

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

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Introduction

Amidst the United States' unexpected rapprochement with the Soviet Union in the 1980s, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* columnist 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 Coming to the White House with a reputation as a hardliner on national security, Ronald Reagan ended his presidency as a champion for arms control and East-West diplomacy. Scholars have provided compelling explanations for Baker's counterintuitive observation. Hawks have an advantage in navigating the domestic politics of rapprochement because they can more credibly signal the wisdom of compromise than doves and because hawks who pursue cooperation come across as moderate to voters.²

The Reagan case remains puzzling, however. While Reagan played against 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. How can we square the now-conventional wisdom of a hawks' advantage in peacemaking with Gorbachev's central 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 is squarely focused on electorally accountable leaders, even though most notable international rivalries feature at least one leader who faces no meaningful electoral check.³

¹Russell Baker, "Rising above Self," *New York Times*, May 28, 1988, <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/05/28/opinion/observer-rising-above-self.html>.

²Alex Cukierman and Mariano Tommasi, "When Does it Take a Nixon to Go to China?," *American Economic Review*, Vol. 88, No. 1 (1988), 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 LP Weeks, "Hawks, Doves, and Peace: An Experimental Approach," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 99, No. 3 (2019), pp. 435-452, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12392>; Kenneth Schultz, "The Politics of Risking Peace," *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (2005), pp. 1-38, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818305050071>. For review, see Michaela Mattes and Jessica LP 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>.

³Notably, while theoretical work on the topic assumes some form of electoral accountability, authors do sometimes

In this paper, I explore how implementation concerns at the domestic level impact which types of leaders—hawks or doves—are best positioned to conclude a rapprochement with international rivals. 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.⁴ Rivalries are characterized by frequent militarized crises, limited diplomatic contact, major unresolved disputes, and persistent antagonism.⁵ Following Michaela Mattes and Jessica Weeks, I define rapprochement as the establishment of better working relations by erstwhile rivals.⁶

To successfully conclude a rapprochement, leaders must be both (1) willing to make peace internationally and (2) able to deliver it domestically.⁷ Hawks and doves offer distinct and symmetric advantages and disadvantages in meeting these two conditions. Hawks enjoy a *credibility* advantage—an edge in convincingly claiming rapprochement is in the national interest⁸—with domestic publics precisely because they are not seen as very motivated to pursue cooperation in the first place. Doves’ *motivation* to achieve peace makes them more willing to pursue it internationally, but at the cost of their credibility with the public on matters of cooperation. In other words, there are credibility and motivation effects that push in opposite directions.

imply that the logic should apply in contexts that do not feature competitive elections. See Cukierman and Tommasi, “When Does it Take a Nixon to Go to China?”

⁴For work specifically on leader hawkishness and rapprochement making this distinction, see, e.g., Mattes and Weeks, “From Foes to Friends,” p. 195 or Schultz, “The Politics of Risking Peace,” p. 9. This is similar to the way the broader literature treats hawks and doves. For example, Casler, Ribar, and Yarhi-Milo note that “hawks and doves emphasize different tools for achieving foreign policy goals,” with hawks preferring coercion or uses of force and doves preferring diplomacy. See Don Casler, David Ribar, and Keren Yarhi-Milo, “The Many Faces of Credibility: Hawks, Doves, and Nuclear Disarmament,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2023), pp. 425-426, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2023.2224924>. Bruce Russett likewise notes that on “the hawk-dove spectrum, hawks emphasize competitive elements” of international politics, while “doves reply with words about the need for cooperation to avoid war and the risks of provoking the adversary.” See Bruce Russett, “Doves, Hawks, and U.S. Public Opinion,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 105, No. 4 (1990), p. 516, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2150933>.

⁵Paul 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://doi.org/10.1177/073889421987028>.

⁶Mattes and Weeks, “From Foes to Friends.”

⁷Robert Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (1988), pp. 427-460, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027697>.

⁸This notion of credibility is widely embraced in the literature. See, e.g., Cukierman and Tommasi, “When Does it Take a Nixon to Go to China” or Kreps, Saunders, and Schultz, “The Ratification Premium.” As Schultz notes, the logic flows from Calvert’s work on the utility of biased advice. See Kenneth Schultz, “The Politics of Risking Peace,” p. 4 and Randall Calvert, “The Value of Biased Information: A Rational Choice Model of Political Advice,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (1985), pp. 530-555, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2130895>.

I argue that electoral accountability, the opportunity to reward or punish leaders at the ballot box,⁹ weights the relative importance of these two effects at both the domestic and international levels. In the domestic political arena, electoral accountability amplifies the salience of credibility with domestic publics, resulting in the hawks' advantage identified in existing work. However, in low-electoral accountability regimes, the salience of credibility before domestic publics falls. At the extreme, if domestic publics are entirely unable to hold leaders accountable, a leader's ability to signal the wisdom of cooperation becomes immaterial to policy outcomes. In these contexts, doves have the political space to act on their dovish preferences and implement a policy of rapprochement.

At the international negotiating table, electoral accountability is also likely to condition whether foreign counterparts prefer to deal with a hawkish or dovish leader. Counterparts prefer to negotiate with electorally accountable hawks because they anticipate the value of the latter's credibility at home. On the other hand, leaders likely prefer to deal with electorally unaccountable doves, both because they (1) anticipate that domestic credibility is less salient in such settings and because (2) doves engage in diplomacy more enthusiastically. Overall, then, in low-electoral accountability systems, we should expect doves, not hawks, to more reliably achieve rapprochements with international rivals.

Given the close link between electoral accountability and democracy—defined narrowly here as a system in which leaders are selected via competitive elections¹⁰—hawks should be best positioned to achieve a rapprochement in democracies, while doves should be best positioned to achieve a rapprochement in autocracies. 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 publics and upon which the logic of hawkish credibility rests.¹¹ Several observable impli-

⁹See 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>.

¹⁰Jose 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>.

¹¹As I explain in greater detail below, 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. Hawks are better able to resolve

cations emerge. First, in democracies, hawks' credibility advantage with domestic publics gives them special latitude to pursue and conclude rapprochements with rivals. Second, in autocracies, credibility with domestic publics is not salient, allowing doves to play strongly to type in pursuit of cooperation. Third, counterparts to democratic leaders prefer to deal with hawks because these hawks can 'deliver' support for rapprochement at home. Fourth, counterparts to autocratic leaders prefer to negotiate with doves because doves are seen as more sincerely committed to diplomacy and appeal to democratic publics.

To test these implications, I analyze two prominent cases of rapprochement: the end of the Cold War under Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev 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 differ on many other dimensions, permitting a "least similar" case comparison that accounts for alternative explanations of rivalry termination and provides insight into the argument's applicability across diverse cases.¹² In addition, by selecting cases that have received attention in the existing literature,¹³ I am able to assess whether my theory incorporating regime type offers additional explanatory power beyond the theoretical contributions upon which I seek to build.¹⁴ Consistent with the observable implications of the theory, I find that (1) while a hawkish reputation was crucial for Reagan and Begin to secure support for a deal

this information asymmetry than are doves, since observers assume hawks would only pursue rapprochement if it was truly necessary, whereas doves might pursue diplomacy even if the moment is not ripe. While it seems reasonable to assume leaders are better informed than the public on matters of foreign policy, it is not clear that this is true when it comes to regime elites, especially in non-personal or elite-constrained regimes. As Jessica Weeks notes, the types of regime elites who hold some dictators accountable tend to be experienced in and knowledgeable about foreign affairs. See Jessica LP Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 8 and p. 22. Indeed, these sorts of dictators often rely on regime elites for information. See Tyler Jost, *Bureaucracies at War: The Institutional Origins of War* (Cambridge University Press, 2024), pp. 2-3 and p. 24. 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.

¹²Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (MIT Press, 2005), p. 50 and p. 82.

¹³For work that considers these cases, see, e.g., 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?," 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>.

¹⁴Steven Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 83.

at home, (2) the dovish Gorbachev and Sadat had latitude to boldly pursue cooperation by virtue of their limited electoral accountability. Further, (3) while Gorbachev and Sadat understood the value of working with hawks such as Reagan and Begin who could secure domestic support for cooperation in the U.S. and Israel, it was (4) Gorbachev's and Sadat's dovishness that made them appealing partners for Reagan and Begin.

This paper makes a number of contributions. First, it offers a general theory of leader foreign policy preferences and diplomatic rapprochement, expanding existing work to cover all political regimes. Implicitly or explicitly, existing work on leader hawkishness and rapprochement has focused on democracies. However, given that democracies rarely find themselves in conflictual security relationships with other democracies,¹⁵ it is important to understand how leader foreign policy preferences intersect with regime type in international rivalry. I find that the salience of hawks' credibility hinges on electoral accountability. Notably, the theory also suggests that rapprochement, in contrast to crisis initiation and escalation,¹⁶ is a setting in which accountability imposed by authoritarian elites may not serve as a substitute for electoral accountability. The paper thus responds to Susan Hyde and Elizabeth Saunders' call for researchers to recapture regime type in the study of international politics.¹⁷

Second, the paper 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 brackets the counterpart with which hawkish or dovish leaders must negotiate. Similarly, other research on leader attributes tends to focus only on the biography or worldview of a single leader

¹⁵Though the causes of this relationship remain subject to debate, 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>.

¹⁶Jessica LP Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve," *International Organization*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2008), pp. 35-64, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818308080028>; Jessica LP 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>; Jessica LP Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace*.

¹⁷Susan D. Hyde and Elizabeth N. Saunders, "Recapturing Regime Type in International Relations: Leaders, Institutions, and Agency Space," *International Organization*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (2020), pp. 363-395, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818319000365>.

in a given analysis.¹⁸ By highlighting leader pairings as part of a strategic interaction, this project advances the literature not only on hawkishness and peace but on leader attributes more broadly.

Finally, the theory offers a new take on diplomacy and leadership in notable instances of rapprochement. As the opening to this article notes, existing work explains why a hawk like Reagan could help to facilitate a rapprochement with the Soviet Union. However, it does not explain how Gorbachev's dovishness could simultaneously make an equal if not greater contribution to ending the U.S.-Soviet rivalry. Similarly, the literature on leader hawkishness and rapprochement offers insight into the role of a hawkish Menachem Begin at Camp David, but does not equally capture the essential role played by a dovish Anwar Sadat. The moderating role of electoral accountability on the relationship between hawkish leaders and international cooperation presented in this article reconciles the apparent contradiction of these important historical cases.

This paper will proceed as follows. First, I review the literature on hawks' advantages in rapprochement. Second, I build a theory of electoral accountability, 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 conclude with a discussion of the article's findings and offer suggestions for future research.

¹⁸For a review of the leader biography literature, see Michael Horowitz and Matthew Fuhrmann, "Studying Leaders and Military Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 62, No. 10 (2018), pp. 2072-2086, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002718785679>; Daniel Krmaric, Stephen Nelson, and Andrew Roberts, "Studying Leaders and Elites," *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 Krmaric, "When Do Leader Backgrounds Matter? Evidence from the President's Daily Brief," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2024), pp. 4144-447, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/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, Philip Potter, Todd S. Sechser, and Allan Stam, "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>.

Foreign Policy Orientations and International Rapprochement

Since Richard Nixon's surprising visit to China in 1972, scholars have sought to explain how leaders achieve controversial policy shifts such as rapprochement—the establishment of better working relations with erstwhile rivals¹⁹—by playing against type. A prominent theoretical perspective argues that politicians who play against type can more credibly signal the wisdom of a policy choice.²⁰ In this literature, credibility refers to a domestic audience's trust in a leader's claim that a policy of rapprochement is optimal given the state of the world.²¹ The standard story is as follows: leaders have better information about the state of the world than members of the voting public. This information asymmetry arises because leaders have “access to the advice of specialists, and in some cases, they possess classified information.”²² Because doves have an ideological preference for cooperation, when a dovish politician pursues rapprochement, voters are unsure whether this reflects objective domestic and international conditions or simply the politician's biases. By contrast, when a hawk claims that cooperation is the best policy, it must be so; hawks have an ideological preference for confrontation and so wouldn't propose cooperation unless it was optimal. Hawks' against-type behavior resolves the information asymmetry between leaders and publics. As a result, the public will be more confident that rapprochement is in the national interest following diplomacy led by a hawk than diplomacy led by 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

¹⁹Mattes and Weeks, “From Foes to Friends.” Consistent with Mattes and Weeks, I distinguish between rapprochement and reconciliation. I exclusively focus on the former, i.e., 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.

²⁰For theoretical work taking this perspective, see, e.g., 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.”

²¹See, e.g., 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.”

²²Cukierman and Tommasi, “When Does it Take a Nixon to Go to China?” p. 181. Similarly, Cowen and Sutter justify this assumption with reference to secret non-public information and access to “sage advisors.” See Cowen and Sutter, “Why Only Nixon Could Go to China,” p. 607.

pivot to the middle, which may appeal to the median voter.²³ 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.²⁴

There is substantial empirical support for the theoretical claim that hawks' have a credibility advantage over doves among domestic publics. Several quantitative²⁵ and qualitative studies²⁶ have found evidence that rapprochement and other cooperative policies garner greater domestic support when carried out by a hawkish leaders. Furthermore, scholars have found that domestic sanction awaits leaders perceived as "overcooperating" with rivals,²⁷ and that dovish leaders may pursue diplomacy with rivals when comfortably ahead in the polls in anticipation of this risk.²⁸

Although the large majority of the literature emphasizes a hawks' advantage deriving from their credibility with domestic publics, it is important to recognize that doves nonetheless have a greater intrinsic preference for cooperation, which can contribute to rapprochement. In particular, two recent studies argue that doves' sincere commitment to diplomacy may make them attractive negotiating partners to foreign governments²⁹ and foreign publics.³⁰ More generally, these studies underscore that there is a tradeoff between doves' motivation to cooperate and hawks' credibility in selling cooperation at home, raising anew the question of whether hawks or doves are "ultimately

²³Schultz, "The Politics of Risking Peace."

²⁴Elizabeth Saunders, *The Insider's 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.

²⁵Mattes and Weeks, "Hawks, Doves, and Peace"; Robert Trager and Lynn Vavreck, "The Political Costs of Crisis Bargaining," *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 Blair and Joshua Schwartz, "The Gendered Peace Premium," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/squad090>.

²⁶Kreps, Saunders, and Schultz, "The Ratification Premium"; Nincic, "The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Politics of Opposites."

²⁷Michael Colaresi, "When Doves Cry," *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 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 (2016), pp. 343-360, <https://doi.org/10.1177/07388942155775>.

²⁸James 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>.

²⁹Joe Clare, "Hawks, Doves, and International Cooperation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 58, No. 7 (2014), pp. 1311-1337, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002713498705>.

³⁰Michaela Mattes and Jessica LP Weeks, "Reacting to the Olive Branch," *International Organization*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (2022), pp. 957-976, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818322000170>.

more likely to achieve peace.”³¹

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, is squarely focused 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 addressing whether—or, rather, when—hawks or doves are ultimately best positioned to achieve a rapprochement. In brief, I claim that hawks are best positioned to achieve a rapprochement in the presence of electoral accountability, while doves are best positioned to achieve a rapprochement in its absence. When electoral accountability is high, hawks’ credibility with domestic publics is highly salient, giving them a crucial advantage relative to doves. By contrast, when electoral accountability is low, 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. I develop this argument in greater detail in the next section.

A Theory of Hawkishness and Electoral Accountability

For leaders to produce a rapprochement, they must be (1) willing to make peace internationally and (2) able to deliver it domestically.³² Hawks and doves have distinct but symmetric advantages and disadvantages in meeting these conditions. Hawks enjoy *credibility* with domestic publics precisely because they are not seen as especially motivated to seek cooperation in the first place.³³ Hawks often have the ability to make peace but infrequently the willingness. By contrast, doves are highly *motivated* to seek cooperation internationally, yet this comes at the cost of their domestic

³¹Mattes and Weeks, “From Foes to Friends,” p. 195.

³²The context is in this way similar to that described by Robert Putnam in his description of two-level games. See Putnam, “Domestic Politics and Diplomacy.”

³³Both preferences and perceived preferences matter. I assume they are positively correlated.

support. When a dove pursues rapprochement, domestic publics are unsure whether this reflects the wisdom of the policy or simply the dove's ideological bias. Doves have ample willingness to pursue a rapprochement but, as a result, limited ability to sell cooperation domestically. These credibility and motivation dynamics push in opposite directions with respect to the probability of rapprochement, and the question of whether hawks or doves are more likely to produce an end to rivalry can therefore be reframed as a tradeoff. When is a dove's motivation more salient than a hawk's credibility and vice versa?

I argue that electoral accountability—the ability for publics to reward or punish leaders via elections³⁴—weights this tradeoff. Leaders vary in the degree to which they are accountable to the public via elections, and this accountability impacts the relationship between leader foreign policy preferences 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 hawks or doves are more appealing to counterparts as partners in diplomacy.

Domestic Level: The Salience of Credibility and Political Space for Diplomacy. Leaders vary in their need to ‘bring their country with them’ when seeking a rapprochement, and this affects the degree to which a leader's credibility before their domestic public is material to policy outcomes. In high-electoral accountability regimes—the focus of existing work—the ability to credibly signal the wisdom of rapprochement to a domestic public is very salient. As a result, hawks' credibility with domestic publics—their ability to overcome the information asymmetry highlighted in foundational work on the topic—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 low-electoral accountability settings and anticipated public skepticism may, in turn, constraint their ability to act boldly in pursuit of peace.

³⁴Ashworth, “Electoral Accountability.”

The dynamic shifts, however, in regimes with low electoral accountability. In such settings, leaders largely do not need to bring their country with them on the road to peace. At the extreme, if domestic publics are completely unable to hold leaders accountable, it renders their approval or disapproval of a policy of rapprochement immaterial. Under these circumstances, hawks' credibility advantage—and doves' credibility deficit—with domestic publics loses importance to the diplomatic process. What matters most are leaders' preferences, and doves value cooperation and compromise more than hawks. Unconcerned with electoral rejection, doves have the freedom to play more strongly to type, investing in bold diplomatic initiatives. Further, while scholars note that electorally-accountable doves often have an incentive to include hawkish advisors in their governments to bolster their public image,³⁵ electorally unaccountable doves should be better positioned to marginalize hardline voices without fearing public alarm or backlash. In essence, absent electoral accountability, doves are freer to implement their cooperative preferences. Thus, the tradeoff between doves' willingness to make peace and hawks' ability to sell it domestically is weighted more heavily toward doves in regimes with low electoral accountability. As a result, in such settings, we should expect doves, not hawks, to more reliably achieve rapprochements with rivals.

International Level: The Value of Hawkish or Dovish Counterparts. The effects of electoral accountability at the domestic level are likely to carry through to the international level. Electoral accountability also affects whether hawks or doves appear as attractive negotiating partners to foreign counterparts, since foreign counterparts are attentive to the political constraints faced by leaders. As a result, foreign counterparts to an electorally accountable leader may anticipate the importance of the that leader's credibility before their domestic public. Understanding that an electorally accountable dove may struggle to earn support for an agreement at home, foreign counterparts may ultimately prefer to deal with electorally accountable hawks. For this reason,

³⁵E.g., Elizabeth Saunders, *The Insider's Game: How Elites Make War and Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2024); Matt Malis, "Foreign Policy Appointments," *International Organization*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (2024), pp. 501-527, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081832400016X>.

Mao told Nixon that he “preferred rightists. . . Those on the right can do what those on the left talk about.”³⁶ Given the salience of credibility in high electoral-accountability political systems, there is value to dealing with hawks who can reliably persuade their domestic publics to support a rapprochement since it reduces the odds that diplomatic effort will be for naught.

On the other hand, a foreign counterpart to an electorally unaccountable leader may appreciate that such leaders often face a more limited public check, reducing the former’s concern about the latter’s ability to implement a deal. Understanding that a relatively less electorally accountable leader can more easily implement their preferred policies regardless of type, foreign counterparts will prefer to deal with doves rather than hawks. This is because doves are more likely to reciprocate gestures toward rapprochement and contribute to positive-sum diplomatic outcomes. In turn, this may ease the political hurdles that their counterparts—especially electorally accountable counterparts—face at home, because foreign doves are likely to generate domestic public support for diplomacy.³⁷ This helps to explain why Israel was able to make peace with the dovish King Hussein of Jordan in the 1990s, but not with the hawkish Hafez al-Asad of Syria.³⁸

Observable Implications. The foregoing discussion suggests that we ought to observe a different relationship between hawkishness and rapprochement depending on whether leaders are democratic or autocratic. Democracy, in the minimalist conception I adopt here, is a political system in which “those who govern are selected through contested elections.”³⁹ There is, thus, a tight link between this understanding of democracy and electoral accountability: in essence, electoral accountability as defined above is both necessary and sufficient for 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.⁴⁰ At a

³⁶Tudda, *A Cold War Turning Point*, p. 182.

³⁷On this last point, see Mattes and Weeks, “Reacting to the Olive Branch.”

³⁸Itamar Rabinovich, *The Brink of Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

³⁹Jose Antonio Cheibub, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Raymond Vreeland, “Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited,” *Public Choice* Vol. 143 (2010), p. 72.

⁴⁰As I note in my concluding remarks below, future research could explore within-regime type variation in electoral accountability and the possibility that it moderates the effect of leader hawkishness in rapprochement or other strategic

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

	Democratic	Autocratic
Dove	Low	High
Hawk	High	Low

high level then, we should expect hawks to hold an advantage in rapprochement when they lead democracies, and doves to hold an advantage in rapprochement when they lead autocracies. 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 a 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, we should 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 domestic publics. By contrast, (2) in autocracies, doves should not greatly fear public rejection of their policies, and should have latitude to play strongly to type by pursuing bold diplomatic initiatives and marginalizing hardline voices in their government. Turning to the international level, (3) we should see evidence that counterparts to democratic leaders prefer dealing with hawks because the latter are better positioned than doves to implement a policy of rapprochement at home. By contrast, (4) we should see evidence that counterparts to autocratic leaders see an opportunity in dealing with doves because the latter are seen as sincerely committed to diplomacy and generate support for rapprochement in democratic publics.

Alternative Explanations. Before proceeding to empirical evidence, I pause to consider alternative explanations. First, given the prominence of research in comparative politics⁴¹ and international

settings.

⁴¹For 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

relations⁴² emphasizing variation in accountability in autocratic political regimes, it is natural to wonder whether my focus on electoral accountability and the simple democracy/autocracy distinction is sufficient. In particular, important work has shown that some authoritarian leaders face meaningful checks from regime elites, and that these elite-constrained (or non-personalist) dictators tend to be less conflictual internationally than those who face little or no accountability from regime elites.⁴³

Despite this convincing research program, 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. As noted above, hawks' credibility advantage emerges from an information asymmetry between leaders and publics regarding whether conditions are favorable for rapprochement. Hawks are better at resolving this asymmetry than doves; if no asymmetry exists, then neither should a hawkish credibility advantage. Assuming an information asymmetry between leaders and publics is well-justified. It is harder to justify such an assumption when it comes to leaders and elites in non-personal or elite-constrained dictatorships. As Jessica Weeks emphasizes, elites in this type of regime are competent and experienced in national security affairs.⁴⁴ Indeed, autocratic leaders often rely on the sorts of regime elites who might hold them accountable for information about international affairs.⁴⁵

In the absence of such an information asymmetry, hawkish leaders should not have a special

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).

⁴²For example, Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace*; Brian Lai and Dan Slater, "Institutions of the Offensive: Domestic Sources of Dispute Initiation in Authoritarian Regimes, 1950-1992," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (2006), pp. 113-126, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00173.x>.

⁴³Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men"; Michaela Mattes and Mariana Rodriguez, "Autocracies and International Cooperation," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (2014), pp. 527-538, <https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12107>; Jeff Colgan and Jessica Weeks, "Revolution, Personalist Dictatorships, and International Conflict," *International Organization*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (2015), pp. 163-194, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818314000307>. Work such as Weeks, "Strongmen and Straw Men," also differentiates between military and civilian authoritarian regimes, but use such distinctions as a proxy for foreign policy preferences, not accountability. Like Weeks, I argue that both preferences and accountability matter. However, I focus on leader hawkishness, rather than regime composition, to capture preferences and competitive elections, rather than elite politics, to capture accountability.

⁴⁴Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace*, p. 8 and p. 22.

⁴⁵Tyler Jost, *Bureaucracies at War*, pp. 2-3 and p. 24.

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 publics. Put differently, while we might expect variation in the degree to which dictators are accountable to elites, higher levels of this type of accountability should not generate a particular hawkish advantage (or dovish disadvantage) when it comes to implementing a policy of rapprochement at home. Nevertheless, the least-similar case study comparison presented below permits me to examine whether the theorized mechanism operates despite variation in the level of elite-constraint imposed on autocratic leaders.

In addition to the question of whether other forms of accountability could moderate the effect of hawkishness, the broader literature on rivalry termination has highlighted non-leadership related factors that may also impact patterns of rivalry and rapprochement, including territorial disputes,⁴⁶ geographic proximity,⁴⁷ and shifts to the balance of power.⁴⁸ Territorial disputes are often thought to be particularly intractable, and thus it may be easier to resolve rivalries in which such disputes are not present. Geographic proximity may also make it more difficult to terminate rivalries, since geographically proximate rivals may appear more threatening and thus require a higher degree of trust before cooperation can be achieved. With respect to the balance of power, relative parity could potentially make it easier for states to see the futility of continued competition. Alternatively, it could be that imbalanced capabilities make it easier for leaders to make concessions without fearing that they 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 they are unlikely to overwhelm the effect of leader hawkishness and regime type, and I do not see

⁴⁶Andrew 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>.

⁴⁷Nils 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 Diehl, "Geographic Dimensions of International Rivalry," *Political Geography*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2002), pp. 263-286, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298\(01\)00059-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(01)00059-2).

⁴⁸Scott D. 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>.

a clear reason to think that they should confound the theorized interaction between these variables. However, the least-similar case study design below again permits a test of whether the theorized mechanisms operate despite variation on these dimensions.

Case Evidence

The universe of cases to which my theory applies are international rivalries.⁴⁹ As noted above, a rivalry is defined as a relationship between two countries characterized by limited diplomatic contact, frequent 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 U.S. and the Soviet Union under a hawkish Ronald Reagan and a dovish Mikhail Gorbachev and (2) the rapprochement between Egypt and Israel in the late 1970s under a hawkish Menachem Begin and a dovish Anwar Sadat.⁵⁰ As above, rapprochement refers to the establishment of better working relations between erstwhile rivals via diplomacy.

The selection of these cases offers a number of advantages. First, my theory and the literature upon which it builds have different expectations for these cases, allowing me to explore whether my theory offers additional explanatory power. As Steven Van Evera notes, such cases 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.⁵¹ The literature on hawks’ advantages in navigating the domestic politics of peacemaking would expect rapprochement in these cases to occur *in spite of*

⁴⁹More precisely, the scope of the theory, as the preceding discussion suggests, is such that it should work best provided that democracy serves as a strong 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 Bennett, “Security, Bargaining, and the End of Interstate Rivalry”) and other identifying more than 100 (see Diehl et al., “Peace Data”).

⁵⁰Both of these rivalries have received attention in the literature on leader hawkishness and rapprochement. See, e.g., 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?”, Miroslav 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, e.g., Scott D. Bennett, “Security, Bargaining, and the End of Interstate Rivalry” or Diehl et al., “Peace Data.”

⁵¹Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, p. 83.

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 sheds light on how far the theory may travel. The two cases are similar on their key independent variables and dependent variable—successful rapprochement between democratic hawks and autocratic doves—but differ on many other variables 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 on these other variables, one can conclude that the outcome is attributable to the variables of interest and not to other factors.⁵²

A number of such factors are worth considering. One, as noted above, some autocratic leaders face accountability from elites, even if they do not face (much) accountability from the public via elections. Though I offered a theoretical counter to this concern above—the requisite information asymmetry for a hawks' advantage may not exist between leaders and their advisors in non-personalist regimes—my least-similar case selection also helps to address this concern since Mikhail Gorbachev was an elite-constrained dictator while Anwar Sadat was a personalist dictator.⁵³ Further, the literature on enduring rivalries highlights a number of factors that might affect the termination of international rivalry, including territorial disputes, geographic proximity, and the balance of power. I argued above that these factors could be important but should not overwhelm or confound the effect of leader hawkishness and regime type. However, the case selection also helps to account for these other factors. While the Egypt-Israel rivalry featured a

⁵²For more on least similar case methods, see George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, p. 50 and p. 82. As noted by George and Bennett, 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.

⁵³See the classification in Weeks, “Strongmen and Straw Men,” p. 337.

major territorial dispute—control of the Sinai Peninsula—the U.S.-Soviet rivalry did not. While Egypt and Israel were (and are) geographically proximate and contiguous, the U.S. and Soviet Union were more distant and non-contiguous.⁵⁴ Finally, as the Cold War closed, Soviet power had declined substantially relative to the U.S.; the rivalry was and was becoming quite imbalanced.⁵⁵ By contrast, in the years prior to the Egypt-Israel rapprochement, the perception was that 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 the sense of invulnerability Israel experienced following the Six Day War.⁵⁶ If the role of leader hawkishness and regime type in contributing to rapprochement is similar in each case, it suggests that these variables mattered independently of the alternative explanations highlighted and that the theoretical mechanisms may travel widely.

Third, these cases are intrinsically important, having received a great deal of attention from both political scientists and historians. Though not relevant from the perspective of theory testing,⁵⁷ selecting these intrinsically important cases holds the prospect of broadening our understanding of historically consequential instances of rapprochement.⁵⁸ In particular, beyond providing a test of my theory, the case evidence provided below offers a new take on diplomacy and leadership at the end of the Cold War and during the Camp David process.

Despite these advantages, a limitation is that least-similar cases—same independent and dependent variables, but different on other dimensions—do not track how changes in the independent variables correspond to changes in the dependent variable across cases.⁵⁹ An alternative approach

⁵⁴Of course, Alaska and the Russian far east are close, but the population centers of each country are much more distant relative to Egypt and Israel.

⁵⁵For overview, see Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations at the End of the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press).

⁵⁶Kenneth Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy: Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, and Begin and the Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 50.

⁵⁷Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, pp. 86-87.

⁵⁸For discussion of theory-guided, idiographic case studies, see Jack Levy, "Case Studies: Types, 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.

⁵⁹These sorts of comparisons follow Mill's method of difference, rather than the method of similarity, as noted

would have been to select most-similar cases, showing differences in the independent variable corresponding to differences in the dependent variable. One reason for using a least-similar design despite this limitation relates to the nature of the theory. A key reason, according to the theory, that autocratic hawks often fail to achieve a rapprochement is lack of effort or interest. Thus, for example, while it might be interesting to compare non-rapprochement under an autocratic hawk with rapprochement under an autocratic dove, a challenge is that there may simply not be much diplomatic activity to observe in the former case.

Nonetheless, I address this limitation in several ways. First, the cases aim to highlight evidence of the underlying mechanisms emphasized by the theory, which can help to bolster inferences drawn from least-similar designs.⁶⁰ Second, I include evidence in the cases that suggests counterfactual comparisons along the lines of a most-similar comparison, e.g., 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 presented below.

Assessing the cases requires a coding procedure for my key variables. The first independent variable is leader hawkishness. As discussed above, hawkish leaders are defined as those who tend to favor coercion or confrontation in international politics. Doves, by contrast, tend to favor cooperation and compromise. To determine whether leaders in the cases are hawks or doves, I search for evidence of their beliefs prior to and early in their tenure, before diplomacy leading to rapprochement commenced. As Elizabeth 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).⁶¹ This is particularly important for my research question, since the theory entertains the possibility of against-type behavior. We would not want to infer leader foreign policy beliefs from actions in office, since the

above.

⁶⁰See George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, p. 82.

⁶¹See Elizabeth N. Saunders, *Leaders at War: How Presidents Shape Military Interventions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 11.

theory tells us 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 strong proxy for electoral accountability—should moderate the relationship between leader hawkishness and rapprochement. To code whether leaders in my cases faced electoral accountability, I turn to the Democracy and Dictatorship (DD) Revisited dataset's binary democracy/autocracy coding in the year leaders enter office. Many measures of democracy exist. I use the DD measure because it closely corresponds to the narrow definition of democracy I adopted above, mainly whether leaders are selected and replaced via competitive elections. By contrast, other measures see competitive elections as only one of many indicators of democracy.⁶² My dependent variable is rapprochement. In each case, I confirm that rapprochement occurred by considering the result of diplomatic activity, including the conclusion of concrete diplomatic agreements and a durable decrease in hostility between the rivals.

My theory suggests that the independent variables of leader hawkishness and regime type interact to determine the likelihood of rapprochement between rivals at the domestic and international levels. To trace the proposed logic and examine observable implications, I structure the cases as follows: First, I offer a brief summary of the case. Second, I provide evidence justifying the coding of my independent variables. Third, I explore the interaction of hawkishness and regime type at the domestic level, with attention to the way that electoral accountability conditions the political space that hawkish and dovish leaders have to pursue diplomacy. Fourth, I examine the interaction of hawkishness and regime type 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.

⁶²For discussion, see Cheibub et al., “Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited.”

The End of the Cold War

Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union could hardly have been worse at the outset of the 1980s. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the Carter administration's subsequent withdrawal of START II from Senate consideration spelled the end of détente. Despite this inauspicious start, diplomacy between a hawkish Ronald Reagan and dovish Mikhail Gorbachev produced an unexpected rapprochement by the decade's end. In the case to follow, 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. Consistent with the observable implications, the importance of Reagan's hardline reputation was that he could mobilize support for rapprochement at home. On the other hand, the importance of Gorbachev's dovishness was that, absent electoral accountability, he was able to play strongly to his dovish impulses and served as the engine behind U.S.-Soviet diplomacy. Further, and also consistent with the observable implications of the theory, regime type conditioned *why* each saw the other as an attractive negotiating partner. Gorbachev valued Reagan for the latter's ability to navigate the politics of diplomacy in the U.S., while Reagan valued Gorbachev's commitment to cooperation internationally without fearing that he was politically vulnerable by virtue of his dovishness.

Leader Preferences and Regime Type

As an initial step in analyzing the case, I code the regime type and hawkishness of both Reagan and Gorbachev. 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. In 1981, the United States is coded as a democracy according to the Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited dataset. Reagan was also a hawk. He had consistently favored confrontational foreign policy positions, particularly vis-a-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 and that it was “the cause of anticommunism that had propelled Reagan into politics” in the first place.⁶³ 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.⁶⁴ Though losing that primary, Reagan reached the presidency in 1981 and used his first press conference to criticize détente as a “one-way street” and downplay the prospects of compromise with an immoral Soviet Union.⁶⁵

Gorbachev was an autocrat. He 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. In 1985, the year he became general secretary, the Democracy and Dictatorship Dataset codes the Soviet Union as an autocracy, without selection of leaders via competitive election. Gorbachev was also a dove. The brutal Soviet experience in World War II contributed to Gorbachev’s strong aversion to the military conflict and competition that had defined the Cold War.⁶⁶ Gorbachev immediately saw the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a mistake.⁶⁷ In 1983, Gorbachev met Alexander Yakolev, later a key foreign policy advisor, and the two men connected over the need to “stop the cold war,” agreeing that “we had to do something.”⁶⁸ 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.”⁶⁹ The visit led Thatcher, Reagan’s friend and confidant, to declare

⁶³James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Penguin, 2009), p. 17.

⁶⁴Julian 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>.

⁶⁵First press conference of President Ronald Reagan, January 29, 1981. Accessed at: <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/january-29-1981-first-press-conference>

⁶⁶James G. 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.

⁶⁷Janice Gross Stein, “Political Learning by Doing,” *International Organization*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (1994) p. 175, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300028150>.

⁶⁸Ibid, p. 174.

⁶⁹Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p. 89.

that Gorbachev was a man with which one could “do business.”⁷⁰

The Domestic Level: The Salience of Credibility and Political Space for Diplomacy

The first observable implication of the theory enumerated above is that the credibility gap between hawks and doves is salient in democracies. We should observe that hawkish leaders, by virtue of their credibility with domestic publics, enjoy political space in pursuing rapprochement and obtaining support for it at home. Consistent with this expectation, the eminent Cold War historian Melvyn Leffler has written 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.”⁷¹ By contrast, for example, Jimmy Carter—a dove who entered office hoping to “cooperate with the Soviets whenever possible”⁷²—had come to see efforts at negotiations with the Soviet Union as a political loser heading into 1980, fearing that he “was open to charges of being ‘soft on communism’ in an election year.”⁷³ Public opinion polling from the United States during this period support 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 the Moscow more vigorously later in his term.⁷⁴

Turning to Gorbachev, the second observable implication listed above is that, in autocracies, any credibility gap between hawks and doves is not salient. Autocratic doves should not fear public rejection of their cooperative policies, and should have latitude to play strongly to type by pursuing bold diplomatic initiatives and marginalizing hardline 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 policy of rapprochement. Instead, he acted with considerable self-

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Melvyn 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>.

⁷²Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (University of Arkansas Press, 1995), p. 218

⁷³Matthew Ambrose, *The Control Agenda: A History of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), p. 163.

⁷⁴For a detailed and extensive examination of these polling trends, see Nincic, “The Politics of Opposites,” 1988.

confidence, publicly highlighting and embracing his role as a peacemaker. As his foreign policy advisor and longtime Soviet ambassador to the U.S. Anatoly Dobrynin put it, Gorbachev felt no need to explain to the “people the full direction and import” of his foreign policy.⁷⁵ Rather, he “imposed from above” his revolution in foreign (and domestic) policy.⁷⁶ Further, while dovish democratic leaders, as scholars like Elizabeth Saunders point out, often feel compelled to surround themselves with hawkish officials to compensate for their soft-line reputation and bolster their public image, Gorbachev had no such impulse. Rather, he sidelined hawkish old-guard figures, such as longtime foreign minister Andrei Gromyko, and surrounded himself with cooperation-minded officials, such as Eduard Shevardnadze, Anatoly Chernyaev, and Alexander Yakovlev, with little concern that it would imperil his public standing.

Also consistent with the observable implications, the autocratic Gorbachev had political space to pursue bold diplomatic initiatives, serving as a catalyst for efforts to end the Cold War. “Flexible” and “energetic,” Gorbachev’s worldview departed from Soviet orthodoxy under his predecessors and helped to unstick longstanding obstacles to better bilateral relations.⁷⁷ Gorbachev’s New Thinking rejected the inevitability of conflict between capitalist and communist camps. Instead, New Thinking emphasized 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

⁷⁵Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow’s Ambassador to America’s Six Cold War Presidents* (New York: Times Books, 1995), p. 629

⁷⁶Sergey Radchenko, *To Run the World: The Kremlin’s Cold War Bid for Global Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2024), p. 539.

⁷⁷Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy?*, p. 127. For more discussion of 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: WW Norton, 2017). Vladislav Zubok contrasts Gorbachev’s (often vague) “New Thinking” on foreign policy with the “revolutionary-imperial paradigm” of his predecessor. See, Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: the Soviet Union from Stalin to Gorbachev* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

transformations of the late 1980s and after.⁷⁸

Gorbachev's speeches gave urgency to the cause of arms control, and he backed up his public diplomacy with a flexible approach to longstanding pain points in the arms control process, such as inspections of Soviet nuclear sites and how to account for French and British nuclear forces. Perhaps as important, Gorbachev's enthusiasm for arms control led him to seek more frequent contact with Reagan, including their famous non-summit at Reykjavik, where initial disappointment turned out to be a major breakthrough in achieving mutual trust and commitment to arms reductions.⁷⁹

International Level: The Value of Hawkish or Dovish Counterparts

The theory suggests that the effects of regime type should also be felt across the negotiating table. That is, whether hawks or doves are perceived as attractive negotiating partners by their rivals depends on whether a leader is democratic or autocratic. The third observable implication of the theory is that counterparts to democratic leaders should prefer to deal with democratic hawks because the latter have an advantage relative to doves in delivering rapprochement at home. Consistent with this expectation, the value of Reagan's hawkishness to the diplomatic process was not just that his hardline reputation enabled him to mobilize U.S. public support for cooperation with Moscow to a degree that would have been difficult for dovish Democrats to achieve. Perhaps as important—and less commonly highlighted in the literature on hawks' advantages—is that Reagan's hawkishness had the effect of inducing engagement from Gorbachev. 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.*”⁸⁰ Indeed, former President Richard Nixon emphasized the importance of Reagan's hawkish credentials in a July 1986 meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev, urging the Soviet leader to deal with Reagan rather than hold out in the hopes

⁷⁸Brands, *What Good is Grand Strategy?*, p. 127.

⁷⁹For more on the role of the Reykjavik meeting, see Shahin Berenji, “Empathy, Risk-Taking, and Concession-Making: Gorbachev's Bold Proposal's 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>.

⁸⁰Leffler, “Ronald Reagan and the Cold War,” p. 86, emphasis added.

that the next president would be more dovish. Gorbachev needed, as James Mann observes, “little persuading” on these points.⁸¹ In an op-ed following Reagan’s death, Gorbachev expressed doubt that he could have the achieved diplomatic accomplishments of the late 1980s with another type of leader, noting that Reagan’s “most important” attribute from the Soviet leader’s perspective was that he “had the trust of the American people.”⁸²

By contrast, the fourth observable implication of the theory is that counterparts to autocratic leaders should prefer negotiating with doves because they are seen as more committed to diplomacy and cooperation than hawks. Absent 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 autocratic doves’ tendency to generate support for rapprochement in rival democratic publics.

Consistent with this expectation, it very much was Gorbachev’s cooperative impulses that attracted engagement from Reagan. Dealing with a “special, new type” of general secretary, the president “engaged Gorbachev in a way no American leader had previously engaged a Soviet leader in the history of the Cold War.”⁸³ Though the Reagan administration did not immediately trust Gorbachev, Reagan nonetheless saw Gorbachev’s rise to power as a “possible turning point in the Cold War”; indeed, in their very 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.’”⁸⁴

Gorbachev engaged in an international charm offensive, proposing the abolition of nuclear weapons by 2000, taking the position that a nuclear war could not be won, and allowing dissidents such as Natan Sharansky to emigrate to Israel.⁸⁵ After receiving a letter from Gorbachev proposing

⁸¹James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Penguin, 2009), p. 37.

⁸²Mikhail Gorbachev, “A President Who Listened,” June 7, 2004, <https://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/07/opinion/a-president-who-listened.html>.

⁸³Melvyn Leffler, “Ronald Reagan and the Cold War,” *Texas National Security Review*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2018), p. 86.

⁸⁴Brands, “What Good is Grand Strategy?”, pp. 129-131.

⁸⁵Interestingly, 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 Goldfien, Michael Joseph, and Roseanne McManus,

cooperation on nuclear reductions, Reagan noted in his diary: “We’d be hard put to explain how we could turn it down.” He also wrote that while some in the administration wanted to call Gorbachev’s moves a “publicity stunt,” Reagan “said no. Let’s say we share their overall goals & now want to work out the details. If it is a publicity stunt this will be revealed by them.”⁸⁶ Of course, it was not (just) a publicity stunt. Gorbachev truly sought radical levels of cooperation with the United States. In addition to drawing Reagan into a diplomatic process, Gorbachev’s dovishness, as expected, generated support for rapprochement in the U.S. public. Gorbachev received a hero’s welcome when visiting Washington to sign the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in late 1987, with a 2-to-1 favorability rating among Americans and 60 percent agreeing that Gorbachev was “different” from predecessors like Brezhnev and Khrushchev.⁸⁷

Notably, despite Gorbachev’s dovishness, the U.S. did not exhibit great concern that he would be unable to deliver on agreements. There is no evidence, to my knowledge, that Reagan seriously feared Soviet public opinion would prevent 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 moves impressed U.S. officials and made clear that he would be able to deliver on agreements reached with the West. The senior NSC staffer for Soviet affairs, Jack Matlock, wrote in a memo to National Security Advisor Bud 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.” This message appears to have reached Reagan, who recorded in his diary the following day that “[w]e’re all agreed the new Soviet Foreign Minister [Eduard Shevardnadze] is there to hold the fort for Gorbachev.”⁸⁸

“The Domestic Sources of International Trust,” *working paper* (2025) and Michael Goldfien, Michael Joseph, and Roseanne 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>.

⁸⁶Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p. 104.

⁸⁷R.W. Apple Jr., “Gorbachev a Hit with the American Public,” *New York Times*, December 4, 1987. Accessed at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/12/04/world/gorbachev-a-hit-with-the-american-public.html>.

⁸⁸Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation*, p. 93.

Outcomes

The dynamics highlighted above contributed significantly to the end of the Cold War and the rapprochement between the U.S. and Soviet Union. Given the salience of electoral accountability in the U.S. context, Reagan's hardline 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 public. Yet because the Soviet Union featured no 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.”⁸⁹ The U.S. and Soviet Union would sign a number of agreements on nuclear monitoring, civilian nuclear energy, fishing rights, space exploration, and more, and the Soviet Union reduced its forces in Eastern Europe and withdrew from Afghanistan.⁹⁰ By 1989, as Andrew Kydd notes, the “process of reassurance was essentially completed,” paving the way to more normal, stable relations between the former rivals.⁹¹

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 war that followed. For much of the early years of the rivalry, Egypt was led by the hawkish Gamal Abdel Nasser, a strong proponent of pan-Arabism and the Palestinian cause who, to Israelis,

⁸⁹Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan*, p. 304.

⁹⁰Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, p. 353.

⁹¹Andrew Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 234.

“personified Arab hatred” of the country.⁹² When Nasser died of a heart attack in 1970, he was replaced by his dovish vice president, Anwar Sadat. In the case to follow, I show that Sadat’s dovishness, when combined with the election of a hawkish Menachem Begin as Israeli prime minister in 1977, played a key role in producing the first instance of rapprochement between Israel and one of its Arab neighbors. As the theory suggests, hawkishness played a very different role in democratic Israel compared to 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. Across the international negotiating table, Sadat was encouraged to pursue rapprochement by his perception 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

I begin by coding the regime type and hawkishness of each leader. Menachem Begin was a democratically elected leader, assuming the prime ministership following 1977 parliamentary elections in Israel. According to the Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited dataset, Israel was a democracy in 1977. Begin was also a hardliner on security issues. Called a “superhawk” by *Time Magazine* upon his election in 1977,⁹³ a CIA analysis at the time 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.⁹⁴

Sadat was a dictator. He assumed power following the death of Nasser in 1970 and did not

⁹²Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy*, p. 1.

⁹³“The Nation: Begin’s American Bandwagon,” September 5, 1977, <https://time.com/archive/6849128/the-nation-begins-american-bandwagon/>

⁹⁴“Menachem Begin,” July 7, 1977. Central Intelligence Agency. Accessed at: <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).

face elections during his time in office. Accordingly, the Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited dataset codes Egypt as an autocracy in 1970, when Sadat became president. Sadat was also a dove. An unknown quantity to many, those who interacted with Sadat before and just as he took power understood that Sadat was a different sort of leader than Nasser and was far more interested in compromise with Israel. Based on his personal experience escorting Sadat on a visit to the United States in the mid-1960s, one State Department official averred upon Nasser's death that Sadat "thinks differently" from Nasser and that the U.S. ought to keep an open mind about him as it related to conflict and cooperation in the Middle East.⁹⁵ 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."⁹⁶ Sadat would repeat variations of this line over the coming years. Just a few months into his tenure as president, Sadat invited two State Department officials to his residence and surprised them by presenting a detailed proposal for a diplomatic agreement with Israel that would re-open the Suez Canal. One of the officials recalled that "we had certainly never heard anything like this from Nasser."⁹⁷ Though initially concerned about his ability to consolidate power—Sadat would ultimately remove rivals rather quickly—U.S. officials saw Sadat as a "considerable improvement over Nasser" in terms of the peace process.⁹⁸

The Domestic Level: The Salience of Credibility and Political Space for Diplomacy

The first observable implication of the theory states that democratic hawks have a crucial advantage in selling rapprochement at home. Begin's role in the Egypt-Israel rapprochement is consistent with this expectation. Begin was, in many ways, a reluctant peacemaker, ideologically rigid and litigious in his negotiating style.⁹⁹ But his hardline commitments also meant that he had the credibility to sell peace with Israel's principal Arab rival at home. This dynamic is visible in the

⁹⁵Charles Kennedy, "Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Interview of Michael Sterner," *Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training*, pp. 22.

⁹⁶Kirk Beattie, *Egypt During the Sadat Years* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 52.

⁹⁷Kennedy, "Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Interview of Michael Sterner," p. 22.

⁹⁸Quandt, *Peace Process*, p. 84.

⁹⁹Wright, *Thirteen Days in September*, p. 12.

domestic reaction to Begin's initial peace plan, according to which Israel would largely withdraw from Sinai. As one analyst put it, though painful to some Israelis, the concessions considered by Begin were widely "perceived to be reasonable: if Begin, despite his belief system, had accepted such concessions, then indeed there must be no other choice."¹⁰⁰ In short, "Begin succeeded in convincing . . . the public that his peace plan was consistent with basic national values."¹⁰¹

The theory suggests a different expectation for autocratic leaders: dovishness should have a salutary rather than deleterious effect. Any credibility deficit doves face vis-a-vis hawks is not politically salient in autocracies, such that autocratic doves have space to act on their dovish preferences, driving forward the diplomatic process. This is what we observe in Sadat's case. As the historian and U.S. negotiator during Camp David William Quandt notes, "Sadat did not seem to be worried about his domestic public opinion."¹⁰² Though there was certainly opposition to 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 with out much regards for the ups and downs of public opinion in Egypt."¹⁰³ Indeed, when some students demonstrated against Sadat's decision to travel to Jerusalem to meet Israeli leaders, the protests "were roughly broken up by security men."¹⁰⁴ Moreover, while democratic doves sometimes feel pressure to cater to the preferences of more hawkish elites and officials, Sadat was unfazed by the resignation of multiple foreign ministers and other top aides during the peace process. Instead, Sadat acted "as his own foreign minister."¹⁰⁵

Though Sadat famously launched a surprise attack against Israel in 1973, the constant in his foreign policy was vigorous outreach to Israel.¹⁰⁶ Consistent with the behavior expected of a dove, Sadat sought peace at virtually every opportunity. As noted above, Sadat indicated his interest in

¹⁰⁰Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *Israel and the Peace Process, 1977-1982* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 84.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²William Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), p. 270.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001* (New York: Vintage, 2001), p. 451.

¹⁰⁵Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy*, p. 6, 13.

¹⁰⁶Galia Golan, "Sadat and Begin," in *Foreign Policy Breakthroughs*, Robert Hutchings and Jeremi Suri, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

a peace agreement with Israel in discussions with American officials in the immediate aftermath of Nasser's death. He sought U.S. mediation in high-level contacts with Henry Kissinger prior to the 1973 war, and then was perhaps the most cooperative of the regional leaders in assisting Kissinger's post-war shuttle diplomacy.¹⁰⁷ When Jimmy Carter became president in 1977, Sadat urged the new administration to launch a new round of diplomacy that had more ambitious goals than the disengagement agreements orchestrated by Kissinger.¹⁰⁸

Importantly, the high value Sadat placed on peace served as the engine of the Egypt-Israel diplomatic process; he was ambitious and willing to negotiate across the many dimensions of the Egypt-Israel relationship.¹⁰⁹ Sadat was a valued partner to U.S. mediators because of his willingness to compromise for the sake of progress. Yet, when U.S. mediation struggled, Sadat also took key steps to build bilateral diplomatic channels with Israel. Fearing that the multilateral negotiating forum the Carter administration favored would fail, Sadat in September 1977 sent a trusted aide, Hassan Touhamy, to secretly meet Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan in Morocco.¹¹⁰ It was following this meeting that Sadat first seemed to believe that peace with Israel was in reach. Two months later, Sadat rescued a "moribund" peace process from procedural obstacles to a multilateral conference by traveling to Jerusalem and addressing the Israeli Knesset.¹¹¹ Though the visit did not produce the immediate breakthrough that Sadat hoped, 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.

¹⁰⁷Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011); Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011).

¹⁰⁸Quandt, *Peace Process*, p. 179.

¹⁰⁹Shahin Berenji, "Sadat and the Road to Jerusalem," *International Security*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (2020), pp. 127-163, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00381.

¹¹⁰Quandt, *Peace Process*, p. 188.

¹¹¹Stein, *Heroic Diplomacy*, p. 229.

International Level: The Value of Hawkish or Dovish Counterparts

Similar to the U.S.-Soviet case, and consistent with the third observable implication listed above, we see evidence that the Egyptians saw hawkishness as an attractive quality in a negotiating partner. Appreciating that any Israeli leader would need to sell peace with Cairo—and the evacuation of Sinai—to the Israeli public, Sadat saw the election of hardliner like Begin as a valuable asset in his pursuit of peace, and it encouraged Sadat to invest in diplomacy. Consistent with the theory presented above, Begin's domestic credibility induced investment in the bargaining process by Sadat, even as he was sometimes exasperated by Begin's less-than-generous approach to negotiation. Sadat, according to Henry Kissinger, held the view that "peace would not be made by an affable Israeli leader, but by a strong one."¹¹² His assessment that Begin fit the bill was supported by a 1977 conversation with Nicolae Ceaușescu—one of the few Eastern Bloc leaders to have ties with Israel—who encouraged Sadat to work with the "strong" Begin.¹¹³ Consistent with Ceaușescu's advice, 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 persuade Israelis of the wisdom of a land-for-peace agreement.¹¹⁴ By contrast, in 1975, prior to Begin's election, Sadat had complained to the U.S ambassador to Egypt that "Israel lacked a leader who could guide the public."¹¹⁵

Consistent with the final observable implication of the theory enumerated above, Sadat's dovishness was a key asset at the international level, making him an attractive negotiating partner for Israel. A key reason that Sadat's dovishness mattered in the peace process was the effect that it had on Israel's incentive to negotiate. Sadat's flexibility—particularly his willingness to pursue a

¹¹²Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 769.

¹¹³Anwar Sadat, *In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 306.

¹¹⁴Sidney 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-mideast.html>. This interpretation is supported by 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.

¹¹⁵Berenji, "Sadat and the Road to Jerusalem," p. 138.

bilateral approach that deemphasized Palestinian national aspirations in the negotiations—earned Israeli attention and made clear that Jerusalem could achieve peace with its primary military rival without making compromises on issues that its leader considered non-negotiable. 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.¹¹⁶ 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.”¹¹⁷ Further consistent with the theory’s expectations, the enthusiasm generated by Sadat’s peace initiative in the Israeli public provided additional impetus for the Israeli government to negotiate.¹¹⁸ Just prior to the Knesset vote on the Camp David Accords, 75% supported the deal and 78% supported the concessions made to Egypt specifically. While Israelis were conditioned to see Arab leaders as implacably hostile, in Sadat they found a “dignified idealist who clearly wanted peace.”¹¹⁹

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, while Egypt normalized relations with Israel and reopened the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping. Sinai has since been demilitarized.¹²⁰ Given their 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,

¹¹⁶Quoted in Berenji, “Sadat and the Road to Jerusalem,” p. 163

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *Israel and the Peace Process, 1977-1982* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994), p. 59; Berenji, “Sadat and the Road to Jerusalem,” p. 163.

¹¹⁹Morris, *Righteous Victims*, p. 455.

¹²⁰The accords and treaty also included provisions aimed at addressing the political aspirations of Palestinians, 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.

Egypt was a dictatorship: Up to a point, most of the media and public could be manipulated and ‘persuaded’ to toe the official line.”¹²¹ 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.¹²² 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 45 years.

Conclusions

Does leader hawkishness matter for international rivalry and rapprochement? Existing literature suggests that it does, but focuses primarily on democracies. Since nearly all international rivalries include at least one autocracy, broadening the scope of this research to include non-democratic political regimes is crucial. This paper does just this by reframing the study of hawkishness and international peace as a tradeoff that is conditioned by regime type. Electoral accountability amplifies the salience of domestic credibility, making democratic hawks likely peacemakers and attractive negotiating partners for rivals who want confidence that a deal will be implemented. In autocracies, the salience of credibility falls. Autocratic doves have greater space to deliver the olive branch and make attractive partners for rival leaders, especially for democratic counterparts seeking to convince voters that a rival can be trusted.

Taking regime type into account sheds light on important historical cases in IR. In emphasizing regime type, it also addresses the disproportionate focus of existing research on hawkishness on the U.S. and other Western countries. Focus on the U.S. experience and that of other liberal democracies has created blindspots for research.¹²³ This paper shows that broadening the scope of inquiry—in this case to include non-democracies—can help researchers uncover important patterns

¹²¹Morris, *Righteous Victims*, p. 475.

¹²²Bar-Siman-Tov, *Israel and the Peace Process, 1977-1982*, p. 149.

¹²³Jeff Colgan, “American Perspectives and Blind Spots in World Politics,” *Journal of Global Security Studies*, pp. 300-309, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogz031>.

in world politics. That said, the research design presented above has limitations. The two cases explored above suggest that hawks have an advantage in achieving rapprochement when they lead democracies while doves have an advantage when they lead autocracies. However, more study would be required to explore the rates at which different types of leaders pursue and successfully achieve rapprochements with international rivals. Future research could advance the literature by looking at the full universe of interstate rivalries. In addition, this initial intervention to incorporate electoral accountability and regime type into the study of leader foreign policy preferences and rapprochement focused on ideal types of democracy/autocracy to proxy for electoral accountability. Future research could also consider within-regime type variation in electoral accountability.

The theory presented in this paper has important implications for contemporary policy questions. In an era of renewed rivalry between the West and China and the West and Russia—prompting discussion of global divisions between autocracy and democracy—understanding the link between leaders and rivalry and rapprochement is crucial. The idea that it takes a Nixon to go to China is now conventional wisdom in academic and policy circles. This study offers an important qualification. It may be that it will take a relatively hawkish U.S. leader to end these rivalries. But the emergence of dovish leaders in Moscow or Beijing could be just as important.