, doves are *motivated* to pursue cooperation internationally, yet this eagerness costs them domestic support. When doves seek rapprochement, the public is uncertain whether this action reflects the appropriateness of the policy or doves' bias toward cooperation. Doves have abundant willingness to pursue rapprochement but, as a result, limited ability to sell cooperation domestically. The effects of credibility and motivation pull in opposing directions, and the debate over whether hawkish or dovish leaders are better positioned to achieve an end to rivalry can thus be reframed as a trade-off. When is dovish motivation more important than hawkish credibility and vice versa?

I argue that regime type conditions this trade-off. Democratic and autocratic leaders differ in the extent to which they are accountable to the public via

35. Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland, "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited," p. 72. This is a minimalist definition of democracy. In essence, electoral accountability is both necessary and sufficient for a state to be considered a democracy, making the latter a good proxy measure of the former. Though there may be variation in electoral accountability within both democracies and autocracies, I focus on ideal types in this initial intervention for clarity.
36. The context is in this way similar to that described by Robert Putnam in his description of two-level games. See Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics."
37. Both preferences and perceived preferences matter; I assume they are positively correlated.

elections, and this accountability affects the link between leader hawkishness and rapprochement in two ways. First, at the domestic level, electoral accountability affects the salience of leader credibility and, therefore, which leaders have the political space to pursue diplomacy. Second, at the international level, electoral accountability affects whether counterparts view hawks or doves as more appealing partners in diplomacy.

DOMESTIC LEVEL: CREDIBILITY AND POLITICAL SPACE FOR DIPLOMACY

Leaders vary in their need to bring their country with them when seeking rapprochement, and this variation in accountability affects the extent to which a leader's credibility before their domestic public influences policy outcomes. In high electoral accountability regimes—such as most democracies—the ability to credibly signal the appropriateness of rapprochement to a domestic public is highly salient. As a result, hawks' credibility with the domestic public gives them an important advantage in making peace relative to doves. Further, because diplomacy makes hawkish leaders appear moderate, they have a political incentive to play against type. By contrast, doves' credibility deficit may undermine their ability to implement preferred policies in high electoral accountability settings, and anticipated public skepticism may, in turn, constrain their ability to act boldly in pursuit of peace.

The credibility dynamic shifts, however, in low electoral accountability regimes, such as most autocracies. In these settings, leaders largely do not need to bring their country with them on the road to peace. At the extreme, if the domestic public is completely unable to hold a leader to account, then its approval or disapproval of a policy of rapprochement is immaterial. Under these circumstances, hawks' credibility advantage—and doves' credibility deficit—with the domestic public loses salience in the diplomatic process. What matter most in low electoral accountability settings are leaders' preferences, and doves value cooperation and compromise more than hawks. Unconcerned about electoral rejection, doves have the freedom to play more strongly to type, investing in bold diplomatic initiatives. Further, while electorally accountable doves often have an incentive to include hawkish advisers in their governments to bolster their public image, electorally unaccountable doves should be better positioned to marginalize hard-line voices without fearing public alarm or backlash.[38] Therefore, in low electoral accountability regimes, a dove's willingness to make peace holds greater weight than a hawk's ability

38. For example, Saunders, *The Insiders' Game*; Matt Malis, "Foreign Policy Appointments," *In-*

to sell it domestically. As a result, in autocracies, I expect doves, not hawks, to more reliably achieve rapprochements with rivals.

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL: THE VALUE OF HAWKISH OR DOVISH PARTNERS

At the international level, electoral accountability affects whether hawks or doves appear as attractive negotiating partners to foreign counterparts, who are attentive to the political constraints faced by leaders. Given the importance of credibility in high electoral accountability settings, there is utility in bargaining with democratic hawks because they can reliably convince their population to back rapprochement. This backing reduces the odds that diplomatic effort will be for naught. For this reason, Mao Zedong told Nixon that he "preferred rightists. . . . Those on the right can do what those on the left talk about."[39]

By contrast, a rival counterpart to an autocratic leader may appreciate that such leaders typically face a more minimal public check, reducing the former's concern that the latter will be unable to implement an agreement. Anticipating that a less electorally accountable leader can more easily implement their preferred policies regardless of whether they are a hawk or a dove, foreign counterparts will prefer to deal with autocratic doves rather than autocratic hawks. The reason is that autocratic doves tend to reciprocate efforts at rapprochement and promote positive-sum diplomatic outcomes.[40] In turn, doves' actions may lower the political hurdles that their counterparts—especially electorally accountable ones—face at home, because foreign doves are likely to generate domestic public support for diplomacy.[41] This logic explains why Israel was able to sign a peace agreement with the dovish King Hussein of Jordan in the 1990s but not with the hawkish Hafez al-Assad of Syria.[42]

OBSERVABLE IMPLICATIONS

The foregoing discussion suggests that the relationship between hawkishness and rapprochement should differ depending on whether leaders are

ternational Organization, Vol. 78, No. 3 (Summer 2024), pp. 501–527, https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081832400016X.

39. Chris Tudda, *A Cold War Turning Point: Nixon and China, 1969–1972* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, p. 182.

40. Mattes and Weeks, "Reacting to the Olive Branch."

41. Ibid.

42. Itamar Rabinovich, *The Brink of Peace: The Israeli-Syrian Negotiations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Table 1. Advantage in Rapprochement by Leader Hawkishness and Regime Type

	Democratic	Autocratic
Dove	Low	High
Hawk	High	Low

democratic or autocratic. I expect democratic hawks and autocratic doves to hold an advantage in rapprochement. Leader pairings featuring democratic hawks and autocratic doves should be particularly auspicious. The theory is probabilistic; I do not claim that democratic doves or autocratic hawks can never achieve rapprochement. Table 1 visualizes the theorized relationship.

Beyond this general relationship, the theory suggests four observable implications. I first consider expectations at the domestic level. (1) In democracies, I expect to observe that the credibility gap between hawks and doves is politically salient. Hawks should have special political latitude to pursue rapprochement and sell it to the domestic public. By contrast, (2) in autocracies, doves should not greatly fear public rejection of their policies, and they should have latitude to play strongly to type by pursuing bold diplomatic initiatives and marginalizing hard-line voices in their government. At the international level, (3) I expect counterparts to democratic leaders to prefer dealing with hawks because they are better positioned than doves to implement a policy of rapprochement at home. By contrast, (4) I expect counterparts to autocratic leaders to see an opportunity in dealing with doves because counterparts view doves as sincerely committed to diplomacy and able to generate domestic support for rapprochement in the counterpart's country.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Before proceeding to this study's empirical evidence, I briefly consider alternative explanations. First, given the prominence of research in comparative politics[43] and international relations[44] emphasizing variation in accountability in autocratic political regimes, some might wonder whether my focus on

43. For example, Barbara Geddes, "What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 2 (1999), pp. 115–144, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.115. For review, synthesis, and novel empirics, see also Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz, *How Dictatorships Work: Power, Personalization, and Collapse* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

44. For example: Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace*; Brian Lai and Dan Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive: Domestic Sources of Dispute Initiation in Authoritarian Regimes, 1950–

electoral accountability and the simple democracy/autocracy distinction is sufficient. In particular, important work shows that some authoritarian leaders face meaningful checks from regime elites, and that these "elite-constrained dictators" (or non-personalist dictators) tend to be less conflictual internationally than those who face little or no accountability from regime elites.[45]

I argue that variation in elite-imposed accountability within autocracies is unlikely to moderate the link between hawkishness and rapprochement to the same extent as electoral accountability. Hawks' credibility advantage emerges from an information asymmetry between leaders and the public regarding whether conditions are favorable for rapprochement. Hawks are better at resolving this asymmetry than doves; if no asymmetry exists, than neither should a hawkish credibility advantage. It is easy to assume an information asymmetry between leaders and the public, given leaders' access to intelligence and expert advice. It is harder to justify the assumption of an information asymmetry between leaders and regime elites in non-personal or elite-constrained dictatorships. As Weeks emphasizes, elites in this type of regime are competent and experienced in national security affairs.[46] Indeed, autocratic leaders often rely on the sorts of regime elites who might hold them accountable for information about international affairs.[47]

In the absence of such an information asymmetry, hawkish leaders should not have a special ability to convince elites that rapprochement is in the national interest. Hawkish credibility should thus be of limited salience even in non-personal or elite-constrained dictatorships, since leaders in such regimes remain largely unaccountable to their populations. Put differently, while the degree to which dictators are accountable to elites varies, higher levels of this type of accountability should not generate a particular hawkish advantage (or dovish disadvantage) when implementing a policy of rapprochement at home. Nevertheless, the least-similar case study comparison permits me to examine

1992," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (2006), pp. 113–126, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00173.x.

45. Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men"; Michaela Mattes and Mariana Rodriguez, "Autocracies and International Cooperation," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vo. 58, No. 3 (2014), pp. 527–538, https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12107; Jeff D. Colgan and Jessica L. P. Weeks, "Revolution, Personalist Dictatorships, and International Conflict," *International Organization*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (2015), pp. 163–194, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818314000307. Studies, such as Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," also differentiate between military and civilian authoritarian regimes, but these studies use such distinctions as a proxy for foreign policy preferences, not accountability. Like Weeks, I argue that both preferences and accountability matter. But I focus on leader hawkishness, rather than regime composition, to capture preferences, and I use competitive elections, rather than elite politics, to proxy accountability.

46. Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace*, pp. 8, 22.

47. Jost, *Bureaucracies at War*, pp. 2–3, 24.

whether the theorized mechanism operates despite variation in the degree to which autocratic leaders are constrained by elites.

The broader literature on rivalry termination highlights non–leadership related factors that may also affect patterns of rivalry and rapprochement, including territorial disputes,[48] geographic proximity,[49] and shifts to the balance of power.[50] Territorial disputes are often particularly intractable, and thus it may be easier to resolve rivalries in which such disputes are absent. It may be more difficult to terminate geographically proximate rivalries because both sides find their contiguity threatening and thus require a higher degree of trust before agreeing to cooperate. Regarding the balance of power, relative parity could make it easier for states to view continued competition as futile. Alternatively, unequal capabilities might enable leaders to make concessions without fearing that doing so could tip the balance of power. I do not claim that these factors—geography, territorial disputes, balance of power—are unimportant for rivalry termination. Rather, I simply claim that the effects of leader hawkishness and regime type also matter. Further, I do not see a reason to think that factors such as geography or power should confound the theorized interaction of leader hawkishness and regime type. Nonetheless, the least-similar case study design permits me to test whether the theorized mechanisms operate despite variation in the dispute, the geography, and the balance of power.

Case Evidence

The universe of cases to which my theory applies is international rivalries.[51] A rivalry is defined as a relationship between two countries that is characterized

48. Andrew P. Owsiak and Toby J. Rider, "Clearing the Hurdle: Border Settlement and Rivalry Termination," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (2013), pp. 757–772, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381613000595; Toby J. Rider, "Understanding Arms Race Onset: Rivalry, Threat, and Territorial Competition," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (2009), pp. 693–703, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381609090549.

49. Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Geography, Democracy, and Peace," *International Interactions*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (1995), pp. 297–323, https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629508434853; Jaroslav Tir and Paul F. Diehl, "Geographic Dimensions of International Rivalry," *Political Geography*, Vo. 21, No. 2 (2002), pp. 263–286, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(01)00059-2.

50. D. Scott Bennett, "Security, Bargaining, and the End of Interstate Rivalry," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (1996), pp. 157–183, https://doi.org/10.2307/2600955.

51. More precisely, the scope of the theory is such that the logic should apply, provided that democracy serves as a proxy for electoral accountability, and provided that autocratic elites who hold dictators accountable are relatively well-informed about foreign policy. The number of potential rivalries within the case universe—the potential domain for analysis—is a matter of debate in the literature, with some datasets identifying several dozen rivalries (see ibid.) and others identifying more than one hundred (see Diehl, Goertz, and Gallegos, "Peace Data").

by limited diplomatic contact, frequent militarized crises or conflicts, major unresolved disputes, and persistent antagonism. Below, I explore two instances of rapprochement between rivals: (1) the end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union under a hawkish Reagan and a dovish Gorbachev; and (2) the rapprochement between Egypt and Israel in the late 1970s under a hawkish Begin and a dovish Sadat.[52]

This study's case selection offers several advantages. First, my theory has different expectations than existing research for the cases in this study, allowing me to explore whether my theory offers additional explanatory power. As Steven Van Evera notes, cases for which theories have divergent expectations are particularly valuable when the goal is to test "the relative power" of multiple theories, rather than simply testing a single theory against a null hypothesis.[53] The literature on hawks' advantages in navigating the domestic politics of peacemaking would expect rapprochement in these two cases to occur *despite* the presence of doves such as Gorbachev and Sadat. By contrast, my theory expects autocratic doves to have a positive effect on the diplomatic process. Similarly, the smaller literature on doves' advantages at the international level would expect hawks like Reagan and Begin to alienate their diplomatic counterparts. My theory, on the other hand, suggests that rival leaders often see democratic hawks as attractive negotiating partners.

Second, the cases are "least similar," which helps to account for potential alternative explanations and to shed light on the theory's external validity. The two cases are similar with regard to their independent variables and their dependent variable—democratic hawks and autocratic doves achieving a rapprochement—but they differ on many other variables that are potentially relevant to rivalry and rapprochement. The logic of inference in least-similar designs is that if the independent variables contribute to a similar outcome despite differences in these other variables, one can conclude that the outcome is attributable to the variables of interest and not to other factors.[54]

52. Both of these rivalries have received attention in the literature on leader hawkishness and rapprochement. See, for example: Mattes and Weeks, "Reacting to the Olive Branch"; Mattes and Weeks, "Hawks, Doves, and Peace"; Cukierman and Tommasi, "When Does It Take a Nixon to Go to China?"; Nincic, "The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Politics of Opposites." Both are also included in a variety of quantitative datasets on rivalries. See, for example: Bennett, "Security, Bargaining, and the End of Interstate Rivalry"; Diehl, Goertz, and Gallegos, "Peace Data."
53. Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, p. 83.
54. For more on least-similar case methods, see George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, pp. 50, 82. George and Bennett note that least-similar designs take inspiration from John Stuart Mill's "method of agreement" and have been used, for example, to show that the logic of the democratic peace holds across very different societies. See ibid.

The alternative explanations section above highlights elite-imposed accountability, territorial disputes, geographic proximity, and the balance of power. The U.S.-Soviet and Egyptian-Israeli rivalries differ on each of these dimensions. Gorbachev was an elite-constrained dictator, whereas Sadat was a personalist dictator.[55] The Egypt-Israel rivalry featured a major territorial dispute—control of the Sinai Peninsula—but the U.S.-Soviet rivalry did not. Egypt and Israel were (and are) geographically contiguous, but the United States and Soviet Union were not.[56] Finally, as the Cold War closed, Soviet power had declined substantially relative to the United States; the rivalry was becoming imbalanced.[57] By contrast, in the years before the Egypt-Israel rapprochement, the rivalry was moving toward greater parity. Though Israel retained a military advantage, Egypt's surprising successes in the early days of the 1973 war undermined Israel's sense of invulnerability following the Six-Day War.[58] If the role of leader hawkishness and regime type in contributing to rapprochement is similar in each case, it suggests that hawkishness and regime type mattered and that the theoretical mechanisms have external validity.

The third advantage of this study's case selection is that political scientists and historians have paid a great deal of attention to these two intrinsically important rapprochement episodes. Though the intrinsic importance of the cases is irrelevant for theory testing,[59] selecting consequential cases holds the prospect of broadening our understanding of historically consequential instances of rapprochement.[60]

Despite these advantages, least-similar research designs do not track how changes in the independent variables correspond to changes in the dependent variable across cases.[61] I address this limitation in several ways. First, the

55. See the classification in Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," p. 337.
56. Of course, Alaska and the Russian far east are close, but the major population centers for the United States and the Soviet Union were much farther apart than for Egypt and Israel.
57. For an overview of the shifting balance of power, see Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations at the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).
58. Kenneth W. Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy: Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, and Begin and the Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 50.
59. Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, pp. 86–87.
60 . For discussion of theory-guided, idiographic case studies, see Jack S. Levy, "Case Studies: Tyes, Designs, and Logics of Inference," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2008), p. 4, https://doi.org/10.1080/07388940701860318. As Levy notes, while explaining cases as historical events is often not (nor should be) the primary goal of case research, theory-guided cases offer a useful complement to inductive historical work.
61. These sorts of comparisons follow John Stuart Mill's method of difference, rather than the

cases highlight evidence of the underlying mechanisms emphasized by the theory. This type of evidence can help to bolster inferences drawn from least-similar designs.[62] Second, I include evidence in the cases that suggests counterfactual comparisons along the lines of a most-similar comparison—for example, within-case observations by actors themselves and analysts about what *would* have been possible if a leader were a dove rather than a hawk, or vice versa. Finally, the conclusion offers suggestions for additional empirical testing that could complement the case studies that I present here.

To assess the cases, I developed a coding procedure for my key variables. The first independent variable is leader hawkishness. Hawkish leaders tend to favor coercion or confrontation in international politics, whereas doves tend to favor cooperation and compromise. To determine whether the leaders in the cases were hawks or doves, I searched for evidence of their beliefs before their tenure and early in their time as leader, before the rapprochement process started. As Saunders notes, this approach analytically separates beliefs from actions and ensures that my independent variables (especially leader hawkishness or dovishness) are not inferred from the dependent variable (rapprochement). This is particularly important for my research question, since against-type behavior is possible in the theory. Inferring leader foreign policy preferences from actions in office would be inappropriate, since the theory suggests that behavior may well run counter to type.

My second independent variable is regime type. In particular, my theory suggests that democracy—because it is a proxy for electoral accountability—should moderate the relationship between leader hawkishness and rapprochement. To code whether leaders in my cases faced electoral accountability, I used the Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited dataset's binary democracy/autocracy coding for the year that leaders entered office.[63] Many measures of democracy exist. I use this binary measure because it closely corresponds to the narrow definition of democracy that I adopt in this study. By contrast, other measures see competitive elections as only one of many indicators of democracy.[64] My dependent variable is rapprochement. In each case, I considered the result of diplomatic activity to confirm that rapprochement—the establishment of better working relations between rivals—occurred.

method of similarity, as noted above. See George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, p. 50.
62. See ibid., p. 82.
63. Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland, "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited."
64. For discussion, see ibid.

My theory suggests that the independent variables of leader hawkishness and regime type interact at the domestic and international levels to determine the likelihood of rapprochement between rivals. To trace the proposed logic and examine observable implications, I first offer a brief summary of the cases. Second, I provide evidence justifying the coding of my independent variables. Third, I explore how hawkishness and regime type interact at the domestic level, specifically how electoral accountability conditions the political space that hawkish and dovish leaders have to pursue diplomacy. Fourth, I examine how hawkishness and regime type interact at the international level, focusing on perceptions of hawkish and dovish leaders across the negotiating table. Finally, I conclude by discussing the outcome of each case.

THE END OF THE COLD WAR

Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union could hardly have been worse in the early 1980s. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and Jimmy Carter's subsequent withdrawal of SALT II from Senate consideration marked the end of détente. Despite these inauspicious events, diplomacy between a hawkish Reagan and a dovish Gorbachev led to an unexpected rapprochement by the decade's end. I demonstrate that regime type moderated the effect of leader hawkishness in this process, such that the democratically elected Reagan's hawkishness and the autocratic Gorbachev's dovishness combined to play a key role in producing a rapprochement. Consistent with the observable implications, Reagan's hard-line reputation was important because he could mobilize support for rapprochement at home. On the other hand, Gorbachev's dovishness was important because in the absence of electoral accountability, he was able to play strongly to his dovish impulses and drive U.S.-Soviet diplomacy forward. Further, regime type conditioned *why* each saw the other as an attractive negotiating partner. Gorbachev valued Reagan for his ability to navigate the politics of diplomacy in the United States, and Reagan valued Gorbachev's commitment to cooperation internationally but did not fear that Gorbachev's dovishness made him politically vulnerable at home.

LEADER PREFERENCES AND REGIME TYPE. I coded the United States as a democracy in 1981 in accordance with the Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited dataset, and I coded Reagan as a hawk. Reagan was a democratically elected leader, ascending to the presidency in 1981 after defeating the incumbent, Jimmy Carter, at the ballot box the previous fall. Reagan consistently favored confrontational foreign policy positions, particularly vis-à-vis the Soviet

Union. As one author notes, Reagan had become "embroiled in an acrimonious fight" over communist influence in Hollywood during his acting career; it was "the cause of anticommunism that had propelled Reagan into politics" in the first place.[65] Reagan subsequently emerged as a leading conservative critic of détente during the 1976 Republican primary, during which he made his mark on the national political scene by criticizing Gerald Ford from the right.[66] He lost that primary, but later Reagan used his first press conference as president in 1981 to criticize détente as a "one-way street" and to downplay the prospects of compromise with an immoral Soviet Union.[67]

I coded the Soviet Union as an autocracy in 1985 in accordance with the Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited dataset, and I coded Gorbachev as a dove. Gorbachev reached the top of the Kremlin power structure not through elections, but as a result of elite politics inside the Kremlin following the death of Konstantin Chernenko. Gorbachev's strong aversion to military conflict stemmed, in part, from the brutal fighting that the Soviet Union endured in World War II.[68] Gorbachev immediately viewed the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a mistake.[69] In 1983, Gorbachev met Alexander Yakovlev, later a key policy adviser, and the two men connected over the need to "stop the cold war," agreeing that "we had to do something."[70] And in 1984, Gorbachev made a highly publicized visit to Britain, during which he proposed "new negotiations seeking radical arrangement toward the complete prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons," telling Margaret Thatcher that "we live on the same planet" and "need to stop with all this [arms racing] as soon as possible."[71] The visit led Thatcher, Reagan's friend and confidant, to declare that Gorbachev was a man with whom one could "do business."[72]

DOMESTIC LEVEL: CREDIBILITY AND POLITICAL SPACE FOR DIPLOMACY. The first observable implication of the theory is that the credibility gap between

65. James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Penguin, 2009), p. 17.
66. Julian E. Zelizer, "Détente and Domestic Politics," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2009), pp. 653–670, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2009.00805.x.
67. Ronald Reagan, "January 29, 1981: First Press Conference," Presidential Speeches, Miller Center, University of Virginia, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/january-29-1981-first-press-conference.
68. James Graham Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation: Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 91.
69. Janice Gross Stein, "Political Learning by Doing: Gorbachev as Uncommitted Thinker and Motivated Learner," *International Organization*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (1994) p. 175, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300028150.
70. Ibid, p. 174.
71. Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p. 89.
72. Ibid.

hawks and doves is salient in democracies. I expect to observe that hawkish leaders, by virtue of their credibility with the domestic public, enjoy political space to pursue rapprochement and obtain support for it at home. Consistent with this expectation, the eminent Cold War historian, Melvyn Leffler, writes that "Reagan's reputation for ideological purity and toughness . . . afforded him a flexibility [in engaging the Soviets] that other U.S. politicians did not have."[73] By contrast, Carter—a dove who entered office hoping to "cooperate with the Soviets whenever possible"[74]—had come to see negotiations with the Soviet Union as a political liability, fearing that he "was open to charges of being 'soft on communism.'"[75] U.S. public opinion polling during this period supports these observations. While approval of Carter's policy toward the Soviets ebbed as he sought cooperation, approval of the hawkish Reagan's Soviet policy surged when he began to engage with Moscow more vigorously later in his term.[76]

The second observable implication is that the credibility gap between hawks and doves is not salient in autocracies. Autocratic doves should not fear public rejection of their cooperative policies and should have latitude to play strongly to type by pursing bold diplomatic initiatives and marginalizing hard-line voices in their governments. Consistent with this expectation, there is little evidence that Gorbachev feared that his dovish reputation put him at a disadvantage in implementing a rapprochement. Instead, he acted with considerable self-confidence, publicly highlighting and embracing his role as a peacemaker. As his foreign policy adviser and longtime Soviet ambassador to the U.S. Anatoly Dobrynin put it, Gorbachev did not feel any need to explain to the "people the full direction and import" of his foreign policy.[77] Rather, he "imposed from above" his revolution in foreign (and domestic) policy.[78] Further, while dovish democratic leaders often feel compelled to surround themselves with hawkish officials to compensate for their

73. Melvyn P. Leffler, "Ronald Reagan and the Cold War: What Mattered Most," *Texas National Security Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (2018), p. 86, https://doi.org/10.15781/T2FJ29W93.
74. Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1995), p. 218.
75. Matthew J. Ambrose, *The Control Agenda: A History of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), p. 163.
76. For a detailed and extensive examination of these polling trends, see Nincic, "The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Politics of Opposites."
77. Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), p. 629.
78. Sergey Radchenko, *To Run the World: The Kremlin's Cold War Bid for Global Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2024), p. 539.

soft-line reputation and to bolster their public image,[79] Gorbachev had no such impulse. Rather, he sidelined hawkish members of the old guard, such as longtime Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, and surrounded himself with senior officials who were open to cooperating, such as Eduard Shevardnadze, Anatoly Chernyaev, and Yakovlev, with little concern that doing so would imperil his public standing.

Also consistent with the observable implications, the autocratic Gorbachev had political space to pursue bold diplomatic initiatives. "Flexible" and "energetic," Gorbachev broke from the ideological orthodoxy of his predecessors and helped to overcome long-standing barriers to better superpower relations.[80] Gorbachev's "new thinking" rejected the inevitability of conflict between capitalists and communists. Instead, new thinking underscored the "indivisibility of global security, the importance of lowering tensions and reducing the risk of war, the imperative of opening the Soviet Union to outside influences, and the need to take legitimate U.S. and Western concerns into account in pursuing Moscow's own security interests . . . these concepts helped ease the zero-sum, Cold War mentality in Moscow . . . and they therefore played an important role in facilitating the transformations of the late 1980s and after."[81]

Gorbachev's rhetoric highlighted the urgency of arms control. He backed up his public diplomacy with a pragmatic approach to long-standing pain points in the negotiations, such as inspections for Soviet nuclear sites and considering whether British and French nuclear forces should count against limits on the U.S. side. Perhaps as important, because Gorbachev was enthusiastic about arms control, he sought more frequent contact with Reagan. For example, during their famous non-summit at Reykjavik, they ultimately achieved a psychological breakthrough and committed to seeking arms reductions.[82]

79. Saunders, *The Insiders' Game*.
80. Hal Brands, *What Good Is Grand Strategy? Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2014), p. 127. For more discussion of Mikhail Gorbachev's thinking on foreign affairs, see Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). For links between Gorbachev's domestic and foreign policy, see William Taubman, *Gorbachev: His Life and Times* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2017). Vladislav Zubok contrasts Gorbachev's (often vague) "new thinking" on foreign policy with the "revolutionary-imperial paradigm" of his predecessor. See Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).
81. Brands, *What Good Is Grand Strategy?* p. 127.
82. For more on the role of the Reykjavik meeting, see Shahin Berenji, "Empathy, Risk-Taking, and Concession-Making: Gorbachev's Bold Proposals at Reykjavik to End the U.S.-Soviet Arms Race," *Security Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2023), pp. 306–337, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2023.2153730.

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL: THE VALUE OF HAWKISH OR DOVISH PARTNERS. The theory suggests that regime type (i.e., democratic or autocratic) should influence whether rivals perceive either hawks or doves as more attractive negotiating partners. The third observable implication of the theory is that counterparts to democratic leaders should prefer to deal with democratic hawks because they have an advantage relative to doves in delivering rapprochement at home. Consistent with this expectation, Reagan's hard-line views were valuable to the diplomatic process, not just because his hawkish reputation enabled him to mobilize U.S. public support for rapprochement with Moscow to an extent that would have been hard for dovish Democrats to achieve. Maybe as important—and less frequently noted in prior research on hawks' advantages—is that Reagan's hawkishness made Gorbachev more willing to pursue rapprochement. As Leffler puts it, Reagan had credibility and "his Soviet interlocutors knew it. . . . If the president struck a deal, it would stick. *Reagan provided the incentive for Gorbachev to forge ahead* (emphasis added)."[83] Notably, Nixon underscored the salience of Reagan's hawkish credentials in a July 1986 meeting with Gorbachev, nudging him to negotiate with Reagan instead of holding out for a more dovish leader in the future. Gorbachev needed, as James Mann observes, "little persuading" on these points.[84] In an opinion piece following Reagan's death, Gorbachev expressed skepticism that he could have achieved the diplomatic accomplishments of the late 1980s with a different type of leader, writing that Reagan's "most important" attribute was that he "had the trust of the American people."[85]

The fourth observable implication of the theory is that counterparts to autocratic leaders should prefer negotiating with doves because they view them as more committed to diplomacy and cooperation than hawks. In the absence of electoral accountability, the benefit of a hawk's credibility advantage to their counterpart falls, making doves especially attractive partners. Further, democratic counterparts' motivation to invest in diplomacy with autocratic doves may be reinforced by the latter's tendency to generate support for rapprochement in rival democratic publics.

Consistent with this expectation, it was Gorbachev's cooperative impulses that attracted Reagan's attention. Dealing with a "special, new type" of general secretary, the president "engaged Gorbachev in a way no American leader

83. Leffler, "Ronald Reagan and the Cold War," p. 86.
84. Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan*, p. 37.
85. Mikhail Gorbachev, "A President Who Listened," *New York Times*, June 7, 2004, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/07/opinion/a-president-who-listened.html.

had previously engaged a Soviet leader in the history of the Cold War."[86] Though the Reagan administration did not immediately trust the Soviet leader, Reagan viewed Gorbachev's emergence as a "possible turning point in the Cold War"; indeed, in their first meeting in Geneva, Reagan concluded that "Gorbachev was really a 'different breed' of Soviet leader, one who was less rigid than his predecessors and might 'make some practical agreements.'"[87]

Gorbachev launched an international charm offensive, calling to abolish nuclear weapons by 2000, arguing that nuclear war could not be won, and allowing dissidents such as Natan Sharansky to emigrate to Israel.[88] After receiving a letter from Gorbachev proposing nuclear reductions, Reagan wrote in his diary: "We'd be hard put to explain how we could turn it down." He also noted that although some in his administration wanted to label Gorbachev's actions a "publicity stunt," Reagan "said no. Let's say we share their overall goals [and] now want to work out the details. If it is a publicity stunt this will be revealed by them."[89] Of course, Gorbachev's actions were not (just) a publicity stunt—he sought unprecedented levels of cooperation with the West. In addition to drawing Reagan into a diplomatic process, Gorbachev's dovishness, as the theory would expect, generated support for rapprochement in the U.S. public. Gorbachev received a hero's welcome when he visited Washington to sign the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in late 1987. Twice as many Americans viewed Gorbachev favorably rather than unfavorably, and 60 percent agreed that Gorbachev was "different" from predecessors like Brezhnev and Khrushchev.[90]

Notably, despite Gorbachev's dovishness, the United States did not exhibit great concern that he would be unable to deliver on agreements. I find no evidence that Reagan feared that Soviet public opinion would prevent

86. Leffler, "Ronald Reagan and the Cold War," p. 86.
87. Brands, *What Good Is Grand Strategy?* pp. 129–131.
88. Interestingly, Gorbachev's reputation as a trustworthy dove was greatly aided by his early domestic reforms, glasnost and perestroika, not just his foreign policy. See Michael A. Goldfien, Michael F. Joseph, and Roseanne W. McManus, "The Domestic Sources of International Trust" (unpublished manuscript, April 17, 2025), https://mgoldfien.com/files/Domestic_Trust.pdf; Michael A. Goldfien, Michael F. Joseph, and Roseanne W. McManus, "The Domestic Sources of International Reputation," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 117, No. 2 (2023), pp. 609–628, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422000855.
89. Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p. 104.
90. R. W. Apple Jr., "Gorbachev a Hit with the American Public . . .," *New York Times*, December 4, 1987, https://www.nytimes.com/1987/12/04/world/gorbachev-a-hit-with-the-american-public.html.

Gorbachev from implementing cooperative policies with the United States. More generally, U.S. officials saw Gorbachev as the key driver of Soviet foreign policy. Gorbachev's personnel choices impressed U.S. policymakers and showed that he could deliver an agreement with the West. Jack Matlock, the senior National Security Council official for Soviet affairs, wrote in a memo to National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane that Gorbachev's removal of Gromyko from the foreign minister post was a "brilliant tactical move which puts [Gorbachev] in direct charge of foreign policy."[91] This move caught Reagan's attention; the president recorded in his diary the following day that "we're all agreed the new Soviet Foreign Minister [Shevardnadze] is there to hold the fort for Gorbachev."[92]

OUTCOMES. The dynamics highlighted in this case study contributed significantly to the end of the Cold War and the rapprochement between the United States and the Soviet Union. Given the salience of electoral accountability in the United States, Reagan's hard-line reputation allowed him to generate public support for cooperation when a dovish Soviet leader appeared on the scene. Reagan was able to seize on Gorbachev's push for arms control and other forms of cooperation, and Gorbachev's image as a man of peace earned him admirers in the U.S. administration and among the public. Yet because the Soviet Union lacked electoral accountability, Gorbachev's dovishness and Reagan's hawkishness—which existing work suggests would be the least auspicious paring from the Soviet perspective—did not preclude diplomatic cooperation. Gorbachev had the political space to play to type and engage a foreign, democratic hawk. The 1987 INF Treaty was an important breakthrough, and in 1988, Reagan would declare that his view of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" was of "another time and another era."[93] The United States and Soviet Union would sign a number of agreements on nuclear monitoring, civilian nuclear energy, fishing rights, space exploration, and more. In addition, the Soviet Union reduced its forces in Eastern Europe and withdrew from Afghanistan.[94] By 1989, as Andrew Kydd notes,

91. "Memorandum From Jack Matlock of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (McFarlane)," Washington, DC, July 2, 1985, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981–1988*, Vol. 5, *Soviet Union, March 1985–October 1986*, edited by in Elizabeth C. Charles (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2020), doc. 54, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v05/d54.
92. Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p. 93.
93. Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan*, p. 304.
94. Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, p. 353.

the "process of reassurance was essentially completed," paving the way to more stable relations between the former rivals.[95]

CAMP DAVID AND THE EGYPT-ISRAEL PEACE TREATY

Egypt and Israel's rivalry began in 1948 with the establishment of Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict that followed. The hawkish Gamal Abdel Nasser led Egypt for most of the early years of the rivalry. A strong proponent of pan-Arabism and the Palestinian cause, to Israelis Nasser "personified Arab hatred" of the country.[96] When Nasser died of a heart attack in 1970, he was replaced by his dovish vice president, Sadat. I show that Sadat's dovishness, when combined with the election of a hawkish Begin as Israeli prime minister in 1977, helped to produce the first instance of rapprochement between Israel and one of its Arab neighbors. As the theory suggests, hawkishness played a different role in democratic Israel than in authoritarian Egypt. At home, Begin's unimpeachable reputation as a hawk helped him to generate support for major territorial concessions to Sadat. By contrast, unencumbered by electoral accountability, a dovish Sadat doggedly pursued diplomacy. Sadat was encouraged to pursue rapprochement because he perceived that Begin's hawkishness would allow the Israeli leader to implement an agreement at home. Israel, though, was not concerned about the autocratic Sadat's ability to deliver a deal; what made him attractive as a negotiating partner was his evident motivation to achieve peace.

LEADER PREFERENCES AND REGIME TYPE. Begin became prime minister following the 1977 parliamentary elections in Israel. According to the Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited dataset, Israel was a democracy in 1977. Begin was also a hard-liner on security issues. *Time* called him a "superhawk" upon his election in 1977.[97] A CIA analysis concluded that his "hardline" views—based on ideological commitments dating to his days as leader of the Irgun paramilitary organization—would represent a "major shift" in Israeli foreign policy.[98]

95. Andrew H. Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 234.
96. Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy*, p. 1.
97. "The Nation: Begin's American Bandwagon," *Time*, September 5, 1977, https://time.com/archive/6849128/ the-nation-begins-american-bandwagon/.
98. "Menachem Begin," July 7, 1977, Central Intelligence Agency, Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/1977-07-07.pdf. See also: Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–1998* (New York: Vintage, 2001); Lawrence Wright, *Thirteen Days in September: The Dramatic Story of the Struggle for Peace* (New York: Vintage, 2015).

Sadat was a dictator. He assumed power following the death of Nasser in 1970 and did not face elections during his time in office. Accordingly, the Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited dataset codes Egypt in 1970 as an autocracy. Sadat was also a dove. Unfamiliar to many, Sadat was viewed by those who engaged with him as markedly different from Nasser and far more interested in compromise with Israel. Drawing on his personal experience escorting Sadat on a visit to the United States in the mid-1960s, one State Department official observed upon Nasser's passing that Sadat "thinks differently" from Nasser, and that the United States should to keep an open mind about Sadat's willingness to contribute constructively to the Middle East peace process.[99] At Nasser's funeral, Sadat told the U.S. representative in attendance that "all I want is peace . . . I am prepared to go to any lengths to achieve it."[100] Sadat would repeat variations of this line over the coming years. Just a few months into his presidency, Sadat welcomed two U.S. State Department diplomats to his residence and surprised them by presenting a detailed proposal for an accord with Jerusalem that would reopen the Suez Canal. One of the diplomats reflected that "we had certainly never heard anything like this from Nasser."[101] Though at first worried about his ability to consolidate power—Sadat in fact marginalized rivals rather quickly—U.S. policymakers viewed Sadat as a "considerable improvement over Nasser" for the peace process.[102]

DOMESTIC LEVEL: CREDIBILITY AND POLITICAL SPACE FOR DIPLOMACY. Begin's role in the Egypt-Israel rapprochement is consistent with the first observable implication of the theory. Begin was a reluctant peacemaker, ideologically rigid and litigious in his negotiating style.[103] But his hard-line commitments also meant that he had the credibility to sell peace with Israel's principal Arab rival at home. In Begin's initial peace plan, Israel would largely withdraw from Sinai. Though Begin's concessions were painful to some Israelis, the domestic public in general "perceived [them] to be reasonable: If Begin, despite his belief system, had accepted such concessions, then indeed there must be no

99. Charles S. Kennedy, "Ambassador Michael E. Sterner," interview, March 2, 1990, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Arlington, VA, published 1998, p. 22, https://adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Sterner,%20Michael%20E.toc.pdf.
100. Kirk J. Beattie, *Egypt During the Sadat Years* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), p. 52.
101. Kennedy, "Ambassador Michael E. Sterner," p. 22.
102. William Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), p. 84.
103. Wright, *Thirteen Days in September*, p. 12.

other choice."[104] In short, "Begin succeeded in convincing . . . the public that his peace plan was consistent with basic national values."[105]

The theory suggests a different expectation for autocratic leaders: Dovishness should have a salutary rather than a deleterious effect on the prospects for rapprochement. This is what occurred in Sadat's case. In the words of William Quandt, a historian and a U.S. negotiator during Camp David, "Sadat did not seem to be worried about his domestic public opinion."[106] Though some segments of the public opposed Sadat's efforts at rapprochement with Israel, "none of this mattered too much . . . Sadat's political position seemed secure, and he was able to govern without much regard for the ups and downs of public opinion in Egypt."[107] Indeed, when some students demonstrated against Sadat's decision to travel to Jerusalem in November 1977 to meet Israeli leaders, the protests "were roughly broken up by security men."[108] Moreover, whereas democratic doves sometimes feel pressure to cater to the preferences of more hawkish elites and officials, Sadat was unfazed when multiple foreign ministers and other top aides resigned during the peace process. Instead, Sadat acted "as his own foreign minister."[109]

Although Sadat notably launched a surprise assault against Israel in 1973, his foreign policy was characterized by persistent outreach to Israel.[110] Consistent with expectations of a dove, Sadat pursued peace relentlessly. Just after Nasser died, Sadat signaled his interest in a peace deal with Jerusalem in talks with U.S. officials. Before the 1973 war, he contacted National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger to court the United States to mediate the Egypt-Israel relationship, and he later was the most cooperative of the regional leaders that supported Kissinger's postwar shuttle diplomacy.[111] When Carter reached the Oval Office in 1977, Sadat urged the White House to initiate a new round of

104. Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *Israel and the Peace Process, 1977–1982: In Search for Legitimacy for Peace* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 84.
105. Ibid.
106. Quandt, *Camp David*, p. 270.
107. Ibid.
108. Morris, *Righteous Victims*, p. 451.
109. Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy*, pp. 6, 13.
110. Galia Golan, "Sadat and Begin: Successful Diplomacy to Peace," in Robert Hutchings and Jeremi Suri, eds., *Foreign Policy Breakthroughs: Cases in Successful Diplomacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 121–147.
111. Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011); Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011).

diplomacy with more ambitious goals than the disengagement agreements that Kissinger had orchestrated.[112]

Importantly, the high value that Sadat placed on peace drove the Egypt-Israel diplomatic process; he was motivated and willing to bargain across the many facets of the Egypt-Israel relationship.[113] U.S. mediators valued Sadat because of the Egyptian president's willingness to make concessions for the sake of progress. When U.S. mediation struggled, Sadat initiated a bilateral diplomatic channel with Israel. Worried that the multilateral negotiating forum that the Carter administration favored would fail, Sadat sent a confidant, Deputy Prime Minister Hassan Touhami, to secretly meet Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan in Morocco in September 1977.[114] It was after this meeting that Sadat first seemed to believe that peace with Israel was in reach. Shortly thereafter, Sadat flew to Israel and addressed the Knesset to resuscitate a "moribund" peace process that had become bogged down in procedural questions surrounding a multilateral conference.[115] Though the trip did not generate the quick breakthrough that Sadat envisioned, talks between the two governments in Jerusalem established a land-for-peace swap as the basic framework for diplomacy and put negotiations on a track that led to Camp David.

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL: THE VALUE OF HAWKISH OR DOVISH PARTNERS. Similar to the U.S.-Soviet case, and consistent with the theory's third observable implication, there is evidence that the Egyptians saw hawkishness as an attractive quality in a negotiating partner. In accordance with the theory, Begin's credibility at home motivated Sadat to invest in the bargaining process, even though Sadat sometimes found Begin's less-than-generous approach to negotiation exasperating. Sadat, according to Kissinger, held the view that "peace would not be made by an affable Israeli leader, but by a strong one."[116] A lengthy piece in the *New York Times* reported that Begin's "hardline credentials" had contributed to Sadat's belief that the Israeli prime minister would be able to convince Israelis of the wisdom of a land-for-peace agreement.[117] By

112. Quandt, *Camp David*, p. 179.
113. Shahin Berenji, "Sadat and the Road to Jerusalem: Bold Gestures and Risk Acceptance in the Search for Peace," *International Security*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Summer 2020), pp. 127–163, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00381.
114. Quandt, *Camp David*, p. 188.
115. Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy*, p. 229.
116. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 769.
117. Sidney Zion and Uri Dan, "The Untold Story of the Mideast Talks," *New York Times*, January 21, 1979, https://www.nytimes.com/1979/01/21/archives/untold-story-of-the-mideast-talks-

contrast, in 1975, before Begin's election, Sadat had complained to the U.S ambassador to Egypt that "Israel lacked a leader who could guide the public."[118]

In accordance with the final observable implication of the theory, Sadat's dovishness was a key asset at the international level, which made him an attractive negotiating partner for Israel. Sadat's flexibility—particularly his openness to pursuing a bilateral agreement that de-emphasized Palestinian national aspirations—earned Israeli attention and indicated that Jerusalem could reach peace with its main military rival without compromising on issues that Begin considered nonnegotiable. Sadat's visit to Jerusalem burnished his reputation as a peacemaker and statesman and engendered optimism among Israeli leaders. During a meeting following the visit, Begin and other top officials attested to the "sincerity" of Sadat's initiative.[119] As Shahin Berenji observes, "The time was ripe to continue talks because, as the Israeli government realized, it had a partner with which to negotiate."[120] In line with the theory's expectations, the Israeli public's enthusiasm for Sadat's peace initiative provided additional impetus for the Israeli government to negotiate.[121] Just before the Knesset vote on the Camp David accords, 75 percent supported the deal and 78 percent supported the concessions made to Egypt specifically.[122] Though Israelis were conditioned to see Arab leaders as implacably hostile, in Sadat they found a "dignified idealist who clearly wanted peace."[123]

OUTCOMES. The dovish Sadat and hawkish Begin ultimately achieved a rapprochement via the 1978 Camp David accords and the subsequent Egypt-Israel peace treaty, earning the leaders the Nobel Peace Prize. Israel withdrew its civilian and military presence in Sinai and returned control of the peninsula to Egypt, and Egypt normalized relations with Israel and reopened the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping. Sinai has since been demilitarized.[124] Given

mideast.html. This interpretation is supported by Shahin Berenji, who notes that Begin's "hawkishness" and leadership style "gave Sadat hope that he had a partner who could convince Israel's public and ruling coalition to make peace." See Berenji, "Sadat and the Road to Jerusalem," p. 138.

118. Berenji, "Sadat and the Road to Jerusalem," p. 138.

119. Ibid., p. 163.

120. Ibid.

121. Bar-Siman-Tov, *Israel and the Peace Process*, p. 59; Berenji, "Sadat and the Road to Jerusalem," p. 163.

122. Bar-Siman-Tov, *Israel and the Peace Process*, p. 150.

123. Morris, *Righteous Victims*, p. 455.

124. The accords and treaty also included provisions to address Palestinians' political aspirations, though these aspects of the agreements were vague and implemented unevenly, and the legacy of the Egypt-Israel rapprochement for the Palestinians is much debated.

the two leaders' different levels of electoral accountability, Sadat's dovishness and Begin's hawkishness simultaneously played an important role. Sadat, unencumbered by electoral checks, was able to pursue peace with alacrity, driving forward the diplomatic process. As one historian notes, "Sadat's winning smile notwithstanding, Egypt was a dictatorship: Up to a point, most of the media and public could be manipulated and 'persuaded' to toe the official line."[125] Sadat's evident sincerity, combined with Begin's hawkish credibility, earned the Camp David accords widespread praise in Israel and "massive support" in the Israeli Knesset.[126] Though resulting only in a cold peace rather than deep cooperation, the Egypt-Israel rapprochement has proved remarkably durable. After decades of military conflict, Egypt and Israel have avoided war or other major militarized crises for the past forty-seven years.

Conclusion

Do leader foreign policy preferences influence patterns of international rivalry and rapprochement? This article has argued that they do. Yet the precise relationship depends on a factor overlooked in prior research: regime type. Electoral accountability heightens the importance of domestic credibility, making democratic hawks likely peacemakers and attractive negotiating partners for rivals who want to be confident that a deal will be implemented. In autocracies, the importance of domestic credibility drops. Autocratic doves have space to deliver the olive branch and are attractive partners, especially for democratic counterparts aiming to show voters that a rival can be trusted. Case studies of the U.S.-Soviet and Egyptian-Israeli rapprochements offer evidence of the theory's observable implications and external validity.

Accounting for regime type sheds light on key historical cases in international relations and helps to address the disproportionate focus of existing research on hawkishness in the United States and other Western countries. Focus on the U.S. experience and that of other liberal democracies has created blind spots for research.[127] This article has shown that expanding the scope of inquiry—in this case to include autocracies—can help scholars discover important patterns in world politics. That said, the analysis presented in this article leaves room for additional research. The two cases explored in

125. Morris, *Righteous Victims*, p. 475.
126. Bar-Siman-Tov, *Israel and the Peace Process*, p. 149.
127. Jeff D. Colgan, "American Perspectives and Blind Spots in World Politics," *Journal of Global Security Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (2019), pp. 300–309, https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogz031.

this article suggest that hawks have an advantage in achieving a rapprochement when they lead democracies, whereas doves have an advantage when they lead autocracies. First, future research could explore the rates at which different types of leaders pursue and successfully achieve rapprochements with international rivals by looking at the full universe of interstate rivalries. Second, future research could also consider within–regime type variation in electoral accountability, given that this initial intervention focused on ideal types of democracy/autocracy to proxy for electoral accountability.

The theory advanced in this article has an important implication for contemporary policy debates. At a time of renewed rivalry between the West and China and the West and Russia—prompting talk of global divisions between democracies and dictatorships—understanding the relations between leaders and rivalry and rapprochement is crucial. It is now conventional wisdom in policy circles and in the academy that only a Nixon can go to China. This study offers an important qualification. It may be that it will take a relatively hawkish Western leader to end these rivalries. But the emergence of dovish leaders in Moscow or Beijing could be just as important.